EUROPE, USA AND THE CARRIBEAN – DEEP DEMOCRACY, COLLABORATION AND STRATEGY IN A GLOBAL 500 COMPANY

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In the section in blue that you will find below, you can find highlights of Amy and Arnold Mindell's Worldwork theory. They explain some of the terms and concepts that are used in this case description. If you are already familiar with Worldwork, or less interested in the theoretical aspects, please go directly to the beginning of the case description below.

Highlights of Worldwork Theory

Here are some highlights of the theory and methodology required for a better understanding of the case description. For more information on terms and concepts, please read the introductory article Worldwork – Transformation in Organizations, Communities, Business and the Public Space.

According to the Worldwork paradigm, an organization or group functions on different levels, which act as parallel worlds. One level is the everyday reality, consisting of organizational facts, people, structures, goals, strategies, and problems that need solutions. On another level, which is self-organizing, a group is structured by an organizing principle, a field. The field distributes the various polarities, or positions, within the group. On a self-organizing level, some issues that are considered "problems" are in fact attempts of the system to balance itself. Many of these self-balancing tendencies are related to polarities, where only one side is directly visible, and the other side is a non-local presence within a group. For example, listen to a leader saying: "We are strong and fearless, and will go on no matter what!", and you can sense the polarity in the group, a doubter and skeptic, for whom those words are meant, an imagined opponent, who believes we are hopeless and we don't want to go on. As facilitators, we can make roles out of these positions in order to make them more visible, and give them a chance to interact. Imagine it as if the group is following the script of an invisible director - something like a larger non-local group mind - to perform a play. When you try to lead a group, you might sense that an

invisible hand was working against you, when in fact it is this self-organizing tendency that is pulling in a different direction.

Roles can be further differentiated into consensus reality roles and ghost roles. **Consensus reality roles** (also called "CR roles," or I sometimes just use the generic term "role") are positions that belong to the central belief system of the culture or group, and thereby are generally accepted by that group. They can be voiced without provoking a strong group reaction. In contrast, **ghost roles** are behaviors that we cannot voice, because they are not "acceptable" or "rational" within a given organizational culture, or outside of what it considers "reality." Although ghost roles are not explicit, everyone feels their presence and suffers from them. Ghost roles can also be detected in unintended communication.

CR roles and ghost roles perform a sort of shadow play. Imagine a puppet theatre, in which two puppets are having a dialogue, and behind a lit cotton screen of the puppet theatre, you see the contours of a third puppet. The two front puppets are caught in a dialogue, but once in a while the puppet behind the screen interjects a sentence. The puppets in front seem to be unaware of the shadow puppet behind the screen, and tend to believe that the other visible puppet had made the remark. In a puppet theatre, this leads to amusing misunderstandings. Amusing to the spectators, but not to the puppets, who are actually distressed. The level of the distressed puppets who can see the shadow puppet would be the consensus reality level; the level that includes the shadow puppet would be the self-organizing level, or what we call the dream level.

By the way, the above example about the audience but not the puppets enjoying the play also holds true for group processes. Many of the interactions, if you are caught in one polarity or role, can be very painful, but once you understand the structure, speak ghost role, behind the confusion, it might even produce a smile on your face.

We are all aware of these dynamics. When we talk about what "really" goes on in a group, as opposed to what is being said on the surface, we are in the realm of roles and ghost roles. The roles speak the appropriate sentences, use the appropriate communication style, and have the appropriate viewpoints, whatever they might be in a given organizational culture, but we hear the whispers of the ghost roles in the insinuations and subtext, the gossip, the lack of reactions to some of the things that are being said.

One reason that groups often avoid making unintended communication explicit, or giving voice to the ghost roles, is the fear that the consequent conflicts will be irresolvable. This makes sense from a consensus reality perspective, where we are used to not having our conflicts resolved and where relationships can be harmed forever, because someone spoke "the truth." From a Worldwork perspective, this makes sense from a different angle. Roles and ghost roles are non-local in the sense that they belong to everyone. Therefore, processing ghostroles means to realize, that you too

are like the person, role or group, that you thought was responsible for all the difficulties. This is also why if a person who has taken on an unpopular role within an organization leaves, someone else will often pick up the same role or some of its aspects. Although ghost roles are most easily projected onto other groups, they are also present in one's own group, where they remain marginalized. In the case description, you can see how both subgroups that are being described project a particular behavior of their own group on to another.

