

People act normal until they start organizing

Using design-based research and discourse analysis to examine a workshop on humane organizations

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1. Introduction

People and their relations are the heart of success of every organization. Although there are no studies that directly relate company success to the happiness of the workforce, it is common sense that communities which are over longer periods working under tension are most likely to be less productive. Next to this ‘modernistic’ line of reasoning, from an ethical point of view humane ways of organizing, in contrast to inhuman ways, seem at first sight essential for the well being of our society.

Already in the end of the 1980s, both Peter Drucker (Drucker, 1988) and Charles Savage (1990) warned us about the limitations of the industrial, hierarchical organization in a knowledge-based economy. Steep hierarchies and strict planning and control can not provide the flexibility and responsiveness needed in an increasingly competitive and collaborative market. Industrial-era enterprises are based on a strong division and subdivision of labor and therefore not on trust but on distrust. According to Peters and Pouw (2006) the rationalization of organizations has produced organizations in which people are like cows in factory farming. These ‘inhumane’ organizations not only suffer from inflexibility but are also unhealthy for the people who work in them.

Healthy social systems, according to systems theory, are “*systems in which all people on all levels and positions are able to participate and thus can influence the course of action in a manner that things are working out positively for themselves as individuals and the social system as a whole*” (adapted from Oshry, 1992). General participation, openness and variety are the key to viable systems (Beer, 1979; 1985). As academics and practitioners in this field we also encounter issues that seem to contrast these recent views on putting the wellbeing of people upfront.

- Shareholders value seems often more dominant than caring for customers and employees
- Alienation takes place between people and between people and their work
- The available theory on ‘how people effectively work together’ is often disregarded in the real working context
- Moreover, the instruments we use in supporting change are often based on an instrumental view of humanity and seem not to work sufficiently.

In this paper we summarize the preliminary findings of a research project on humane organizations. In this research project we explore our concerns regarding inhumane ways of organizing on the one hand, and we ‘test’ several design rules seen as conditions for humane organizing on the other. In particular we used a workshop

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among 28 academics and practitioners for a critical reflection on current methods (organizing principles) and thoughts (shared meaning regarding humane organization) on humane organizing.

2. Methodology

In our study we combined two qualitative research methodologies. First, during the workshop we asked a group of experts to reflect on the theme of ‘humane organizations’ and we collected and analyzed their reflections using discourse analysis.

Second, we used a design-based research approach (Van Aken, 2004; 2005; Romme, 2003) to design and test an organizational setting (a workshop) based on a specific set of design principles for humane organizations, in order to develop knowledge about the success of the principles and their rules for usage.

2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis places the focus on language, in particular the use of and the meanings interwoven in language (Banister et al., 1994; Marshall, 1994, Potter and Wetherell, 1987). According to the method, text can be systematically read in order to lay open social processes. Discourse analysts claim that most social issues can be described in various ways by the same persons and that one draws on these issues differently according to the context (Marshall, 1994). Hence, discourse analysis aims at discovering variation regarding a certain phenomenon in text, when variation emerges, and what purpose it serves.

In discourse analysis language is the unit of analysis. Language plays an active role in constructing meaning in social context and this meaning can be de-constructed (see Derrida, 1978). Linguistic repertoires are conceptualized not as originating from the individual, but as culturally and historically embedded and socially communicated. The theory on discourse analysis provides the following guidelines to analyze text (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994, Marshall, 1994, Miller, 1994):

- Describe open and hidden dichotomies
- Interpret metaphors and platitudes
- Focus on disruptions and contradictions
- Discover which issues are especially seen as ‘problematic’

For the present study we applied discourse analysis to the 28 individual introductions and research questions of the participants of the research workshop.

2.2 Design-based research

Design-based research (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003) is a research approach with a dual purpose. The approach consists of two distinctive but interwoven streams of inquiry. The objective of the *knowledge stream* is to develop generalizable knowledge that can help create desired situations (Romme, 2003), preferably in a way that contributes to theory (Collins, Josph, & Bielaczyc, 2004; Eden & Huxham, 1996). The objective of the *practice stream* is to contribute to the practical concerns of people in problematic situations, by solving particular problems in specific circumstances. Figure 1 provides an overview of the steps of the study. Ideally, steps 3 to 10 are repeated several times adding new cases until the point of

theoretical saturation has been reached (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, because of time and resource constraints this level of saturation was not achieved in this study. We were only able to test the design principles in one setting.

