

How to communicate and collaborate successfully

Dr. Ellen Nathues

Leuphana University Lüneburg & University of Twente

Today, we talk about an old-fashioned thing...

- **Human communication**

- And especially, about understanding each other when different backgrounds, professions, organizations, languages, etc., come together



About me

- Background in Business Administration & Communication
- Now combining both in my research

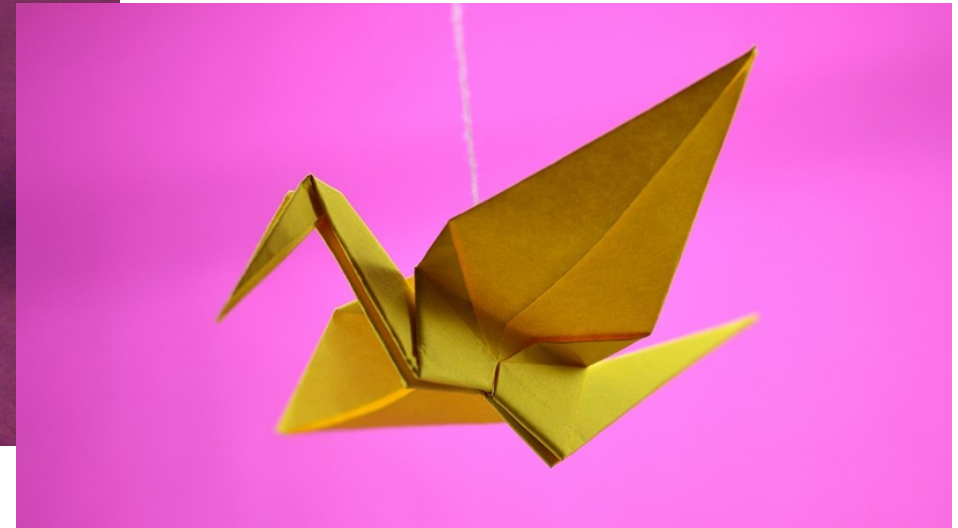
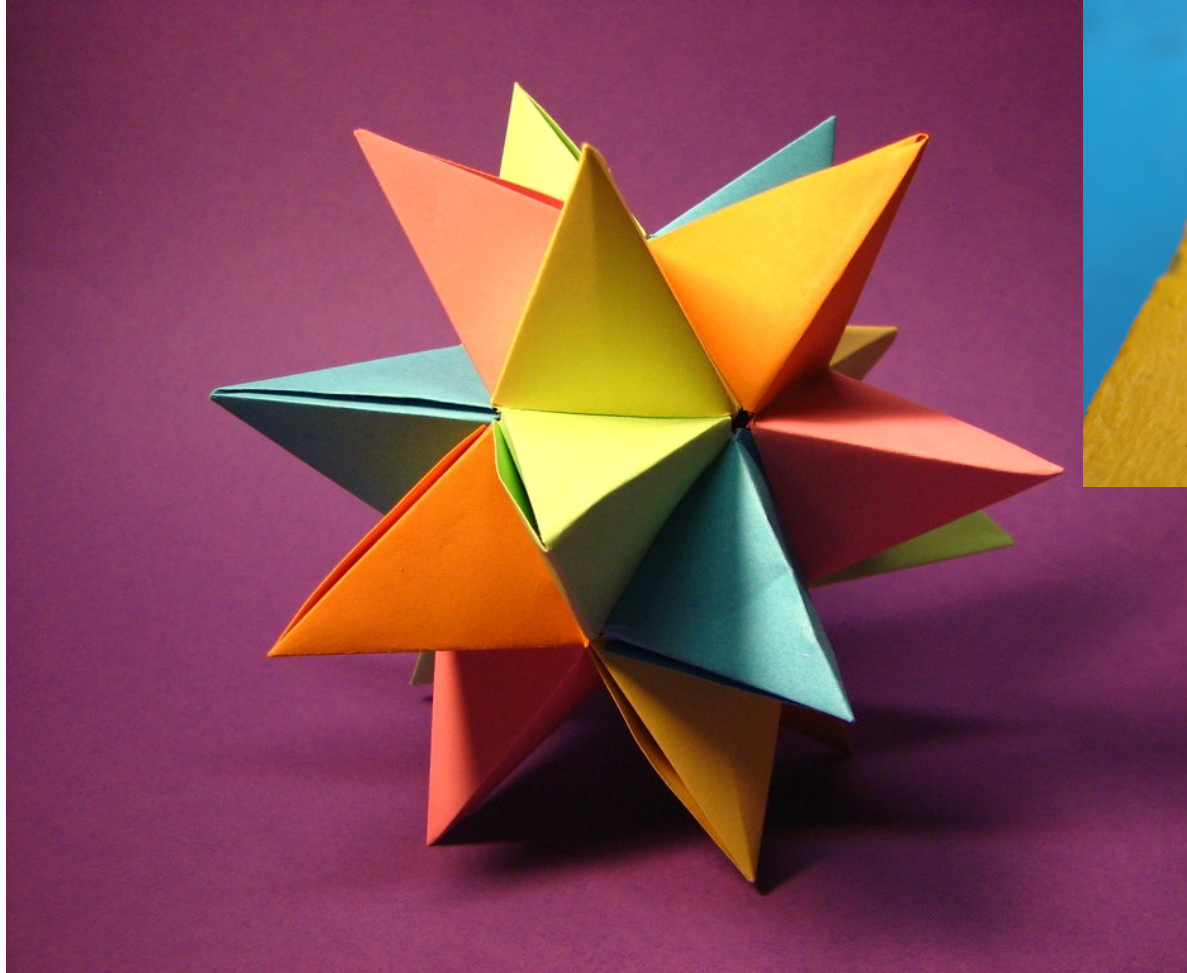
Communication / Collaboration / Organization