These dynamics are why it often takes an emotional or charged interaction to understand fully how these roles are present in one's own group. The process of gaining self-awareness about one's own nature cannot easily happen on a rational and linear level only, as it is precisely that level, which often contains the belief systems that marginalize the very issue that a group needs to wake up to. Because of this mirroring process, the only resolution in that sense is a raised awareness, of how we are the other, how we ourselves are part of and contribute to what upsets us most. No wonder we shy away from direct confrontations.

The process of achieving this awareness can highly emotional. It often forces us to traverse a period of escalation and confrontation. If we are able to do that, and at the same time follow our total experience with awareness, step by step, we will eventually come to appreciate that these roles are present within the whole system. The total information or knowledge contained within the roles now becomes explicit and can be used creatively by the whole group. From this perspective, disturbances or problems are potentials that are crying out to be used! It is the facilitator's job to create a safe container for the participants, and to make sure, that at the end of a group process, conflicts are resolved, and everyone has understood new dimensions about the problems that were being presented. Participants and clients not only have the right, but also the duty to be skeptical and be concerned about the outcomes. It belongs to the work of the facilitator to notice and relate to these fears and make sure that everyone is protected.

Sustainable facilitation is based on discovering and supporting the basic self-facilitative tendencies of the collective. Roles which actually facilitate the entire process are themselves contained in all groups, yet these roles are not always recognized or expressed by the group itself. One example of these roles is eldership. Eldership is based on a warm detachment that understands life and people as a developing and unfolding mystery and therefore respects and supports every person and tendency, while still being able to create boundaries in a non-offensive way. It is rooted in a person's convictions about the meaning of life, and the role that spirit and nature play. These convictions don't necessarily have to be explicit, but are often just felt in a person's heart. The elder remains centered in her or his own beliefs about the core values that make living together on this planet

possible. However, these beliefs are not forced upon others, but rather modeled in a way that inspires others to follow. Eldership is independent of age and is expressed as often in ordinary people as it is in leaders and facilitators.

The Case Description

Background and preliminary comments

In this case description, you can read the report of a strategic development retreat, which we facilitated within the leadership team of a Global 500 corporation. (The Global 500 is a list of the largest 500 companies in the world.) This group has an international presence, and its headquarters are in the United States. Its activities span several different and very diverse industry sectors. We are two external consultants, who organize and facilitate an annual strategy retreat with the executive management branch of one of the industry sectors. The group consists of 50 to 60 people. More than half are top senior executives, the others are experts from various levels of the organization and from countries from all over the world, who for different reasons were invited to participate in the retreat. These retreats address many issues, and are intended to create a common vision and a roadmap for the coming year. Although the primary focus is on general strategy development, many group members are also interested in working out team issues as they come up, which are considered to interfere with overall organizational efficiency. Smaller organizational problem spots that are possible learning sources for company-wide development are often included in the agenda. We assist the group in creating an agenda, and guide the group through it. When "hotspots" appear (moments in which the group shows the potential to polarize around a particular issue) we try to establish a consensus in favor of or against the group delving more deeply deeper into the problem area.

Thus during the retreat, linear group processes with goal setting, task allocation, budget planning and other such activities organically mix with highly emotional group processes,

relationship work, and visioning. Towards the end of the retreat, we help the organization, often in a highly energized session, to rediscover its myth. The organizational myth contains the essence of an organization, its uniqueness, its role in the world at large, and the meaning it has for the development of humanity. Every organization has such a myth, regardless of its size and mission statement. The myth is a pattern that encompasses the various manifestations of the organization, and can even be found hidden away in what at times looks the blatant errors or malfunctioning of a group.

