

The Orders and the Leaders
Keep calm and use systemic coaching

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Introduction

Every organic system is a living system

1. What is systemic coaching?

Changing one's own life can be difficult. Breaking the chains, sometimes impossible. We all have dreams and resolutions, hidden in a drawer and sadly, we too have often locked ourselves in a drawer. Many of these dreams could have become true if we had received support from a coach on a constant and accurate basis.

Systemic coaching is:

- A structured process, according to our coachee's needs.
- A full commitment between coach and coachee to reach the objective requested by the coachee.
- Raising awareness and encouraging responsibility, (the capacity to find a response) of the coachee, widening their view and reading their own territory by using a different map.
- Stimulating and supporting the coachee in order for them to reach their own potential and to find new and unexpected solutions in stressful situations and during lack of clarity.
- The map of the organic system of the coachee, and of the rules on which his success is based.
- Helping the coachee to understand which systems are currently inaccessible to them, which generational bonds are preventing flow in their life, of their career and of their overall success.

1.1. Process

A coaching session is similar to a conversation between a coach and an athlete; it focuses on the training of the coachee in order to help him better his own performances and the quality of his life.

At each session, the coach asks the coachee where he would like to convey his attention and which aspect of his life he would like to observe more closely and deeply. The coach listens and contributes to the process with some powerful questions and, if necessary, by inviting the coachee to design a sort of map of his own system. By doing this, the coach challenges the coachee attentively and sensitively the boundaries of the coachee, helping him reveal 'implicit' information, which is invisible, but present in his system.

It is neither about counselling, nor mentoring. The coach acts under the assumption that the coachee possesses all the necessary resources within himself. **The coach is the guide and stimulates him.**

In this relationship, the coach encourages the coachee to develop a more flexible, less familiar attitude, to venture into new territory, according to his own rhythm, to develop abilities and competencies, in order to examine the objectives and to realise them.

Systemic coaching helps the coach to offer the right support to the coachee so that he might succeed in shedding some light on some personal questions and/or problems before those become insuperable and cumbersome.

During a systemic coaching session, the coach helps the coachee to create a map of his own emotions and consequently creates a model, 'the systemic model' by definition, which allows our client to understand, and as a result, to act.

1.2. Why? The burning question

When our client decides to take guidance with a systemic coach, he usually has a burning question or concern, something he specifically cares about.

Starting from the question and from the information-gathering process during the interview between the coach and the coachee, the coach will succeed in creating a logical model of the client, based on the collected data. This can appear as some kind of map of explicit knowledge, namely at the surface of the question: what emerges from the tip of the iceberg.

The logical model is then represented in the constellation, thanks to a new image to stimulate a creative dialogue between the coach and the coachee himself.

The creative dialogue generates understanding of the implicit knowledge (already

present inside the question), that very knowledge which was not understood in the logical model at the beginning of the encounter, because it is indeed implicit and thus hidden. Often, the client is not aware that he already has within himself all the answers and the resources in order to 'respond' to his own question. Thanks to the constellation and the observation of his question from a Meta position, acquiring information and going deeper, the coachee gains access to the deep structure of his question; strengthening himself and adopting at each step a different perspective, he raises his awareness and succeeds in viewing and perceiving new facets of his question.

It is like discovering that a flower has many more petals than at first glance; and the coachee succeeds in giving a name to each petal, a new face, a new meaning. The emotions and feelings surface, opening themselves up to a new life, the coachee is freeing himself from old weights, misunderstandings and blockages, and succeeds in seeing his situation more clearly.

Acquiring awareness during a systemic coaching session amounts to activating a movement on a subconscious level, and re-establishing order. The client is able immediately to look at his own situation with a new, fresher and pure without illusions, fears or false preconceived ideas (do you remember the 12 violations of the meta-model?). Then the territory expands and there are no missing pieces to the puzzle anymore. The systemic constellation helps our coachee to see reality for what it is.

And here is our client's map that enlarges itself, that becomes more refined, more precise, tidier, and in the correct perspective, so much so that the coachee, by acquiring information succeeds in imagining possible solutions, as well as new choices to face and a renewed desire to pursue his own path.

1.3. Is systemic coaching for me?

Often during my professional career, the efficiency of this approach has raised doubts when talking with friends, colleagues, professionals, counselors, managers and leaders.

When considering a change in one's own personal or professional life, working with the systemic coaching technique can make a difference. When focusing on truly important things, we succeed in facilitating the transitions that allow our client to obtain the desired progress.

Along this type of route, our client may discover his own inclinations, his unexpressed talents, his passions and his strengths that further contribute to his success.

Systemic coaching can help to bring out the missing parts, what is not obvious, what our client has forgotten, in order to align the strength of his values with his objectives, allowing the possibility for a smoother professional career and for a more satisfying personal life.

Enlarging one's own spectrum contributes to a better quality of life and allows one to achieve specific results.

Some of the reasons that could drive a client to ask for the intervention of systemic coaching and that are often the starting point of the question for personal and professional success are:

- Wanting to make changes in one's life.
- Seeking to make a decision for a while and feeling stuck.
- Wanting to balance the day-to-day life with the bigger picture.
- Reassessing one's time management.
- Contemplating a new opportunity.
- Acquiring new skills in order to ultimately grow and flourish without knowing where to begin.
- Experiencing a certain dissatisfaction and discomfort at work.
- Sensing that one is not in the right place.
- Feeling excluded from the system.
- Possessing a rage in oneself and not knowing where it's coming from.