- Getting close to the real action
- Bottom-up thinking, resonance between practical phenomena and theoretical ideas

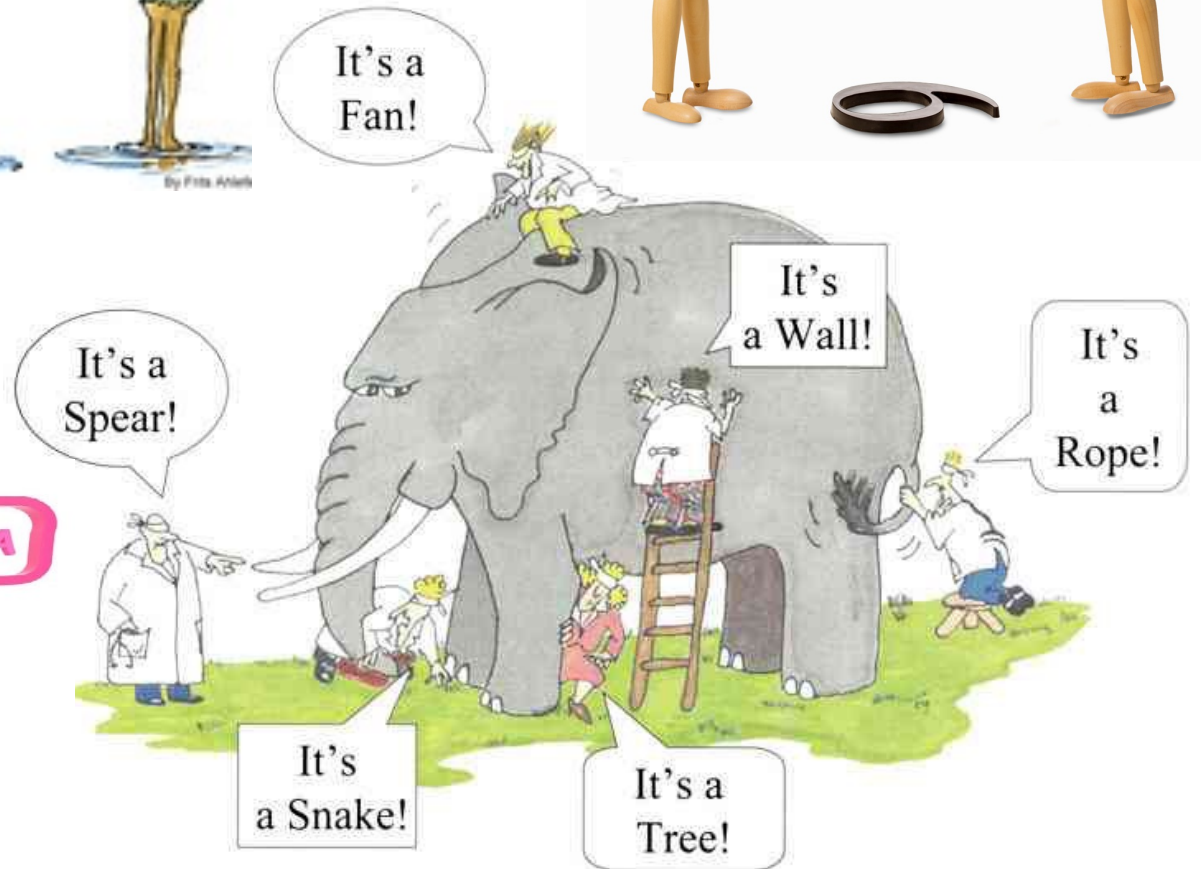
Rough set-up

- Exercise I
- Revisiting communication
- Exercise II
- Rethinking communication
- On belly-speaking
- Exercise III
- Hearing more voices in collaboration
- Reflections & conclusions