Often, the visions of the founders are aspects of the organizational myth, and also the beginning difficulties, etc, which are still mentioned in the hallways of the executive floors. However, an organizational myth goes beyond that. Please read more in the special section on organizational myth. This myth needs to be rediscovered and remembered sporadically, as it breathes new life into routines, brings fresh excitements to our work and makes our activities more meaningful. We use the final session to get to the essence of the process of the overall retreat and unfold the organizational myth from that. Finally, we then facilitate translation of this myth into a final vision and use it to frame the overall strategic approach in terms of the organizational development and the change management tasks ahead. This process shows how an organizational myth is an organic quality inherent in all groups, and once discovered gives rise to a vision. It's a powerful experience to discover the spirit that brought the organization so far to wake up to the changes that want to happen and then finding a form to co-create them. Finally, we provide awareness techniques to track the changes during the implementation period over the months to come.

In the case of the organization described here, we are facilitating the retreat for the third consecutive year. After some initial skepticism from some of the participants about the value of working on the different levels (which gave us an opportunity to explain how our methods add value) the group is now excited about exploring possible problem areas. If the majority of the

group considers a problem area too inconsequential to merit discussion, but others disagree, we set up subgroups or offer one-on-one resolutions outside of the regular meeting hours.

Preparation for the retreat

We typically spend up to two weeks preparing these sessions. The preparation includes:

Peer coaching and preparation:
Before going into any organization, especially for the first time, we feel apprehensive. Instead of trying to overcome our fears, we explore them. They can tell us a great deal about the organization, that our normal rational view has ignored.
In this case, we worked on our nervousness about one member within the sponsoring leadership group. It was his first year in that organization and he was very critical of the whole project, which he obviously believed was a waste of time and money. My first judgmental reaction was to think he was uneducated and didn't know enough about a system approach in general or Worldwork in particular. In the peer coaching session, my co-facilitator supported me to do a role play in which I assumed the role of that person. When playing this role, I suddenly found that the background and experience as a banker and investor, that this person brought into the group, was not taken seriously enough in this group of strategic thinker and leadership experts. This was very helpful to me, because one of the topics in the retreat, which is not discussed in this case description, was to debate the continuation of a particular industrial activity, which held considerable emotional value in terms of the company's history and tradition, yet no longer made sense in terms of its profit. The company had had this discussion for three years in a row, and decided year after year to continue it, as a symbol of their roots and history so to speak, and as a trademark of their mission statement. For them, it turned out, that this particular business activity was considered a figurehead for the company's relationship to the environment and diversity, both being an important part of the original vision for this group, which they wanted to be seen and recognized for. Because of my inner work,

I felt more competent when this discussion came up to support the strong view of the new member to discontinue the activity in question, and could assist in offering an alternative, to make this tradition explicit and frame it as an essence, and how it was present in some of the group's most recent activities. This process finally culminated a year down the road in a new company statement regarding its relationship to diversity and the environment, framing it in context of all their business activities and corporate governance. I mention this for two reasons: first to show how the facilitator's own fears and reactions can be a source of useful information about the group as a whole, if they are unfolded, and second, to show how these values also play out in the case description below, where the discussion focuses on another topic.

During the preparation period, we facilitators must undergo a peer coaching process in which we work with each other for greater awareness about our own agendas, questions, fears, and reservations that we may have about the upcoming event. We also resolve possible teamwork issues, like competition and jealousy. Simultaneously, we contact our sponsoring leadership group to assess the present situation, clarify their goals and agenda, and receive updates on the latest developments. A week before the actual meetings, we invite all the participants to join us on our extranet. The extranet is a secure online environment which can be accessed via the internet, and that allows for sharing of documents, poll taking, group discussions, the use of an online whiteboard, and the possibility for confidential one-on-one coaching interactions. This online facility provides a space to modify the agenda and presort topics before the meeting, and gives a preliminary overview of possible hotspots. We also use the extranet after the retreat, for debriefing of possible remaining issues that surface in the days after the retreat, and to assist with the implementation of the change process.

As part of our preparation, we also research numerous content questions that touch on the topic of the coming facilitation. During the preparation phase of the case that is described here,

we became aware of a potential topic, expansion into the Caribbean space, which led us to study associated aspects. Not only did we read the company's annual report, we also had one of our associates conduct independent research into the world market situation for the particular industry sector of the department that was seeking an expansion, the company's dynamic strategic positioning within the global market, and the executive's rationale for the expansion of that sector into the Caribbean space. We also studied the economic situation of the chosen country, and one of our associates researched and created a cultural profile of the three main groups that were involved in the project. We are great fans of over-preparation, which we believe is an indispensable condition for successful facilitation and consultation. It's part of our own Total Quality Management (TQM) approach. We have found that this extra knowledge invites more credibility and trust, allows participants to speak more freely and directly, while at the same time assisting us in adding content to the discussion. However, once we begin to facilitate, this knowledge remains in the background, and we follow the spontaneous emergence of the group process, using the information from our preparation only if needed within a particular context.