2. Balance, Order, Belonging

2.1. Balance

If we approach the understanding of these two worlds, 'macrocosm' and 'microcosm', which talk to us about a great order and a small order, we are encouraged to stop ourselves in between those two worlds at the simplicity of ancient wisdom, which has been able to transcend and show us the infinite possibilities of its proposals.

To stay in between these two worlds, macro and micro, leads us to think of mesentery, a new organ, among the largest in the human body, which has been discovered thanks to a study of the **University of New York** and the **Mount Sinai Beth Israel Medical Centre**.

This organ is nothing else than a network of **interconnected tissues** and is full of **fluid**. It acts as a real **shock absorber**. Labeled for decades as simple connective tissue, the complexity of this organ remained **invisible** because of the methods used to examine it through microscope, which made it appear falsely dense and compact.

I am focusing on this specificity in order to underline that the complexity of this organ did not allow us to view it for what it is.

The question arises spontaneously: how many other complexities still remain hidden to the human eye?

In a book kindly given to me by the researcher Dr Anna Zanardi, “Coaching Auto Motivazionale” – Ed. Franco Angeli 2015:

“The author states that the systemic theory provides us with the tools to conceive a new way of learning. This is a large vision that transcends significantly the problems and the technological capabilities, a re-direction that becomes necessary in science in general and in human behavior. In one way or another, we are bound to deal with complexities, with systems and ensembles.

The systemic approach acknowledges the pervasive interdependence of the various systems and analyses the relationships between minor and global systems.”

The first assumption of our work is to consider that each individual is a sub-system in larger system. We know how to learn when it happens on a conscious or explicit level. However, we are often unaware of our learning process when it happens on an implicit level.

The function of the systemic approach is to bring awareness on the implicit level and to integrate it with the explicit one.

It is a very important notion that our awareness is a gate that makes us able to interconnect micro and macro, the extremely big with the extremely small, and to perceive them simultaneously. Awareness is a window, which links the outside with the inside, the low with the high, and the implicit with the explicit.

In this way, we reach our perfect centre: the heart, the real multidimensional door that allows us to understand what happens outside through what happens inside and vice versa.

If one understands things ‘from below’, one can understand things ‘from above’. If one understands things ‘from the inside’, one can understand things ‘from the outside’.

These powerful concepts help us to tap into the great forces of the cosmos, remembering that not only are we part of it, but that – in line with ‘fractals’ - there also is a macrocosm as well as a microcosm inside of us, a below and an above, an inferior manifestation and a superior manifestation, one conscious and one unconscious.

We started with the unreal – the illusion created by each subjective mind – to reach something more real, we move from the obscurity towards the light, from ignorance to wisdom. To look at the stars will allow us to know our own inner god. To know our own inner god will bring us to see the light of the stars.

Everybody can use their own awareness as if it were a telescope or a microscope; everybody can understand the universal law as well as the subtle mental mechanisms. The same clarity allows us to manage and transform our surroundings, to have a clear vision of the situation of the world.

It is clear how useful and how precious a method of awareness and the ability to analyse the outside can be, but if we then cannot succeed in integrating this synthesis into all our evolutionary processes, we could lose ourselves in the outward journey in believing that everything is reduced to our perception. We will never stop breaking down matter in smaller and smaller particles.

Very few people strive to understand the relationship between the element and the whole. How do they interact? How do they affect each other? In addition, particularly, why can this small particle, which is 'I', influence and is an indispensable part of that great, unique 'Being'?

Is this organ a discovery that is immediately linked to the complexity of our system?

How many sub-sets, sub-systems do we not know yet? How much are we not able to see yet with our eyes and our senses that is operating and underlying many of our systemic choices?

Perhaps it would be possible to start thinking about our 'I' as an organ, something bigger, which acts as a shock absorber, and which is responsible for our sicknesses, successes, discoveries, choices and challenges?

This is a question, which, I will try to answer it in the next chapters of this book. If you have already read up to this point, well done! Stay with me, there is still so much to discover and we are only at the beginning.

2.2. Order: awareness

*Meet your small order and you will know the great order.
Start to know the great order and you will encounter your small order.*

In the last couple of years, at work; in contact with managers, successful men, university students, friends and acquaintances; the word awareness often appears in conversations, above all else.

Awareness of one's own richness, one's own feelings, one's own emotions and, when one is respectful and responsible, awareness of the other who is different from oneself.

I like to think that we agree with one another in order to take the first step towards each other, they consciously know that they are not going forward towards the other, but rather downwards!

What do I mean by going downwards rather than forward? Let me explain myself better: how can you start flying if you cannot walk? How can you take a flight if you cannot run on your own two feet towards a specific destination?

One of the first mysteries in revealing the path of developing awareness is that if you wish to ascend to a higher level of awareness, it is useful to first start by descending to the lowest level.

It is about perceiving without any type of painkillers or anesthesia what our harsh reality is at each level, even if it is painful.

To have an impulse to jump is sometimes necessary to take the leap, as if we have to mould ourselves into something else.

This generally means having to go down a few steps, starting from the point where we think we are stuck.

In order to construct a building with various floors, we need to dig deep to prepare strong foundations. The building risks collapsing if we do not build strong foundations. It will be unstable, unsafe, and could cause severe problems later.

With the systemic approach, when I am next to the person who really wants to know himself deeply, down to the very small and authentic reality, I offer him the opportunity of a journey where he can discover his true self: **his own personal reality.**

Everything depends on this.

Since it is fundamental in coaching to ask powerful questions, I think it is useful to ask my coachee how much he likes his own reality and therefore, himself. It is actually not so easy to answer this question in a balanced way.

To like one's own reality (one's own being, living, emotions), is more than anything, to like more than one's beliefs and specifically, more than one's own ideas.