Exercise I: Origami



Exercise I: Origami



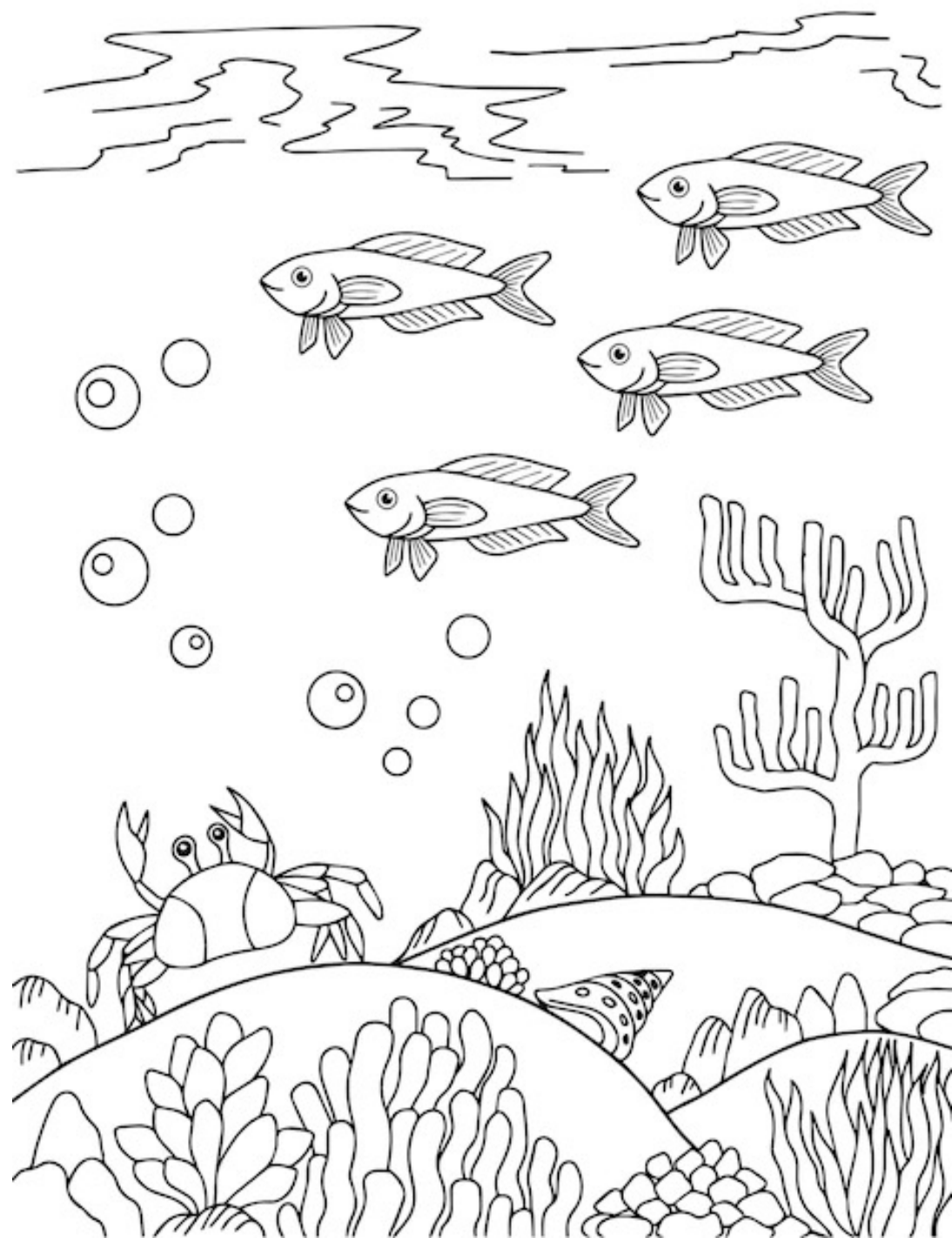
Let's revisit what communication is...



The chief object of education is not
to learn things but to unlearn things.