As part of the knowledge stream we have adopted a set of design principles and rules of construction for humane organizations. We then tested these principles in the practice stream by using them to design a workshop with experts about the theme of humane organizations. During and after the workshop we evaluated and reflected on the effect of the design principles as ‘reflective practitioners’ (Schön, 1983) in order to draw conclusions about their effectiveness and the indications and contraindications for their usage (Van Aken, 2004).

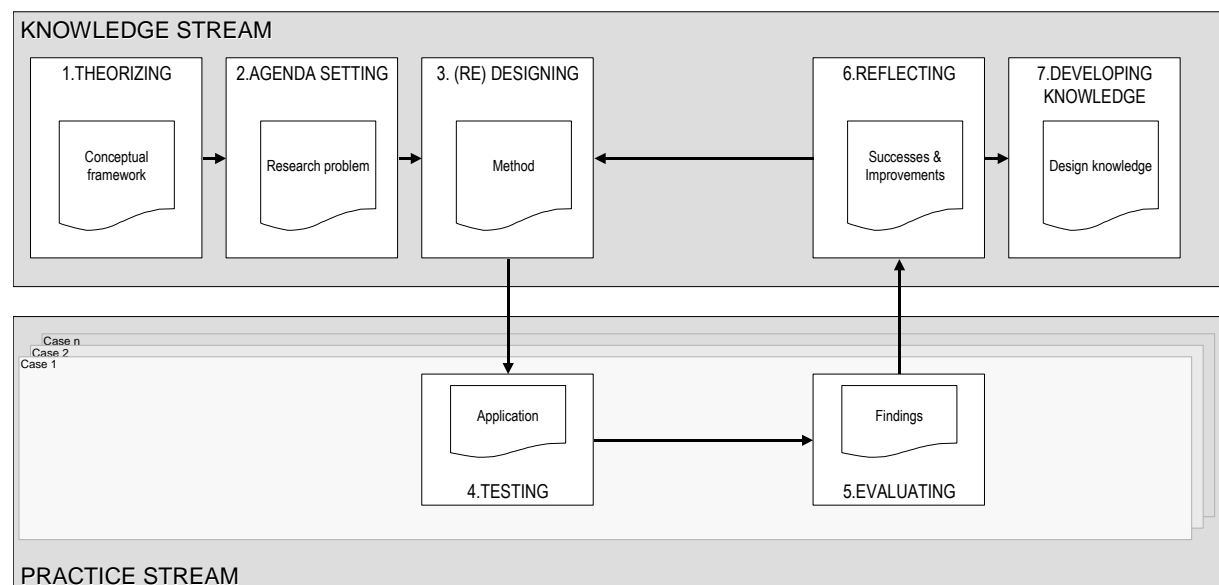


Figure 1 Design-based research methodology

3. The intended design of the workshop

A general concern about the inhumanness of modern organizations led us to identify a number of design principles for ‘humane’ organizations and to use them to design a temporary organization in the form of a workshop. The design principles are based on the work of Kessels (1993) and Wierdsma (1999). In our design of the workshop we used the following design principles for humane organizations:

1. Use the capabilities of everybody available in the system (using variety)
2. Make use of the energy, passion and aspirations of everybody present
3. No dominance (free access for all participants to the process of knowledge building)
4. Act and reflect
5. Dialog instead of debate
6. The medium must be the message
7. Do what matters (working with real life issues)
8. Work towards results (things that work)
9. The commitment to make explicit hidden patterns and themes
10. Share responsibility (actorship)

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In addition, we believe that in humane organizations the primary role of management is:

- to make possible the access to and sharing of knowledge
- to provide room for collaboration
- to facilitate knowledge productivity

The result was a design for a workshop with a limited structure. As facilitators we did not want to influence the preferred way of working of the experts we invited. In addition we wanted to be an equal member to the group and not act as leaders of the group.