Because if on the one hand we would like to reach a higher level of wisdom, on the other hand we often live a reality in which we distort to our advantage, unrespectful of the truth at all times, deforming what we see.

We manipulate and adapt reality every day in order to appear better in front of others, and by pleasing them, we above all deceive ourselves.

Systemic coaching is a mirror, which offers a phenomenological approach, which allows the implicit reality to reveal itself. During a session, the coachee who wants to explore his own request chooses a representative who will serve as a sounding board, which will in fact express the coachee's emotions, tapping into the knowledge and wisdom of the knowing field, or the collective intelligence.

The coachee, who at this point will have simply to observe as a spectator, will allow the representative to experience the situation. The duty of the representative will be to sense with his own body, without seeking perfection, being of service to the client, in a simple way and without any intention whatsoever.

This way, that part of reality, which is generalised and distorted, will be revealed and will allow the client to acquire more clarity and determination to travel on the right path.

Often, when the client explains his own situation, he is not lying or manipulating reality, he is rather half-aware of his own actions, driven by an unconscious motivation. In order to fly high, a human being has the capacity to maintaining himself with love, with strength, with dreams and with awareness.

This important transition, the move from executor to actor, actor of his own life, allows the client to increase awareness, to welcome the new reality, and to include the new information, which has emerged during the session.

In each session, the client will welcome all that is already present in his own heart, and it could not go otherwise, until he will actually make space for his own awareness, abandoning the old systems to gain new strength and skills.

As with communicating vessels, the old nodes, once dissolved, will allow the old paradigms to empty themselves and to welcome new larger, clearer and more defined maps.

In which order are we?

In order to go beyond our self-deception, it is important to accept the risk of listening to ourselves and to follow our specific road, always more attentive, more vigilant, calling everything and everyone into question to sort things out.

After having truly listened to ourselves, each cancellation, distortion and generalisation that blocks the growth of awareness can be broken. The freedom that our mind offers us is the choice of various colours, typologies, and lengths of chains that link us to the illusory world.

In which order do we want to live?

By looking at the patterns and constraints incurred in our mind, we can realise how much we are free, and only after having tasted the beauty and value that we give to ourselves, transcending the perception of our mind, we will be able to appreciate that freedom and have other satisfactions.

It starts with a very big effort on honesty to recognise the strength of our chains and seeking the necessary tools to cut them. The energy of the system is neutral; the intentions are bringing value or disfunctionality. Our mind decides which part it wants to turn to in order to seek answers. A systemic coach offers a space to the coachee, free of judgements and biases, where it is possible to ask questions.

In which order, is it possible to live a sane and right life?

As in a family, it is fundamental in a company to occupy a position, which belongs to us. Let us imagine a company where the order of rank is hierarchical. It means that some are occupying higher positions and are in front of others, and others are below and after them.

On the contrary, in a company where the rank order is circular, the participative leadership approach will allow all the components to be equally spaced from the centre and to have thus the same responsibility and decision-making power.

However, what stabilises the hierarchical order? Generally, with the systemic approach, it is the timing of belonging and not the degree of power and responsibility, as it could be misunderstood. This means that those who arrived first in the company, occupies the first position before everyone who arrives after them: that power in professional life, appoints the position of who those who arrived first.

When this hierarchical order is broken, the consequences decide on the success or failure of a company and often, on life and death of a process, a business, etc.

The consequences show that it is a universal order against which nobody can grow without bad consequences for himself and for others. Restoring the order is a prerequisite to the success and to the sanity and balanced management of the company.

2.3. Belonging

"Each member of a system has the right to be part of the company's system and as a result, no one can be excluded for any motive".

What often happens, is that some members are **forgotten** or **excluded**, because they are not efficient for example, or not performing according to the company criteria's and are therefore dismissed in unclear circumstances (for instance, during a re-organization, or rounds of redundancies, or relocations of management headquarters and/or operation centres).

Some jobs are out-sourced and therefore employees loose the possibility of feeling part of the system, i.e. the original company. Some employees might have been misplaced, excluded or forgotten by the company, due to various reasons: harassment, victimisation, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious belief. These employees must be **reintegrated in the system**, and if this does not happen, their successors will have to pay the price of such treatment, often encountering the same or similar treatment to that of their predecessors.

In order to **bring peace back to the system**, we simply need to collect information, recognise the excluded person, know his name, his date of birth, death, and get to know about his life. When it comes to employees who have been forgotten about or left behind in the organisation, it is very important to recognise and honour the sacrifice they have made, without criticising the absurdity of such companies. For example, who started a team, worked for years on an idea (doing out of civic duty, or ambition or because he firmly believed in the project), and it is not acceptable for the system that such information might be forgotten or undervalued.

PART 1 – The Universal Language of Systems

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask... for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."

Albert Einstein

1. The principles

- a. The language
- b. The definition
- c. The orders of love

The first time I read a book where Bert Hellinger explained the orders of love, the word order made me uncomfortable and I perceived it as an enforcement.

Is love an order, or is the order, love?

Per se, I like order, or at least subtle forms similar to order, which is what I consider order for myself. Each and everyone has obviously a very personal idea of what order is to them.

Did it ever happen to you to encounter persons or experience situations that give this pleasant impression of order, of harmony, or perfection?

The right thing at the right moment, the right way.

Did it ever happen to you to be dazzled, to experience an intangible magic, which renders everything simple and perfect?

This concept can be summarised for simplicity like this:

1. In a system there is always a proper and right position for everyone.

2. The parents are 'greater' and the children are 'smaller'.
3. Everyone has the right to belong to his or her own family, without being excluded.
4. Everyone is responsible for his or her own life

Is it that simple? It is all here. Why then is it so difficult? In addition, what should happen when the system is a company and not a family?