The Case Description

The process that you are about to read is meant to give you an overview of how a group can work on an issue by changing levels. The description leaves out many facilitation details. It doesn't focus on the exact interventions and the complexity of level changes. It therefore suggests a sense of ease and speed in what is a highly charged interaction. Although, if a facilitator has the necessary understanding of the various roles present, the group process should have a sense of ease and effortlessness, and convey the impression that it all was an organic flow. If you are interested in learning more about the micro dynamics of the Worldwork facilitation, please go to the section in the website, that zooms in to one of these facilitative interactions and explains breath by breath how this works, so you can understand more about the complexity of the methods and interventions.

When reading through it, you might be surprised at the speed at which it all occurs. Part of that is because of I have often used a summary of what actually happened. Nevertheless, the whole process took a little under an hour. The reason for the speed is the use of the ghost role and the concept of edges, which reduces cycling, the phenomena that both sides go back and forth with repetitive arguments .

Opening Scene

It is Day Two of the meeting. This afternoon, the whole group will meet. This afternoon's agenda includes a topic regarding the development and progress of the new branch of one of the company's production groups in the Caribbean, the first for this production line in this part of the world. The rumor during the break is that this branch has been fraught with problems, and that the intention of the meeting is to bury the project. Brigitte, the project leader, opens with a report, summarized as follows:

> "We have come across some problems so far. There were problems within the supply chain of the builders. Some materials got lost, vanished, or were the wrong kind. In addition, there were some personnel problems. Workers either didn't appear when they were supposed to, or walked out on their jobs. We had to hire non-skilled workers to meet one deadline, which resulted in additional problems, setting us even further behind. The communication between the corporate project management and the local team is often complicated. But we think we can overcome the problems with a renewed effort."

Brigitte, while trying to convey confidence and control , sounds frustrated, looking down at her report and avoiding everyone's eyes.

Alonzo, the leader of the Caribbean team, now speaks up. What follows is a summary of his remarks:

> "Yes, there have been difficulties. We don't have the necessary infrastructure yet in place. It's sometimes difficult to find some of the materials that we need – sometimes they are not available. Also, we were slowed down by extreme weather conditions...but we are doing our best, and we will finish the project as close to the deadline as possible. I am sure we can work out the differences."

Alonzo sounds very detached, as if talking about someone else. He too, avoids looking at anyone. The atmosphere is tense.

Other executives pose some questions; rather than answering, Brigitte and Alonzo basically reiterate what they have already said. Several of the leading executives are now nodding, indicating that they understand, but their facial expressions are skeptical, someone is frowning, some brows are knit, someone leans away from the speaker, another person crosses his arms. One executive proposes in a neutral manner to give the project one more month, before deciding among the immediate stake holders how to continue. Several people agree and the group seems ready to move on. The group atmosphere is stale and somewhat heavy; Brigitte looks upset. The group follows our suggestion to spend more time exploring the issues surrounding the project.

Analysis: *The two sides have stated their initial positions both sides appeared to know what the other one was going to say. No doubt, that discussion had happened several times before. They have transmitted both intended communications and unintended communications, or double signals as we refer to it.*

On a "measurable" or consensus reality level is the content of this discussion, which signals a mutual understanding of the problems, and an agreement to keep trying to resolve them. This is the intended communication. Both sides have a tacit preference

for rational linear reporting, as if they were reciting items on a shopping list, and the suppression of the open conflict is palpable in the atmosphere and is expressed through tone of voice and body language. These last aspects, tone of voice and body language, are unintended communications. We distinguish another level, a self-organizing level, which we also call the dreaming level. It is self-organizing because we cannot control it, and we are not identified with what is happening "to us."
It is on this self-organizing level that the "ghost roles" can be found in unintended and often non-verbal communications. In this case it is the anger in the voices, the discontent of the executives listening to the progress report, and the general atmosphere of depression and frustration at the end. What is being postponed is not so much the decision, but the escalation of the conflict that is present in the non-verbal communication. We think that the group could benefit from escalating now.