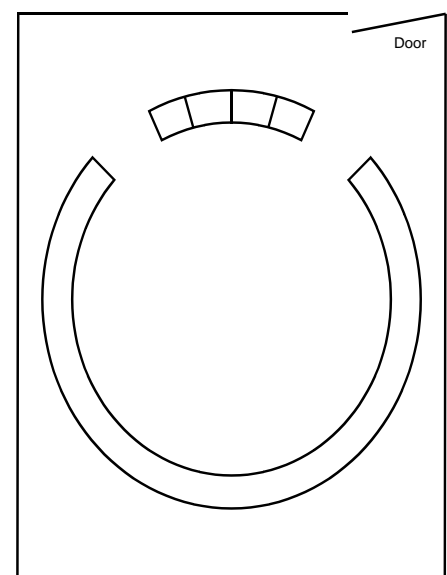
The design of the program consisted of four rounds of one hour each separated by moments of reflection of half an hour. Bloch (2000) argues that sessions at conventional congresses and workshops are often not interesting for people. The participants attend passively and tend to forget the presentations within a short time. Between and after the sessions, he argues, the real connections take place. People then have the opportunity to meet and to discuss the issues about which they really care. We used Bloch's suggestion and organized 'open sessions' with no structure. We called them coffee session, lunch session, after lunch session and tea session. Next to the beverages, only the space was provided. The working format of each round was left open to the participants. The theme of 'humane ' organizations' was given. Moreover, we asked the participants to see the workshop as an invitation to explore his or her personal research question.

The idea was that at the start of the conference each participant had the opportunity to present in one minute his or her affinity with the theme as well as the personal research question. Others were encouraged to use this round of presentations to identify persons with whom they might want to enter into a dialogue during one of the four rounds. We intended to use the moments of reflection both as a research tool as well as a way to stimulate reflection about the theme. During these moments we were to ask the participants to update their logbook that we gave them at the start of the day, and to reflect together on three questions: How are you? How are we?, and How is the theme developing? At the end of the workshop we intended to ask the participants to write a story about their experiences during the day and send it to us so we could use it for this article. We set up a website for people to post their reflections as a weblog and comment to the reflections of others.

4. The realized design of the workshop

We used a special invitation mechanism for the testing of the workshop. Each of us invited two people that we thought might bring a different perspective to the workshop. We then asked each of them to invite another two people they knew who could be of value. To facilitate them in the process we wrote a brief invitation letter describing the purpose of the workshop and how it had come about.

The workshop was held on Thursday, April 20th, 2006. 25 people from various backgrounds attended the conference. Most of them were freelance consultants with a focus on process consulting with a background in social and humanistic sciences (psychology, organizational science). Each participant received a logbook that contained name and picture of each member of the group



and enough room to write down observations, comments and reflections.

The group started of sitting in a semi-circle with us as the four initiators sitting in front of the room (see figure 1). We started the affinity round by telling the group about our own kinship with the theme, describing the course of the day, and asking them to write a brief note afterwards describing their experiences that we could use for this article. However, each one of us took three to four minutes instead of the intended one minute, which acted as a signal to the group that they too could take more then one minute. As no one was keeping time the affinity round took 75 minutes instead of the intended 45 minutes.

Then we broke up for the first round of dialogue, the 'coffee round'. Quite naturally the group split into three subgroups that each went outside to sit around a table and discuss the topic. After an hour the group went back into the room for the first reflection, led by Rob. He asked the participants to spent five minutes reflecting on the first round and write their thoughts down. Then he invited the members to share their thoughts with the group. The reflections were a mixture of people expressing their content with the quality of the conversation taking place and people articulating their frustration about a lack of action.

After 30 minutes the group broke up for the second round of dialogue, the 'lunch round'. This round took place while eating lunch from a buffet and the result was that a number of small, loose groups were formed and one or two larger groups. This round was less formal and structured then the coffee round. After an hour the group gathered again for a reflection round in the main hall led by Herman-Jan. Again participants were asked to reflect for five minutes and write down their thoughts. During the lively conversation that followed many participants conveyed their malcontent about the way the workshop was heading. One participant described the workshop as a traditional organization that asked the members to contribute to a hidden product (this article) out of sight of the individual contributor and questioned how 'humane' this organizations was. Another asked what the goal was we wanted to achieve as a group. A third wanted to make the conversation less abstract by studying a particular case of an organization that had proven to be successful in humane organizing.

One of the participants took initiative and articulated the theme they wanted to explore during the next round, invited others to join him and left the room. However, nobody joined him. Another member announced that he wanted to explore the theme of 'simplicity' in organizations. Several participants followed him outside. A third partaker invited the group to join him in an exploration of the dilemma individual vs. collective and to use this workshop as a case. This attracted another subgroup of participants. A remaining subgroup stayed in the main room to study the case of a successful organization.