Each company is a family. Enlarged, different in its shape, in its appearance, but it needs love to survive, or better said, it needs these simple rules to be respected. These rules give vitality to its members, and are a testimony of strength and economic success.



2. The practice

a. Mapping of the system

During a systemic coaching session, it is useful to explore the various elements of our coachee's system, in order to discover if these rules are respected, and when they are not, to understand what is preventing the good functioning of the system.

It would be simplistic to think that it is possible to understand the complexity of our

client's personality, internal and external functioning, his soul, through a few simple questions.

In principle, our client, even if requesting a constellation, could have difficulties identifying the essential elements to his own query, and for this reason the coach will try to define with his client the most appropriate names to use, always according to the client's mapping. It is about being in line with the client, using a language he knows, and adding some definitions, labels, adjectives, adding new flavours according to his own tastes and operating modes. Each constellation is unique and unrepeatable, because it matches a specific time of our client: his 'present'. After only a moment, everything changes and the client could already have a completely different image and representation of himself.

b. The map and the territory

The representation of the client expresses the situation in the exact timing in which it happens. It is thus important, during the interview prior to the constellation, to remember to represent the current situation and not the desired one to the client. Extract all the elements that belong to the present moment and position them in the constellation.

The coach focuses his attention to:

- Thoughts;
- Emotions;
- The body's movements.

Everything is important, and the interview will be useful in order to understand in which modality our client is, (VAK Visual, Auditory & Kinesthetic) and subsequently to discover his own movements, the emotions that emerge during the coaching session and what new things emerge during the constellation.

c. The map in expansion

In order for the client to take action, this requires a rephrasing of the question, of the possible new hypothesis, and of the solution.

The coach will help rephrase the new context, the new 'frame' in which to identify the appropriate first step. The body is the vehicle that lets the new situation emerge, as well as the new elements to add to the client's map in order to change his perceptions and to take the first steps towards the solution.

It will make it easy and natural for our client to imagine the progress, to increase the room for manoeuvre. It will be like reinforcing the strengths of our coachee, recognising his own resources and skills, in order to find the strength and courage and to look ahead and look at his reality in a new way.

Imagining the new reality and experiencing it will make it possible to anchor the sensation to help the coachee to experience again the same sensation each time he will need it, in an independent and secure way.

3. The competencies

The 11 ICF (International Coaching Federation) competencies are integrated in the systemic coaching practice, reflecting in their complexity, the concepts of balance (giving and receiving), of order and of belonging.

a. Relationships

One of the three basic pillars of systemic coaching, the **exchange of giving and receiving**, and consequently the constant seeking from each system a harmonious balance, is reflected in the following competencies which a coach develops and respects during the systemic practice:

- **Complying to the ethics guidelines and with the professional standards** – Understanding the ethics and the standards of coaching; being able to apply them in an appropriate way in all coaching situations.
- **Establishing trust and closeness with the client** – The ability to create a secure and supportive atmosphere, which generates continuous mutual respect and trust.
- **Managing progress and responsibility** – The ability to focus and maintain attention on what is important for the client and to leave to him the responsibility to act.

b. Purpose

The second pillar upon which systemic practice is based is related to purpose. In each system, it is fundamental to identify and respect the rules, the timing and above all the **order of the relationship**. From there we can understand how much the following competences are important and vital to a good conduct of systemic session:

- **Establishing the coaching agreement** – The ability to understand what is necessary in the specific coaching interaction and to agree on process and relationship terms with the potential or new client.
- **Creating awareness** – The ability to integrate and to evaluate precisely different sources of information, and to offer interpretations which help the client to reach awareness and consequently to reach his goals.
- **Planning and establishing objectives** – The ability to develop and maintain an efficient coaching plan with the client.

c. **Intention**

The third pillar upon which the systemic practice is based is related to **intention**. In each system, it is fundamental to occupy the right **position**, the one which **belongs** to us and to be able to do it the most natural and healthy way.

The following competences will help the coachee to build a discussion where their belonging will be respected:

- **The presence in coaching** – The ability to be completely aware and to create a spontaneous relationship with the client, implying an open style, which is flexible and trusting.
- **Active listening** – The ability to entirely focus on what the client is saying and not saying, to understand the meaning of what is being expressed in the context of the client's desires, and to sustain the expression of oneself for the client.
- **Powerful questions** – The ability to ask questions, which let emerge the necessary information to the surface in order to get the most benefits from the coaching relationship and for the client.
- **Direct communication** – The ability to communicate in an efficient way during the coaching sessions and to use language, which will have the most positive impact on the client.
- **Planning actions** – The ability to create the opportunity to learn with the client, during the coaching and in work/life situations and to undertake action that will bring the intended goals as efficiently as possible.