Many parallel worlds are present at this point. For example, from one viewpoint, often described as a democratic-humanistic one, you can argue that the headquarters, with its predominantly European and American thinking style, needs to open up to diversity and accept the different cultural values of the Caribbean crew, and learn to work with them. On other side of that polarity, is the viewpoint of organizational viability, or corporate strategy. There you might argue that it is time to cancel the project, as it is costing too much, and endangering the competitiveness of the entire organization.

These viewpoints are only the tip of the iceberg. Behind them are issues of the development of the globalization, and tied in with this, a basic discourse about what is progress, democracy, and what values will help us to grow and flourish on this planet. Within this debate is the discussion about cultural differences and the evolution of societies, which appear as time spirits, so to speak on the local stage of the play on corporate culture and strategy. Whereas the stage might be local and roles played out by the local actors, the roles that are being played can be found all over the globe.

From the democratic-humanistic viewpoint, for example, the success or failure of globalization depends on the ability of those with more economic resources to relate to cultural styles in other areas of the world, and to allow for an empowering experience. This position would argue that if people do not learn to appreciate other cultural styles, there will be no sustainable resolutions, but rather revolt and rebellion. From the viewpoint of organizational survival, corporate viability is threatened in a competitive world. It is argued that if there is no organization left, there will be no people with jobs with whom to discuss democratic values. From a Worldwork perspective, both of these viewpoints are partial realities; they are parallel worlds. Both must be correct and complementary, since they are part of the same field. Combined with additional viewpoints and parallel worlds, they represent the entire reality. With the introduction of the concept of **Deep Democracy** *and its methods for working with these polarities, we hope to give voice to unintended communications for the accessibility of as much information as possible to the organization as a whole. The potential crisis is not a problem, but the system's attempt to balance itself. The facilitator's job is to create the boundary conditions within which this can happen safely.*

Intervention: *Our goal is to help both sides to go over the edge and represent the ghost roles, in this case the positions that are politically incorrect.*

Voicing the Ghost Role: Deep Democracy Beyond Political Correctness

One of the facilitators starts out on the headquarters' side and obtains permission to voice a ghost role, after reassuring the other side that she will be on their side in a moment. The facilitator says:

> "If I were part of the headquarters, I would think: This is not going anywhere. It was a mistake in the first place - we will have the same problems with the

plant on a continuous basis. Let's abort the whole operation. They are not developed and educated enough, and too 'flaky,'" and don't see the opportunity we offer them. Let's build in a place where we will have less of these problems. I can't say that out loud, or we will have a big brawl in here, because everyone will be insulted."

Some people actually smile, and one person unconsciously nods a little when she hears that spelled out. Others protest -- no, such a thought would never cross their minds. Interestingly enough, one of the Caribbean team members also smiles and looks relieved. Another team member looks furious.

Analysis: *One side has gone over the edge, and escalated by making a "politically incorrect" statement. Now comes the facilitation of the response from the other side.*

The Caribbean team leader first answers rationally, repeating that the team is doing its best. The smile as well as the fury that we noticed when the role was played out, is a ghost role that needs to be unfolded.

The facilitator inquires first about the smile. The person who smiled answers right away that it is a relief to hear these words spoken out loud. She says she often feels this way when she interacts with that group, but it's never said. The facilitator understands this answer as positive feedback for continuing to unfold this position, and receives permission to voice the ghost role for the Caribbean team. He says:

"If I were you, I would think the following: they never understood us. They are arrogant and greedy, and instead of helping us to get this done, they constantly criticize us and look down on us. Obviously they have no clue about who we are."

"Yes!"

one of the Caribbean knowledge workers exclaims.

"They always treat us as if we were stupid and lazy."

Then, turning to the American project leader, the knowledge worker replies:

"You seem to think that if we were not constantly supervised, we would all take off and go to the beach for the day."

The atmosphere has changed. It is now electric and everybody looks wide awake.

Analysis: This is an escalation with mutual reproaches. Both sides have escalated and broken out of the group's usual communication style and state of mind. It is up to the facilitator to frame this new development and to create a safe environment in which to find a sustainable outcome. First, the group needs to be supported in having gone over the edge – in allowing change in.