The third round, the 'after lunch round', took the remaining of the afternoon. Again three subgroups were formed. One subgroup worked outside on the theme of 'simplicity' using techniques from psychodrama. Psychodrama is guided dramatic action to examine problems or issues raised by an individual. A second subgroup explored the dilemma individual vs. collective by setting up an organization constellation. A third subgroup studied the case of a social services organization that had been very successful in applying the principles of humane organizations. The atmosphere in the subgroups was lively and energetic and we as initiators had difficulty in getting the groups to stop. The final round of reflection was led by Jürg. The general view was that it had been a day well spend that had produced interesting

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learning and insights, both from the way the day had been structured – the process of the workshop, and the things that had been discussed – the content of the workshop.

5. Discourse analysis: revisiting themes, metaphors and actors of human organizing that emerged during the workshop

Researchers using discourse analysis claim that anything that is problematised by (or being 'labelled' through) language starts to exist (and therefore to 'act') independently of the person who communicated the label at the first place. In this sense, we problematised the terms 'humane organizations' and humane organizing' (or in dutch mensgericht organiseren c.q. de menselijke maat in organisaties) in the invitations of the workshop without being very much conscious of the consequences of our chosen 'wording'. Hence, the workshop theme (as a newly created actor) met the ongoing discourses of the participants and melted to a rich potpourri of meanings concerning humane and inhuman ways of organizing. In the following we try to deconstruct parts of this potpourri, not to unfold *the* truth but to show the richness of the discourses attached to the metaphor of humane organizations.

To begin with, we may separate two lines of reasoning among the participants. The first line started from the assumption that there is such a 'state' as a human way of organizing which can be opposed to a more inhuman way. Following this path, we will discuss the differences between human and inhuman organizing, and the metaphors related to the opposites.

In the second line of reasoning some of the participants saw either human or inhuman organizations as 'a non issue.' Organizing is a process between humans and therefore it is by definition always a *human product*. To conclude we focus on the main actors in the various discourses and we try to describe the broader context in which the dialogues took place.

5.1 Human and inhuman ways of organizing

It seems that we often use opposites or dichotomies in order to express our view on certain issues: one behavior is *ok*, the other is *not ok*. It is common sense, that by naming one of the opposite poles, the other pole also enters the scene. For instance, by reflecting on *human* ways of organization the *inhuman* way of organizing immediately comes to the fore (even without mentioning it explicitly). People who label organizations being 'unhealthy' indicate that there exists such a thing as 'healthy organizations.' If people are caught 'in the system' there are automatically others who act 'independent of the system.' Besides disclosing 'the opposite,' these dichotomies are carriers of the norms of a certain discourse, for instance, what the factors are that make organizations more or less healthy. In table 1 we give a few examples of the dichotomies we discovered during the first round of the workshop.

Table 1: Dichotomies as buildings blocks for ‘humane and inhumane organizations’

<i>human</i>		<i>inhuman</i>
Trust	<=>	Mistrust
We know ‘better’ and act accordingly	<=>	We know ‘better’ and do the opposite
Acting kind	<=>	Acting unkind
Logics in the society, (reality in urban areas with a lot of criminality), private/individual logics	<=>	Institutional logics (bureaucrathy, governmental logics)
Closeness, contact, intimacy, connections	<=>	Alienation, out of contact, distance also distance top-work floor
Creating room by moving, walking	<=>	Not moving = standing still, sitting
Healthy	<=>	Sick
Simplicity	<=>	Complexity
‘Biological way of raising animals’	<=>	Animals in cages, animal factories
Good for mankind, good for animals	<=>	Good for ‘things’
Hike out of the comfort zone	<=>	Caught in the comfortzone
Not adapting (zelf organizing)	<=>	Adapting (organized)
Positive side of (full of energy)	<=>	Negative side (no energy)
Dialogue on real things	<=>	Superficial talks
Ability to defend	<=>	Dependence
I do not have to do so much....(in Dutch: ontmoeten), emergence, room for creativity	<=>	The invitation was oppressive, I got the feeling that I have to do something....(in Dutch: moeten)
Management & leadership is necessary	<=>	Management destroys, management makes dependent
Out of the system	<=>	In the system
Being (also by being passionate and aggressive)	<=>	Not being (people are not visible, no emotions)
Small scale = powerful	<=>	Large scale = powerless
Good governance, the ‘Rhineland model’ (strategy)	<=>	Preventively killing animals (or firing people), bad governance, the Anglo-Saxon model
Holos/to be	<=>	Logos

It would go to far to discuss all those dichotomies in depth. However, a brief selection may give an impression of the voices raised during the workshop.