PART 2 - Systemic Coaching in the Business World

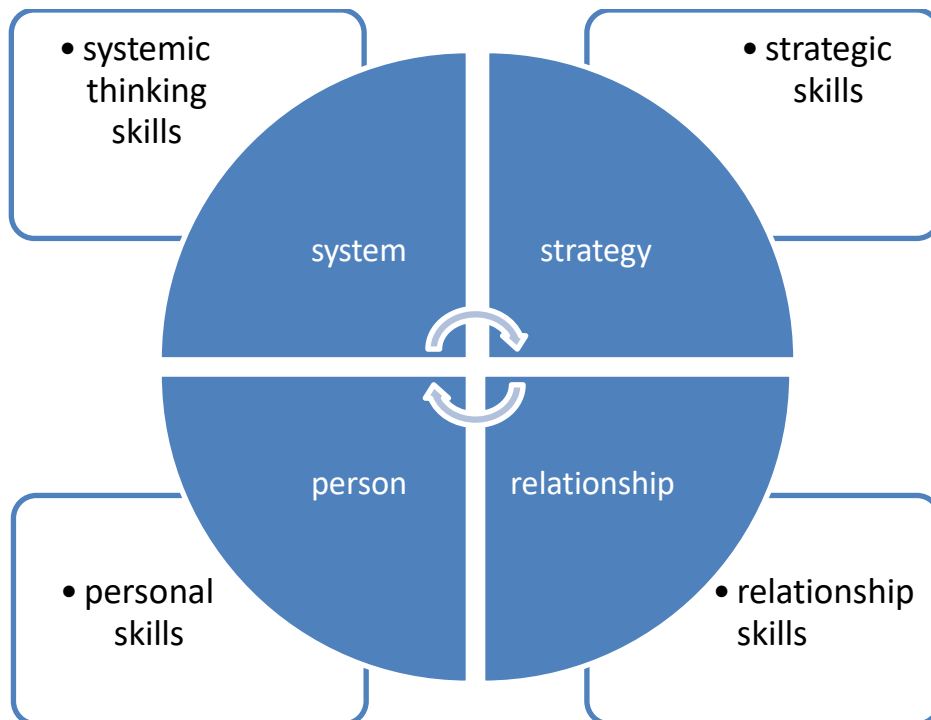
1. A different view of the organigram

In a company, the first image in order to illustrate the functioning of the company is the organigram: pyramid, circular, transversal, inclusive, exclusive, etc. A system represented this way is simplistic and rather imprecise.

I am wondering what could resemble an organigram where satisfaction, responsibility and happiness of the company members are represented. Instead of units or departments where names are written with titles (or positions) and probable and/or improbable functions, what could be an alternative for the company where they emphasise the specialty, the energy level and the responsibility (the ability to respond) of various departments?

2. The systemic leader: the 4 pillars

A leader, who wants to observe his own systemic functioning, could position himself in four quadrants defined like this:



Imagining a board with four quadrants during a systemic coaching session, the problem faced in the session could be represented like this and consequently be observed from four different angles.

The client would then have the possibility to explore, in the four quadrants, different aspects of his query that could add some important elements once broken down and maintained in relationship to each other, which could be useful to untangle the problem and reveal the solution.

The map would expand the meaning and consequently reveal all the aspects, which had previously been undervalued, yet to be thought, hidden, even if present in the phenomenological field of our client.

3. The Systemic "S" in a Company

With the mechanical model, in order to understand the whole, one breaks down the problem, analyses the individual parts and then reconstitute them afterwards.

With the systemic model, the characteristics of the individual parts can on the contrary, be understood only by studying or reading them inside their context, studying the organisation of their relationships.

With the General Theory of Systems (Von Bertalanffy, 1969), the Theory of the Field (K. Lewin), and Cybernetics (Wiener, 1948; Ashby, 1971), a new way of observing the reality is introduced, in which the point of view moves from the 'part' to the 'organisation of the parts', from the 'individual unit' to the 'organized whole'.

Let us imagine that, thanks to the studies on communication by the School of Palo Alto (Watzlawick, Bateson, Jackson et.al., 1971), things like the structural body of a company can be studied and included in its comportemental complexity, thanks to the multiplicity of interconnections that characterise every human phenomenon.

PART 3 - Ladder of Success

- a. Form and language
- b. The basic principles of the method
- c. The business approach
- d. Responsibility
- e. Structure of the systemic management
- f. Objectives
- g. Guidelines to prepare a training in systemic coaching.

a. Form and language

In the systemic world, questions have a fundamental role; open questions encourage the coachee to view his own map in a different way, in order to be able to add information that is apparently not visible.

This is because other than explicit knowledge, it is important on the systemic level to perceive and understand implicit knowledge, a specific language that apparently does not say anything or that is difficult to understand, but when examined attentively, is full of useful information. However, the pieces of the puzzle are still incomplete.

Having gathered explicit and implicit knowledge, the coach who operates at a systemic level helps the coachee to build a Logic model through mental maps, and during the constellation, through a phenomenological representation. The coachee will have the possibility of representing his own question and thus indirectly the solution, through building a differently mapped representation, which is richer, more precise, and complete.

In this new map, emotions and feelings, which are often under-evaluated or underestimated, will come to life and be represented.

It is important to understand which movements of the soul are stimulating our coachee to make space for new possibilities. Through a creative dialogue between coach and coachee, where everything is possible, new bridges can be created, and it will be easier for the coachee to wander through paths which not so long ago seemed impossible.

The simple act of thinking about walking on new paths will bring understanding which enlarges the horizons of a map that no longer represent reality the way the coachee

imagined it at the beginning of the systemic coaching process.

This new representation is powerful when it gives strength and enthusiasm and when the coachee finds new energy to face his own problems. It will thus be possible for our coachee to imagine, represent, come up with new suggestions and consequently enlarge his own horizons in order to dare to explore new possibilities. The coach will verify with the coachee these new possibilities, building new maps and adding all this information, generating from the whole systemic process.

b. The basic principles of the method

Systemic coaching is a mapping of the system, which draws its inspiration from **systemic constellation**, a technique that comes from the family constellations, explored by Bert Hellinger.

Systemic could be defined at the current quantum level, where we are exploring areas related to traditional psychotherapy: to Milton Erickson's hypnotherapy, to Moreno's psychodrama, to Perls's gestalt therapy, to systemic theory, not to mention Jung's assumptions, and to other famous characters who had sensed the potential and the impact of the past generations aspects at symptomatic level.