The facilitator frames the change. She says:

"Congratulations, you are both impressive; this is the first step for the resolution. Notice how powerful you both have become. It's this power that will solve the problems, not only the politeness that I sensed before. It's this power that you now both display that is going to finish the project."

Both sides breathe a little easier.

Both parts that are being criticized are ghost roles, unpopular positions that no one can identify with. Because no one identifies with these positions, the information behind them remains hidden, and we can therefore only look at them judgmentally. In order to resolve this dilemma, we need to pass through the

emotional non-linear process that we are now in, and get to the essence of these roles. Look at how these sides appear to one another:

The headquarters' side*: an arrogant, inflated western mindset that thinks it can do everything better, faster, and more intelligently, and that is cold, mechanistic, distant, greedy and ignorant.*
The Caribbean team's side*: a lazy, sabotaging, ignorant, undeveloped person, who lives in fantasyland, and doesn't understand that problems need to be solved immediately and on a material level .*

The intervention is meant to help each side to identify with some aspects of the accusation, so that the actual processes behind the stereotypes can be revealed. This is a complex matter, in which the facilitator can use her own eldership and leadership. Read the abbreviated version of how it continued:

Ghost Role and Role Switch:

The facilitator points out that most accusations hold a bit of truth, and that either side can help to create a sustainable outcome by picking up the accusation first. Alonzo, the Caribbean team leader, looks at the facilitator, indicating that he might want to try first. The facilitator picks up the cue and says:

> "Alonzo, maybe you want to try first, and I'll assist, and then I'll help the other side."

Alonzo speaks right away and looks now straight at the other group:

> "Well it's true; we have a different experience of time and life. For us, time is not a thing that can be wasted or used. Time allows us the opportunity to be and to live, to have relationships and to be with friends. Our lives are rich because of our experiences and bonds, and because of our joy, not because of

the profits we make. We think that time and the freedom to spend it in the way that we want is the most precious gift."

As he speaks, you start to notice a shift in attitude. Everyone is impressed with his ability to face the issues on the table, and to own his part in creating the problem. As he is completing the last sentence about time and freedom being a gift, one of the senior executives, a Swede, blurts out, "that actually sounds nice!"

Other members of his group glare at their colleague.

Analysis: This is a significant moment. When one side identifies with its part of the accusation, we witness the beginning of a role switch. One member on the US/European side is actually affirming the role that is being played out on the Caribbean side, which will inevitably act as a catalyst for others in the group to identify with that role. This development is partially predictable. For reasons of a basic self-balancing tendency, if one side picks up the accusation, the other side tends to waver from its original position. The whole group doesn't have to change . Awareness that the role is present among them is more important than unity.

Immediately one of the facilitators frames Alonzo's ability to bring forward the core issue. The facilitator then picks up the role switch, asking the Swede what he would do with more time. He responds:

"I would take time, go to the ocean, leisurely rethink my projects, and find a more creative approach to them…maybe with music."

He says with a chuckle:

"Most of the time I am under such a time pressure from the outside, constantly chased by deadlines, that I never have enough time to really think about the new creative things I have on my mind."

Many executives agree now, although some still disagree. One says:

> "Yes, remember the time when Horst [another executive] broke his leg, and the good ideas that he came back with after his two weeks in the hospital?' [Everyone laughs.]. He was a nicer person, too!! [Everyone laughs harder.].

The human resource director, who had listened quietly to the conversation, says:

> '"Actually, if we had more time, we would probably be more efficient and not less. That is what I hear us say."

The US/European subgroup has now embarked upon a lively discussion about how to use time, how to deal with time pressure, and how to find structures that make more room for creativity. They seem to have forgotten about the Caribbean people on the other side, who are watching the conversation with beaming faces. The US/European subgroup decides to add a topic to the following day's subgroup section on time pressure, creativity, efficiency, and how to find the balance. The leader of the US/European subgroup group suggests that some of the Caribbean team join them for the meeting, as they might be helpful in this process. The Caribbean people smile proudly.