In terms of metaphors, people in organizations were compared to animals in the bio-industry. Humans are, according to one of the participants, intensively used on a large scale like pigs, cattle’s and chickens in order to produce effectively. Companies fire employees preventively when the first signs of recession appear. This ‘machine like’ thinking in the top fosters distrust, distance, and dependence. People start feeling ‘stuck,’ powerless, and – in the worst case ‘sick.’ Just like in the bio-industry, this discourse suggests that there is a way out. Humane organizations, just like biological farms, must turn the tide. However, people who see humans as ‘in essence free creatures’ dispute this analogy. Both discourses (people depend on the system versus people have a free will) are not new. In particular, this discussion likes on the different point of views of Marxists en Existentialists that dominated the sixties of the past century. Existentialists saw people being fully responsible for their own fate, while Marxists called this view instrumental and ignorant towards broader, social forces.

The existentialist flavor seems to be more dominant in the many ‘neo’-modern leadership theories in which individual development of leaders is supposed to lead to better organizations automatically (*“hello tiger, if you want to you can create your*

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own future!”). Obviously, many Business Schools, trainers and coaches involved with ‘supporting change in organizations’ also represented this view on the world. Certainly this view is attractive in times when the economy is booming. The revival of the ‘old’ dispute between discourses makes clear that the focus on the individual did not lead to the kind of organizing we hoped for. Each individual has to act within a framework that is given. When the economic circumstances get worse, the frame gets smaller.

During the workshop, one of the participants problematised the process of ‘organizing’ itself: *“People act normal until they start organizing!”* he argued. Obviously, he wanted to say that organizing as such hinders ‘normal’ behavior. Normal in the context of some participants was a human way of action, for instance, being in contact, caring, being kind, or being responsible for the whole. Not normal was seen as separating strategy from action, thinking from feeling, or leadership from ‘follower ship.’ The cited participant also seemed to express that by ‘organizing’ (in opposite to leave something unorganized) certain forces appear that make people do things that are in essence not good for us. These forces may be related to the fears of losing position or of ‘not being accepted.’ Losing contact with ‘the reality as it is’ seems to be a symptom of this fear. People become defensive and therefore ‘distant’ to the other. *Inner emigration*’ was one of the metaphors used for this process. Increasing personal contact in small day-to-day relations was seen as a remedy to create more human organization.

Although convincing, the organized versus unorganized dichotomy seemed not to propose to do without organization (an illusion after all), but to do with less organization. The latter is seen as a reaction on the over-organization (and over control) of our society in general.

Another intriguing distinction during the workshop was made between the terms simplicity and complexity. *“Simplicity”* it was argued, *“shows the path to human organization.”* The conversation on simplicity might relate to a much broader discourse, namely the critical view on our modern way of life itself. In this way of life materialism and the dogma of ‘never ending growth’ hinders people to discover the essences of life. Those essences, the participants agreed, are defined by simplicity. *“It is not easy, and certainly not superficial”* they argued *“but at the time you understand it becomes simple.”*

It is not the purpose to be cynical upon the lines of reasoning used by the participants. In the contrary, the dialogues uncovered a deep concern of the professionals (and maybe a broader public in postmodern society also) on the wellbeing of people and the social system as a whole.

5.2 *Organizing and discourses on organizing as a product of humans*

One of the participants was an expert in storytelling and his story obviously influenced the audience during the workshop. He used the story summarized in table 2 to reveal another dimension of human organization, namely our capability to rationalize what we see and do in ‘hindsight.’ As such, the dichotomies described above may be seen as mirrors to the storytellers past experiences. On the other hand, these stories disclose what the storyteller would like to be changed in order to create a ‘better’ world.

Table 2: The perfect shot

“Once upon a time, a rabbi walks with his student through a village. The student asks: ‘Rabbi, when we talk about difficult matters it seems that you always know a perfect story to tell which describes my personal situation? How do you do that? The rabbi answered by ‘a story:’ A long time ago, a young military student was an extraordinary talent in handling arrow and bow. Much more often than his colleagues he knew to shoot his arrows right in the center of the target. After he successfully finished his academy he traveled through the countryside back home. In this journey he passed a small village. While passing the village, he could not believe what he saw. Just about every wall was covered with targets, and in each target there stuck an arrow right in the middle. The young soldier stopped his horse in order to look for this excellent marksman. The inhabitants of the village explained that this perfect example of sportsmanship was the product of the village’s fool. He shoots first and then he draws the targets around the arrows! And that is how I do it, closed the rabbi. I read a lot of stories. When I feel like telling one of these, I direct the conversation to a certain topic and then I tell the beforehand chosen story.”