What is most apparent in the process of this technique is its ability throughout the changes in the constellation setting from the people who represent the different layers of the coachee's system, to access a "collective information field" that continually maintain intact all the events that occurred in a specific system (family, company, religious and/or political).

Some events stay recorded, keeping their memory in this quantum field.

The British biologist Rupert Sheldrake (1) believes that systems are regulated not only by rules known by science, but also by fields he defines as morphogenetic.

Why do many phenomena defy the explanations of conventional biology and physics?

For instance, when laboratory rats in one place have learned how to navigate a new maze, why do rats elsewhere in the world seem to learn it more easily? Rupert Sheldrake describes this process as morphic resonance: the past forms and behaviors of organisms, he argues, influence organisms in the present through direct connections across time and space. Calling into question many of our fundamental concepts about life and consciousness, Sheldrake reinterprets the regularities of nature as being more like habits than immutable laws.

Furthermore, these fields emerged as a creative innovation from nature, but they subsequently became cosmic habits able to impact inanimate and animate elements. This would explain the synchronised crystallisation of complex molecules, simultaneous learning, or any new pathways in a labyrinth of guinea-pig operations, but also the appearance of new words, the learning of techniques (if you consider the case of the hundredth monkey). Sheldrake's theory assumes that, if an individual of a species learns a

(1) Enciclopedia di filosofia, Milano, 2002, s.v. Aristotele e causa M. C. Feloe, Dalla fisica dei quanti alla realtà, Macerata, 2007
R. Sheldrake, A new science of life, 1981

new behavior, **the morphogenetic field changes, through morphic resonance, with a sort of vibration, and transmits itself to the entire species.**

According to researcher Maria Caterina Feloe, since life is consciousness and everything is inter-connected, by applying Sheldrake's ideas to the development of the states of consciousness, we can infer that also those kind of states are related to morphogenetic fields. In this context, the so-called thought-patterns could be able to function as magnets to other similar thought-patterns, attracting persons with comparable characteristics.

The conceptual elaboration briefly presented shows similarities with the Aristotelian philosophy, in relation to those that the Stagirita defines as formal causation (**morphogenetic field**) and material causation: the former is actually the model, the root cause, the rule of something; the latter is the matter.

Also the expression 'morphogenetic field' refers to the thoughts of the 'master of those who know': the Greek word *morphé* means 'form', understood in its whole range of possible meanings, also quite difficult to conceptualise. The link between the morphogenetic field and the energy field mimics the Aristotelian union of formal and material elements.

Among the other innumerable fundamentals from which the knowledge of systemic discipline draws, numerous researchers and professors have influenced this practice and some particularly drive my unconditional admiration:

- Solution Focused Therapy (De Shazer)
- Systemic School of Heidelberg (Stiering)
- Structure of the Mind (Kahneman)
- The Systemic Management (Rosset, Senoner)
- Learning Organization (Senge)
- Theory U (Otto Scharmer)
- Sense Making (Weick)

c. The business approach

Systemic coaching can be integrated in a decision-making process, problem solving, transformation, mediation, coaching, etc. in order to access the implicit knowledge and the emotional intelligence of the leader. Working the systemic way creates a dynamic image of reality that allows on one hand to identify profoundly with a situation in order to experience it and explore it, and on the other hand to dissociate from it, observe it from various perspectives and analyse it rationally.

It is an extremely practical and operational tool that allows, among other things, to explain intuition, visualise the core of the question, simulate alternatives, stimulate creativity, align the visions of a team, access collective thinking, and create a tangible and precise image of a situation.

What are the advantages of this method?

1. **Diagnostic:** The method allows the coachee to represent spatially an image of the mental maps that implicitly drive our behaviours in a specific situation. Mental traps, obstacles, vicious circles become visible and perceived at an emotional level. The systemic image of a situation allows to us to reap its essence in a precise and tangible way.
2. **Developing solutions:** systemic coaching allows the coachee to simulate the evolution of a situation and to experience various possible behaviours. The effect of each choice are tested at both logical and emotional level. The filter of rational thinking can be suspended in order to allow the emergence of creative solutions. Alternatives, which had been previously unthinkable, can reveal themselves as decisive elements for the solution.
3. **Decision-making processes:** The systemic approach allows the coachee to reduce the complexity of a situation by collecting its essential structures. A spatial model of these structures allows the coachee to explore the various choices available in order to understand their feasibility and their probable effect on the problem in its entirety.

d. Responsibility

I would like to talk about the responsibility of the coach towards the coachee. One of my primary concerns, as a coach, is to try to help who reaches out to me in a responsible way and who is open to change.

It is fundamental in the work that the coachee approaches this practice freely and free of barriers of any nature. The systemic query or question asks for maximum honesty from the coachee and maximum sensitivity and expectations without intentions from the coach.

In fact, it is not sure that the client will already see a change or will feel free to act. The coach must not force this process, even if the solution seems evident and so easy.

With systemic work, the coach has to demonstrate an ability to “hold the space” for the coachee, stimulating him with powerful questions and to wait for the reactions of the client. It is a dance where the coach cannot allow himself to be sloppy and at the same time has to fine-tune himself to the client with all his senses open and being alert, in order to perceive when the client is ready to change.

e. Structure of systemic management

During a systemic coaching session, one can act according to a fixed scheme or plan, or according to one’s own intuition, in order to respond the best way to the coachee’s requirements.