Analysis: The issue of time and how to use it is now seen as a global issue that is present on both sides. At this point, the US/European subgroup members indicate that the interaction has added to their own learning. Time pressure and the impulse to escape it is no longer seen as an issue that is present only on the Caribbean side. Rather it is an issue that is present everywhere. The Caribbean team initiates the de-escalation by admitting to some aspects of the reproach. This admission alone has powerful effects, and can be considered responsible for the change within the US/European subgroup.

Processes are self-balancing. The other side must also own part of the reproach. Now we must assist the other side in going over the edge.

The facilitator now asks the other side to identify with the reproach. Brigitte, with some prompting, admits:

> "Yes, it's true. I look down on many people, because they are not as efficient and intelligent as I am, and don't see always where the possible value addition or profit lies."

There is a big sigh of relief on the Caribbean side and but also some disagreement throughout the room.

Analysis: It is politically incorrect to own the experience of excellence and feeling superior. Brigitte has stepped into a ghost role. Arrogance also needs to be unfolded, as laziness was. After the process of unfolding, lazy was recognized as a term for a different experience of time that is present and needed in both groups. Unfolding arrogance should lead to a similarly uplifting reframing. The relief on the Caribbean side about the admission of the arrogance is no surprise for a worldworker. Contrary to the common belief that the admission would cause outrage, the opposite occurs. The effect of the ghost role was always felt; now that it has a voice, we know we can process it.

The facilitator asks her how she knows this. She looks confused at first and then she says:

> "I feel it when I talk to people."

I ask her to take time to actually feel it, and to identify with the feeling. As she does this, a smile suddenly appears on her face, and she says, surprised:

"It actually feels good. It has a feeling like crème brulée, my favorite dessert. Soft and sweet, and a little tangy."'

When asked to elaborate, she explains.

"I have so much experience, have created projects on so many continents…I am very capable and organized, and by now I understand most of the problems that I come across. I feel proud and good about my knowledge."

She looks embarrassed, and when asked about this shyness she replies, "you are not supposed to feel good about yourself." There is a gleam on her face. The room goes quiet. Many people look touched, and the Caribbean team leader suddenly bursts out:

"I have experienced this, how experienced you are, and it's so wonderful to see you talking about it now so openly."

She looks surprised that he doesn't criticize her, but actually admires her. She asks if it is not offensive to say that.

"No."

Alonzo replies,

"On the contrary. You allow me to be proud of my work, too. We had many difficulties, but we did overcome so many [and lists a few] and if it wasn't for us starting this dialogue, we would never have gotten to appreciate any of it. "

Brigitte nods in agreement, and looks at him with relief and surprise. She says:

"If I were more in touch with this sense of accomplishment, I probably would interfere more and speak out more about how to do things."

Suddenly someone starts clapping. There is a great atmosphere in the room. Everyone feels the relief of the change of atmosphere. Both sides agree that there has been a mood shift, and appreciate the opening of the communication between them.

Analysis: Arrogance is now seen also as a global issue. Arrogance is a perverted expression of self-confidence and self-appreciation. Once it is owned, it opens the way to pride, leadership and eldership. Both sides are waking up to these connections, and to discovering their own learning through this process.

The Resolution

An executive member now asks what practical effect this will have upon the actual project, and what the next steps are.

Analysis: Now that the information that was hidden in the ghost roles has been discovered, and the group has experienced a change in the previous governing state of mind, consensus reality returns. Initial underlying tensions are unfolded and discovered as keys for enhanced collaboration, synergy of diverse groups and talents, and the building of a trusting relationship between the two groups. This process now should bring forth practical solutions to the actual problem.

The Caribbean people begin by saying that they can actually do better. One of the members admits that some of the delays might have been avoidable. A knowledge worker says, half jokingly, that maybe they were "resisting." They now state that they want to try harder, because they want and need the jobs:

"We want to learn to work more efficiently and we understand that the plant will benefit all of us. We want to learn how to do this better, and we look

forward to being trained in this area. If we talk like this to each other, we'll work 24 hours, it's more fun than the beach!"

He adds the last phrase in a mocking tone, referring to his earlier comment.