In fact, the storyteller in the workshop problematised the way of working delineated in the table. He seemed to ask: Don’t we abuse the labels human or human ways of organizing in order to plea for our own individual concerns? What are the real motivations to join this workshop? Are we working on our ‘network’ (the business reason)? Is it to meet friends or just interesting people (the social reason)? Is it because we want to be part of this process of organizing (fear to be excluded or to miss something)?

Another participant raised the question whether ‘there is such a thing as inhuman organizing?’ According to her, human action includes ‘the good and the bad, the friendly and cruel, the healthy and the sick.’ The metaphor of the Yin Yang served as a symbol of this line of thought. “*Freedom*” one of the participants said, “*means also that there is room for the dragon in me.*” As a consequence, we problematised explicitly the cruel sides of organizing (as an opposite of the supporting, helpful side). One of the participants argued, “*Organizing is per definition contra individual (and in this sense inhuman). By organizing we structure, make rules, and thus we form the individual to the norms of the collective.*” It seems that ‘organizing’ like working for food in general came to earth after Adam and Eve were biting in the apple. It was then that mankind had to leave ‘the unorganized’ paradise. Several participants even suggested that animals might be more capable of human organizing than humans themselves. Although disputable (who wants to live in an organization of a lion family?) it might be the case that the actual perception of the chains of organizing is only the price for our ‘ability to think’?

Moreover, these reflections led to a comparison with eastern and western religion (and philosophy), which brought in the spiritual dimension of human organization. Meditation and Presence (in addition to Cognition) were seen as keys to get in contact with deeper layers of social systems. Being in connection with these systemic layers

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might offer every now and then opportunities to initiate a small intervention to create movement where before there was stagnation.

5.3 *Actors and contexts of discourses concerning human organizations*

To conclude, we would like to introduce the main actors of the various discourses related to the workshop theme and the context in which these discourses appeared. With regard to human and inhuman ways of organizing we may distinguish the offenders and the victims within the discourses. In the words of a participant, *“We have a new elite who is driving around in Hummers [and other 4 wheel drives], who define the rules of the game. I am concerned about the space of others. What space is left for others in the public arena to participate in the process of making sense of (and therefore influence) important social issues.”* This concern followed several discussions on the situation of young people in multi cultural environments, and the (by this elite) newly created *war on terror*. The elite sets the rules and the others play the game accordingly. In a systemic way of looking at this phenomenon, it would be interesting to discuss how the victims produce the offenders and the other way around?

Actors with regard to this latter systemic line of reasoning are mainly ‘the social system’ and the few individuals who may influence this social system positively (e.g. work on redefining the game to make the players stronger). Within the social systems there are larger ‘forces’ influencing the rules of the game (for instance, the Anglo-Saxon versus the Rhineland way of leadership). Individuals who are able to influence on a systemic level are – in this view – among others spiritual leaders who connect to a larger ordering (a viable system), include the excluded (e.g. the dragon in me), and therefore work on a stronger collective.

Last but not least, a few words must be spent on the context of these discourses and their originators. The organizers of the workshop are related, just as most of the participants, in one way or the other, to the broader support system of commercial and non-commercial organizations. We therefore represented as a group ‘the helper system’ of postmodern organizations. In the years after 2000 many of us experienced the working environment (and the political environment) being less open for alternative voices. While in the years before 2000 people really seemed to be the heart of the enterprise, after the millennium no tolerance, fear and reductionism reentered the stage. This common experience affected not only the people in organizations we worked with, but also our own organizing environment. At the time of the workshop, it seemed that several initiatives came alive simultaneously to defend these ‘lost ideals’ and to create space. After all, the workshop on human organizing represented for many participants part of these initiatives.

6. **Testing the design: how did the design principles work out?**

We had created a design for the workshop based on a set of design principles for humane organizations. When we put this intended design into practice, we did some of the things we intended to do, we ignored other things we intended to do, we did things we had not intended to do, and we did not do certain things that we should have put into the intended design (see figure 2).