During a workshop in Milan, organised by Georg Senoner, I learned some techniques to gather information during the brainstorming with the client and helped him map them to create an image of a situation at the very moment when the client sits down and starts speaking with the coach.

By collecting information, we can allow our client to read his own mental map, without interrupting ourselves to take notes or to write. We give him this physical space to connect himself to his own mind and then re-create his map with what he sees in his mind, sometimes in a mixed-up way.

After this, it is easier to reconstruct the situation together and to assign a name and a voice to his vision, and to choose the resources, the persons, the pieces to move on his chessboard in order to reach a possible solution.

We proceed in the following sequence: we enter in contact with the client in order to

prepare to co-creation and to create a **relationship**. Through some direct questions during the systemic interview, we can enter into our client's world (**pacing**).

After the interview, the client will have to query the coach. The dialogue continues according to a systemic model, thus a mapping model, in order to guide him to the choice of elements to be considered in the constellation.

Subsequently, we help the client to create a **representation** of his own mental map, consisting of these three elements:

- His current situation.
- His evolution and movement.
- The situation that reflects the response to his initial question.

Once we decided the structure of the constellation, we proceed to the translation, in a verbal language, of the elements, which were chosen for the representation, in order to take action.

The client will have his representation, thanks to some paper sheets labeled according to the elements he chose, and moving inside his map, physically, with his body, he will access all the hidden and implicit information that emerge during his journey.

Without interpreting the individual elements, the coach will serve as a mirror for the client, positioning himself on each individual sheet, asking the coachee to successively experiment by himself.

Without making a suggestion to the client, the coach will function as an antenna and position himself on the sheet that represents a certain important element in the client's map. He will offer the coachee a phenomenology, giving form to a concept, an idea, a feeling. The pawns, exposed this way, will start to move until the coachee completes his own chess game, and creates a new image of his own map, already including the possible solution.

f. Figurative pattern and summary of the process

Imagine a recipe where three steps are necessary to reach success: the ingredients, the right quantities, and the time.

With systemic coaching, we could say that the ingredients are the following:

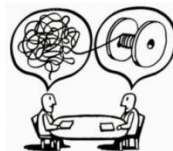
The contact with the coachee; the interview and the questions; the model that is adapted to the coachee; his map and the translation of the map to activate change.



The right quantity is by providing a great openness of heart and mind, no harm, a sensitive, welcoming state and a sustained 'presence'.



Regarding the time, it is important to activate the mental maps of the coachee in the right order, developing hypotheses and then testing them, daring to enter our coachee's map of the world and at the right time accessing new horizons, guiding him through various perspectives.



The question is already the response; it contains in itself all the elements to explore.

f. Objectives

"A picture is worth a thousand words"

The main duty of each coach and business consultant is to help the clients gain clarity in situations where the information becomes too mixed-up.

In order to manage the rising **complexity of organisational dynamics**, we need innovative approaches that can treasure the whole capital of expertise of the company.

Thanks to the systemic coaching, it is possible to draw a **tangible and precise overview** of the situation that is faced. One activates the implicit knowledge and intuition of the team, developing and stimulating creative responses. The result is a clear and practical indication to the next step that brings us closer to the objective.

With systemic coaching, we help the client **understand a situation**, the way it presents itself at this time in his mind and not how he would like it to be, or how he thinks it should be, or how he remembers it was in the past.

We help to shed some light on the **subtle perceptions** the person has gained over time, mostly unconsciously, and to **bypass the illusory veil** resulting from fears and desires.

The client can realise the changes he will have to put into action, the courage that his choice will require, and **the price he will have to pay** in order to do what he feels is right.

Systemic coaching allows the client to **recognise the mental traps** that induce him in certain situations to repeat actions and behaviours he would like to avoid.

This awareness acquired during the systemic coaching session allows our client to let go of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours and to test new leads which will allow him to reach his objective.

g. Guidelines to prepare a training in systemic coaching for a company

During a systemic coaching process, we develop:

- The tools to design the mental maps to analyse complex situations in the work and organisational context in order to develop innovative solutions.
- The gathering of information and the underlying question, so that our client feels understood, heard and guided.
- The trusting relationship in order to allow our client to imagine the various professional situations in which he needs support:
 - Decision- making;

- Conflict resolution;
- Negotiation;
- Team management;
- Change management.

During a coaching session, the attention is focused on those elements that can develop the potential of the coachee, to activate his personal resources and to develop his entrepreneurial strategies.

Everything is possible: we can do a spatial representation or use sheets of paper. During a spatial representation, the person who is representing something important for the coachee (i.e. customers, freedom, money, family, and partner) is supporting the coachee and he will not harm in any way the contents of the coachee's constellation. This person will serve as a sounding board to help the coachee to see the hidden information that finally comes to the surface.

Phenomenologically, the energy of the field will be unfolded and new information will have an impact directly on the body of the person. *"The largely non-verbal language exchange experienced in a constellation frees leaders, coaches, consultants from their familiar stories and allows a deeper systemic picture to emerge"* (J. Whittington, 2016 ed Kogan Page)

The mind is not in a particular mode of activity, and the person in the spatial representation will move and change position simply connecting to the wisdom of the quantum field of the coachee. Everything is energy, and phenomenology itself helps to lend a shape and a name to the emotion. The cognitive part stays silent, it is not active. The representative trusts his own sensations, which are dictated to him by the situation, he stays, open the field where he is, the coachee's constellation.

Once the exercise is finished, there is no need to comment, and the representatives will go back to their places. The exercise is concluded by the facilitator calling out the name of each participant. The client thanks everyone and keeps to himself the new image of his own situation. The image is already a step towards the solution, is the solution itself. Moreover, the image is helpful.