— *Gilbert K. Chesterton* —

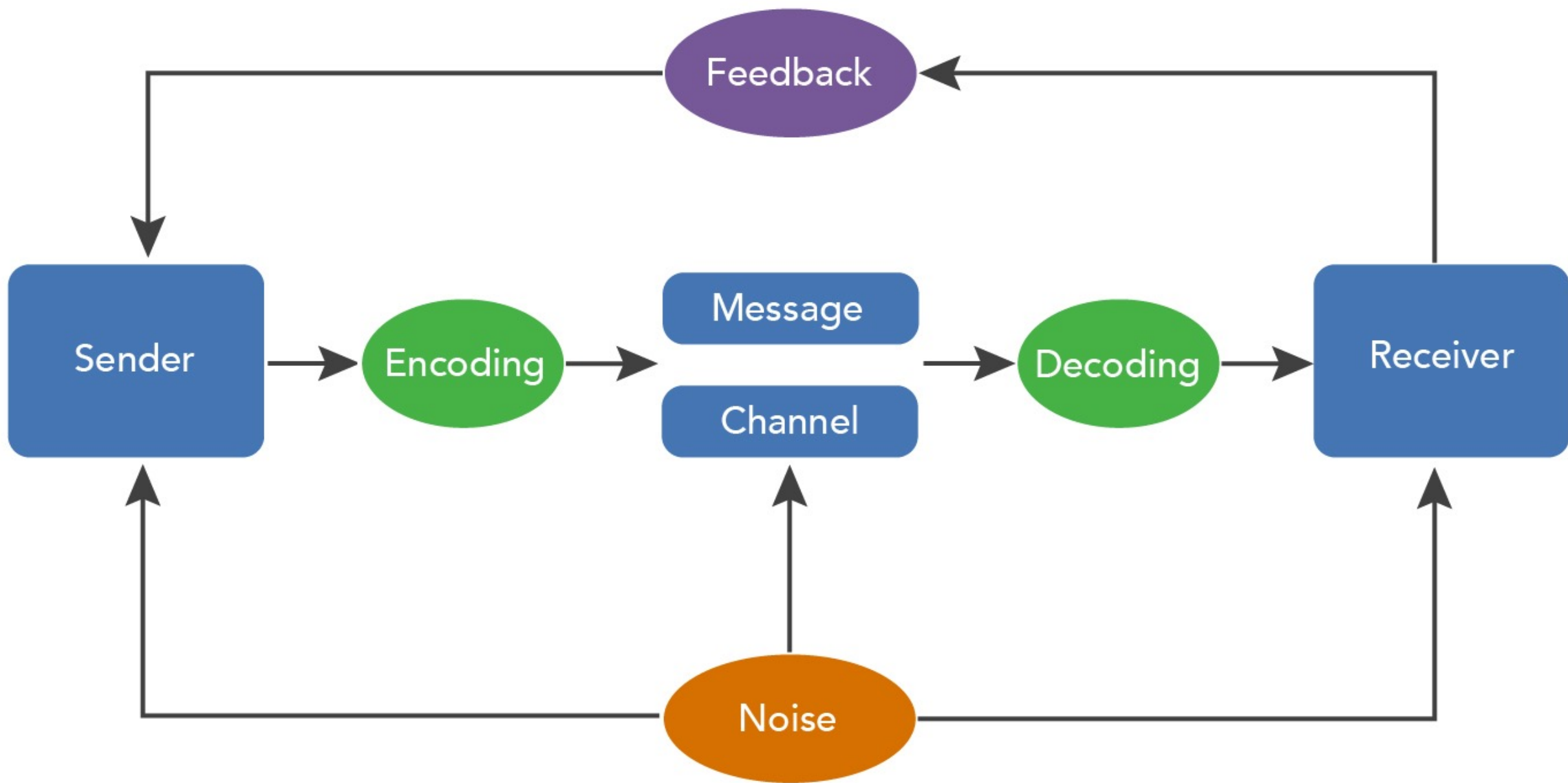
AZ QUOTES



Assumptions, when they are fine...

...and when they become problematic

That is what happened with communication...



in proper
context



**Claude
Shannon**

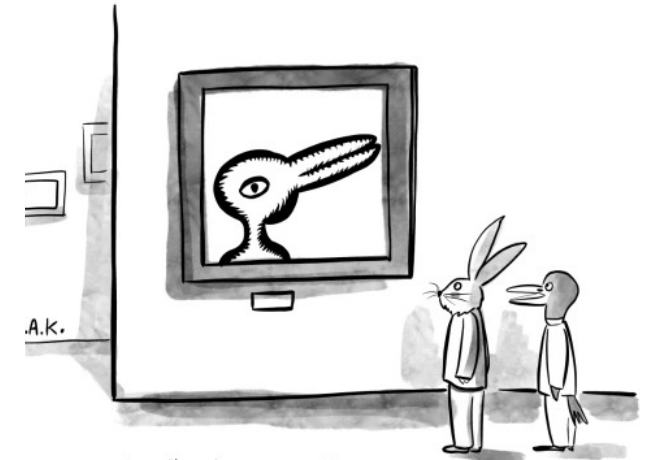


**Warren
Weaver**

The problem...