		<i>Part of the realized design</i>	
		<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>Part of the intended design</i>	<i>NO</i>	III. What we did that was not part of the intended design	IV. What we did not do that was also not part of the intended design (but should have been)
	<i>YES</i>	I. What we did that was part of the intended design	II. What we did not do that was part of the intended design

Figure 2 Matrix of intended and unintended actions and non-actions

How did the design principles articulated in paragraph 3 work out (quadrant I and II)?

1. **Use the capabilities of everybody available in the system.** The free form of the dialogue rounds allowed participants to make good use of each other's capabilities. There was the opportunity to meet people that could be of help for answering your personal research question. Capabilities could be used with respect to the content as well as the process of the workshop. For example, in round 3 process skills were used in the field of psychodrama and organization constellations. To conclude, we can say that we offered the opportunity for everybody to bring in his or her capabilities. The question remains if this is sufficient. Available time remains an important factor. It takes time to share each others interests and capabilities.
2. **Make use of the energy, passion and aspirations of everybody present.** The level of energy in the group varied. The days started of vary lively but several dips in energy level occurred around lunch break. By then people became aware that something needed to happen to make sure the day would contribute to their passion and aspirations and they showed actorship. For most participants round three seemed to have fulfilled that purpose.
3. **No dominance.** We formulated the theme of the workshop loosely. Participants were asked to contribute to what subjects would be on the table. Likewise, there were only a few restrictions on the process of the workshop and even the structure that was given beforehand changed during the day. This allowed for different people to take the lead and it created space for different voices. In this respect there was little or no dominance. It seems there is a subtle balance between leadership and follower ship within a group. In some moments people are more likely to be on the background and then again they step forward. Both states are necessary. Both, leadership and follower ship most of all ask for physical, mental and spiritual presence.
However, the way we set up the circle for the affinity round and the fact that we as initiators went first to discuss our affinity with the subject (and took more time then allowed) did create a certain dominance by the initiators on a systemic level that could have been avoided.
4. **Act and reflect.** We did create a situation of action and reflection by alternating in the program between dialogue and reflection. Although some people in the beginning resisted the idea of having to sit quiet, reflect and write down their thoughts, most of them agreed after the first round that this did help in deepening the experience and insights.

5. **Dialog instead of debate.** The form chosen for conversation during the workshop was left to the participants. We did not try to steer towards dialogue instead of debate. In this case we did not have to as most participants proved to be highly skilled in the technique of dialogue, which probably had to do with the fact that almost all were process consultants with a background in social and humanistic sciences.
6. **The medium must be the message.** We tried to organize the workshop as a 'humane' organization so that the 'medium' of the format and context would reflect the 'message'. As can be seen from this overview of design principles we did succeed in this to a large extent. However, there was one striking exception that was spotted by one of the participants. The workshop represented at least one of the characteristics of traditional ways of organizing: the hidden product at the end of the pipeline in the form of the article out of sight of the individual contributor. Savage (1990, p. 209) describes the hidden product as a characteristic of industrial-era companies: "Most jobs in industrial-era companies are defined in ways that make it hard for both the worker and manager to see the entire process. Industrial-era jobs do not give people a clear understanding of the nature of the product. A significant part of the process and the product is locked into a black box, out of sight of the individual contributor". This results in workers taking a short-sighted approach to the process and the product.
7. **Do what matters.** The participants were asked to bring their personal research question and use the workshop to work on it. They were given the opportunity to work on what really mattered for them. However, this did not work well for a number of participants. One of the reasons was the abstractness of the chosen topic, 'humane organizations'. Afterwards one of the participants challenged the way we had framed the topic using this term and asked us why we did not frame it more concrete like 'how to have more fun in your work'. This may have helped to work on more real life issues. On the other hand we would have pre-structured the topic much then we did now.
8. **Work towards results.** Participants were asked to work towards their personal objectives by working on what really mattered to them. For some this worked better then for others. However, several participants questioned whether the group should not be working towards a shared result and asked what the common goal of the group was. A shared task seemed to have been missing. The free style of the program may have hindered the group to work towards a common goal in addition to the individual goal.
9. **The commitment to make explicit hidden patterns and themes.** There was a genuine tendency to search for hidden questions and patterns using dialogue as a conversational technique. This attitude allowed for the well known group dynamic "half-time" effect to take place after the second round. The half-time effect is the phenomenon that people start to ask themselves when they are half-time a certain event whether they want to do the second half in the same way as the first half. This is true regardless of whether the event is a day, a year or a lifetime. The setting in the workshop gave room to the frustrations that this half-time effect can produce and allowed it to be used in a productive way. This resulted in a very lively and productive afternoon round. While there was a search for hidden questions and patterns on the level of the content and the group dynamics of the workshop, there was less inclination to research what happened on a systemic level. We will discuss this level in more detail below.