A constellation:

The question is already the solution

Take two chairs, sit on the first one on the right and invite your client to sit next to you. Ask him to close his eyes and imagine a situation. Do not speak and do not do anything else than sensing his presence next to you.

You will observe that when proposing this type of exercise, the coachee will change position, expression and consequently it could even happen that your coachee is changing the question.

Offer all the time he needs, everything is meaningful, keep listening, get in contact with

the 'non-verbal language' while gathering information about what you are seeing, hearing and perceiving.

It is not necessary to know all the details of the situation. Proceed this way: ask your coachee to imagine the same situation and to think of a goal to reach, it may be an objective, a resolution, a change.

Continue the process with asking him what he is thinking. Then ask your coachee to write the request on a sheet of paper. Once written down, invite your coachee to position the sheets on the ground. Subsequently, the same way, he will have to write down his name on another sheet of paper.

At this point, there will be two sheets on the ground in front of him, the sheet with the **question** and the sheet with his name (the **protagonist**).

Continue the exercise by asking your coachee to observe the scene (from his seat), and to express the feelings he experiences.

At this time, as a coach, walk towards the sheet with the coachee's question and position yourself on the sheet, without any intention, as a simple visitor. Your positioning will allow the coachee to observe the scene from another point of view.

Then change position and go on the sheet with the name of the coachee: wait for a few minutes, observe what your coachee does, who is still sitting on the chair, and invite him to go position himself on the sheet with the question.

At this point, ask your coachee how he feels and if he needs something specific. In case he wants to add an element to the constellation, something important that he already has (a **resource**) or something he wants to get rid of (an **obstacle**); ask him to write down the name of this third element on a sheet of paper and to position this sheet in his constellation.

At this point, invite the coachee to go to the sheet where he is the protagonist. In the meantime, change position and go on the third sheet, where the coachee has written the resource or the obstacle.

Observe how the coachee behaves and what his movements, his expressions are. Ask him how he feels and if he wants to say something.

Taking the position chosen by the coachee, the one he has chosen to represent his resource or his obstacle, you (the coach) will offer him (the coachee) the possibility to feel how his constellation changes adding various elements in it. He will then see how these added elements change the shape of his constellation.

Each movement of the coach allows for new possibilities and amplifies the coachee's map. The coachee will be able to explore the quality of the relationship between himself and the resource and/or the obstacle, after he acknowledges the sensations of the

relationship between himself and his question.

The next step will be to ask the client how his emotions and his thoughts have changed, and above all, where he wants to position the fourth element, the **solution**.

The initial question already presents the solution in most of the cases; often, the client does not dare to think of something different, because it is easier for the brain to retrace a path that it already knows and where it feels secure, even if it is inappropriate or is not useful anymore.

The coach will serve as a mirror and will provide our coachee with the possibility of moving himself into a situation he does not know. Thanks to the trust between the coach and coachee, the client will be able to experiment new paths and allow himself the possibility to explore new opportunities and thus to move towards the solution.

It is important for the coach to remain neutral each time the client changes role and asks the client how he feels and what has changed. Changing roles and inviting the client to explore the relationship with the solution from the position of the resource and/or obstacle, will inevitably produce a change in perceptions.

Exploring what changes after each movement offers various opportunities, amplifies the map of the coachee's territory and stimulates the client in looking at his question from a different perspective. It is also important, at each change of role, to invite the client to try a different bodily movement in order for him to find the most appropriate one at that time.

The purpose of such an exercise is to reveal to the client which opportunities he has not considered yet, to bring his attention to various aspects, to discover relationships, to link the facts, the persons and the events together; to connect the various pieces of his puzzle.

The map will be enriched, it will be complete and will consequently offer different indications, and will offer the possibility to our client to start a new path and to take action.

The exercise might be concluded by asking our client which next step he is ready to effectively take.

The resolution process is initiated. The first step, the most important has been taken and the client will feel relieved and light.

Conclusions

Gunthard Weber, the founder of organisational constellations said 'organisational constellation work' needs to come more into the hands of business consultants for it to develop and become sustainable. It is not easy to adapt to the business world. (Roswita Konigswieser- Ed. Carl Auer 2005)

It needs good people who understand both this work and the organisational system with

ideas on how to develop it so it works well in the organisational context.

Only a few decades ago, it would have been very difficult to imagine the opportunity to offer systemic coaching in an organisation.

However, learning and adapting the systemic constellation is not an easy task, especially in those organisations where a well-established hierarchy has developed a top-down control approach.

Since systemic coaching is ultimately a question of attitude, this approach involves far more than simply know – how, expertise, and techniques that can be learned in a book.

My expertise, my learning process and especially my University experience at Politecnico di Milano has shown me how difficult this approach can be to learn and to teach, but at the same time how powerful and effective it can be. One of the main claims of this approach is to be not always immediately performing to the high expectations of those leaders who do not want to fail, and avoid difficult issues.

I am regularly confronted with coachees, managers and leaders with no experience of systemic coaching. They think they can change people's attitudes and organisational behaviour, by simply changing the organigram or organising a meeting, or writing rules and regulations. Systemic coaching can accompany leaders who need time and it is an art to understand and patiently unravel rigid knots.

My experience has shown me how important is to keep a flexible mind, as well as a calm and patient attitude. Our service to big companies can make the difference when we are capable of coaching and managing innovative leaders who will transform their internal process expertise, and help their organisation to grow and develop.

Systemic coaching can support all those people who believe that “the challenges of life are life itself”. Challenges can be taken as an opportunity to test this approach and shift from victimisation to taking responsibility and action. Our own experience is a small step towards the evolution of our species.