The group decides to spend the next day working in their subgroups on what can be done to improve efficiency, and invites team members from the other group to participate. They create a joint team consisting of two members from each group to design a strategy for long-term planning of the supply chain issues, and for resolving personnel issues. (On the following day, these groups discovered that diversity issues and supply chain problems are deeply linked, and developed new ways of dealing with them.) The project leader looks thrilled. She brings out her eldership by stating congruently and powerfully:

> "This has been an amazing learning session. I am grateful to the team for having brought out the importance of teamwork and relationship. I did notice that you, [looking at Alonzo and his colleague], were the first to take responsibility for what didn't work, the first to support me in my leadership, and the first to bring us together."

Alonzo nods and has a charming grin on his face when he says proudly, "I notice this, too."
The team leader says, "I know this will be a great branch, and I now know we can finish this on time!"

There is a great sense of relief, a new feeling of closeness in the group, and hopefulness in the air.

Analysis: It is now the facilitator's task to frame the process that the group has just gone through by reminding everyone of what has been achieved and what next steps should be taken, and by bringing forth the question of how this process has added value to the overall project. In more traditional strategy development

sessions, many of the underlying conflicts over power distribution, internal politics, diversity issues, etc., often appear as heated debates about best strategies and best practices. Because underlying processes are rarely directly addressed or resolved, these discussions tend to cycle, or resulting outcomes meet later with passive resistance. On the other hand, if underlying issues are actually addressed and successfully resolved, many groups are so elated and relieved that they get lost in the feel good atmosphere and neglect to bring the resolution to a practical level. At this point, it is the facilitator's responsibility to bring the group back to the practical tasks by summing up the steps and creating a timetable to implement the changes that the group has decided upon. This needs to happen in the context of the group process, to show that practical management, the criteria of shareholder values, and value-adding strategies are not separate from teamwork issues, and that they actually enhance one another. In today's world, corporate groups are sometimes wrongly attacked for being too materialistic. However, many indigenous cultures understand and implement the need to understand conflict resolution, group process, community-building and even spirituality within the context of creating better practical solutions. Hence the Hopi saying: "Does this talk grow corn?" Can our work be used practically and add value to the everyday reality of our organization?

Framing and Deliverables

We framed the process for the group in this way:

The company side believed the Caribbean side to be incapable of meeting its efficiency requirements for the completion of the plant. The Caribbean side believed the company side to be incapable of meeting the leadership requirements that were needed for collaboration. In the course of the process, we witnessed an empowering experience in which the company, the seemingly more US/European side, learned that owning excellence in efficiency allows for implementing and teaching it in a more related and collaborative style. The Caribbean side learned about its leadership abilities in teamwork and team

building. Following its own vision of relationship and teamwork, it took the first step in each stage of the group process. This side learned that it can use this ability with awareness to become more efficient in solving its teamwork problems. The process has shown that diverse talents need not clash, but can exist synergistically.

We then asked everyone to break up into small groups and discuss how this awareness now can solve the remaining practical problems

The groups reported back after 45 minutes with the following results and plans:

- Joint development of a training course in time-management techniques and managerial skills for the local team, with special focus on diversity issues and collaborative efforts.
- New strategic planning steps to deal with long- and short-term supply chain issues (not being able to find materials or having to wait for them to arrive) and the creation of a special joint team consisting of members from both groups for supply chain problems, personnel problems, and industrial relations problems, with a particular focus on diversity issues and collaborative efforts in all of these areas.
- Scheduling of a meeting with the main suppliers, including a group process about the existing problems and how to solve them.

Postscript

The participants told us that they considered this a highly successful meeting, and they later informed us that the plant had been finished on schedule. Two years later, the corporation celebrated a production record in its Caribbean branch. Although we don't suppose a single causal connection between the meeting and the outer success, we thought it should be mentioned as part of the story.

Closing Remarks

This case description is meant to give you a general idea about how the
paradigm can be applied. The effectiveness of any teamwork intervention applied, such as the one above, depends on an ongoing culture of support. The description omits many details and doesn't include a detailed account of the awareness process of the facilitators. It also excludes the details of the preparation work and the subsequent debriefing. Both teams were coached online in our extranet for two months after the retreat. At times, these online sessions were followed up with phone conversations in addition to one or two personal meetings, to anchor the changes that occurred. In response to the requests of three individuals, we coached them over the next year, past the point of completion of the plant. I refer you to other pages on this site or to the <u>library</u> link for more detailed descriptions of other cases.