10. **Share responsibility.** To a certain extent, responsibility for the content and the process of the workshop was shared. However, due to the way we set up the circle for the affinity round and the fact that we as initiators went first to discuss our affinity with the subject (and took more time than allowed), the shared responsibility for the process was not as strong during the first two rounds as it could have been.

We also did things we did not intend (quadrant III). For example, we created a setting in which participants were asked to sit down and converse, and to reflect on this by writing things down. Then we asked to go home and write a reflection report and mail this to us. However, one participant was dyslectic and reminded us that unintentionally the focus of the setting was on conversation and language as a means of communication, reflection and learning, which created for him a bit of a backlog.

During the evaluation of the workshop within the team of initiators and while reading the reflection reports, we identified three additional design principles that maybe should have been part of the design (quadrant IV): 1) pay more attention to other systems that influenced what happened, 2) stimulate other levels of consciousness, and 3) structure productivity. To find out whether these principles really are improvements to the design we need to do a second test. Let us briefly describe each one of them.

1. The workshop can be seen as a system that was designed for a certain purpose. However, as in any system, other systems will be present in the designed system and will influence its output. Participants bring their own 'home' system into the room. The workshop was held in a Nyenrode venue, which brought the Nyenrode system into the room. Some participants were freelancers that worked for some of the other participants, which brought a client system into the room. We ignored these systems while it would probably have been better to address them and give them a place.
2. The focus of the workshop was on mental activity using language as the main tool for communication, reflection and learning. However, there are many more levels of consciousness that can be very productive when used and can be very unproductive when ignored. Maybe we should have addressed these levels during the day by introducing forms consciousness raising like of meditation.
3. The workshop design did not work towards the joined identification of a common goal and a collaborative effort to achieve this. As a result the individual participants went home satisfied about a productive individual learning experience, while the collective output of the group was limited. A different, more structured, design may have improved the collective productivity of the group.

7. Reflections

The evaluation of the design and the discourse analysis indicate to us three important themes about humane organizations. The first is the issue of 'old' and 'new' organizing. What are really characteristics of new, humane, organizations? What elements of the old way of organizing need to be preserved? How is it possible that, like in our workshop, the old can creep in, even when the full intention is to create the new? Why is it so difficult to create a system in which all people on all levels and positions are able to participate and thus can influence the course of action in a

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manner that things are working out positively for themselves as individuals and the social system as a whole?

The second theme is about leadership. Although our design principles included 'no dominance', and 'shared responsibility', leadership never went away. It was always present in the workshop at different levels. There was personal leadership, which is about 'what do I want to achieve'. And there was leadership over the group that was shifting between participants. There is a constant tension between the two types of leadership. Too much focus on personal goals results in loss of contact with the group. Too much focus on becoming part of the collective results in loss of contact with personal goals.

The third theme is about systems. We created a new, temporary, system that brought together many other systems. We have learned to see and deal with the group dynamic of these kinds of workshops, but we have still little insight into the systemic processes in groups. What systems are present? How do they influence what happens? How can they be facilitated to increase the productivity of the group?

The industrial revolution brought us a lot of material (individual?) well being, but according to many participants of the workshop it is now time to reintegrate other values in our way of organizing to create more well *BEING*. In this sense, the conversations on humane organizing showed the many concerns on our dominant ways of organizing.

The division of 'work and leisure' affect our society deeply. It seems that we in the Western world are still caught in a broader social process between the necessary emancipation of the individual (from dependency to independency) and the conclusion that after all we are as individual's interdependent creatures and therefore part of a collective. With regard to the latter, it is obvious and painful at the same time that we are all responsible for the humane and (the so called) inhuman parts of organizing. "We are part of the problem and therefore part of the solution," to recall an old system thinkers conclusion. In this sense, we (the participants of the workshop) are nothing like a humane elite improving the world of organization. Hence, if not 'improving', what else is the task of the helper system of organizations? We have no clear answer yet. To summarize some of the participant's voices: the essence lies in simplicity; it is focusing on valuable contacts, the short moments when people really meet, the few stops at small places of momentary happiness. This sounds simple, however it is not at all easy!

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