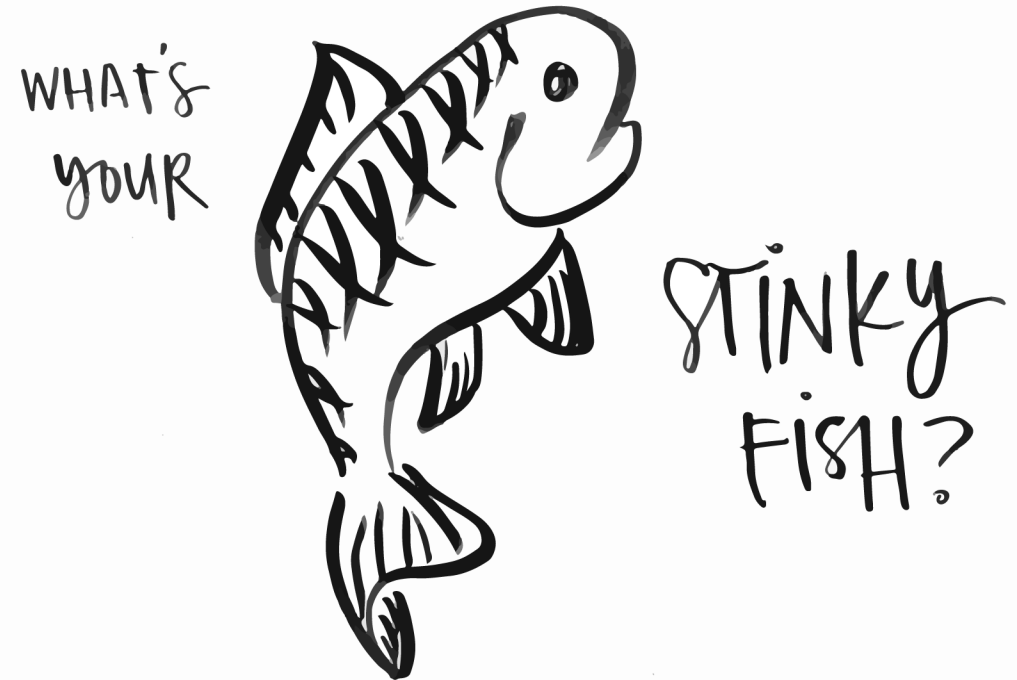
Reducing communication to a mere technical problem.

So what happened?



= Communication is simply very complex ...

- Different goals
- Different roles
- Different styles
- Different understandings
- Different cultures
- Different matters of concern
- Different identities
- ...

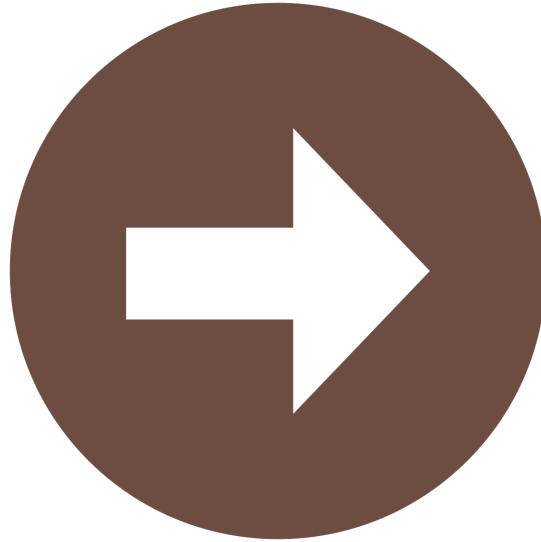


Not exaggerations, but the normal state of affairs.

Or why is it that *Communication Problems* are the most consistently mentioned problems?

An alternative: A constitutive approach





Exercise II: Bell-ringing



Reflecting in smaller groups

- Organizational culture
- Professional identities
- Leadership
- Organizational ways of doing things (routines)
- Collaborating with others
- Organizing collaboration, including goals
- ...

Two ways...

Informational model

Constitutive approach

A flat-earth-perspective?



But if things get more complex...

You are doing so much more than mere
message transmission.

What does this mean in practice?



Expression

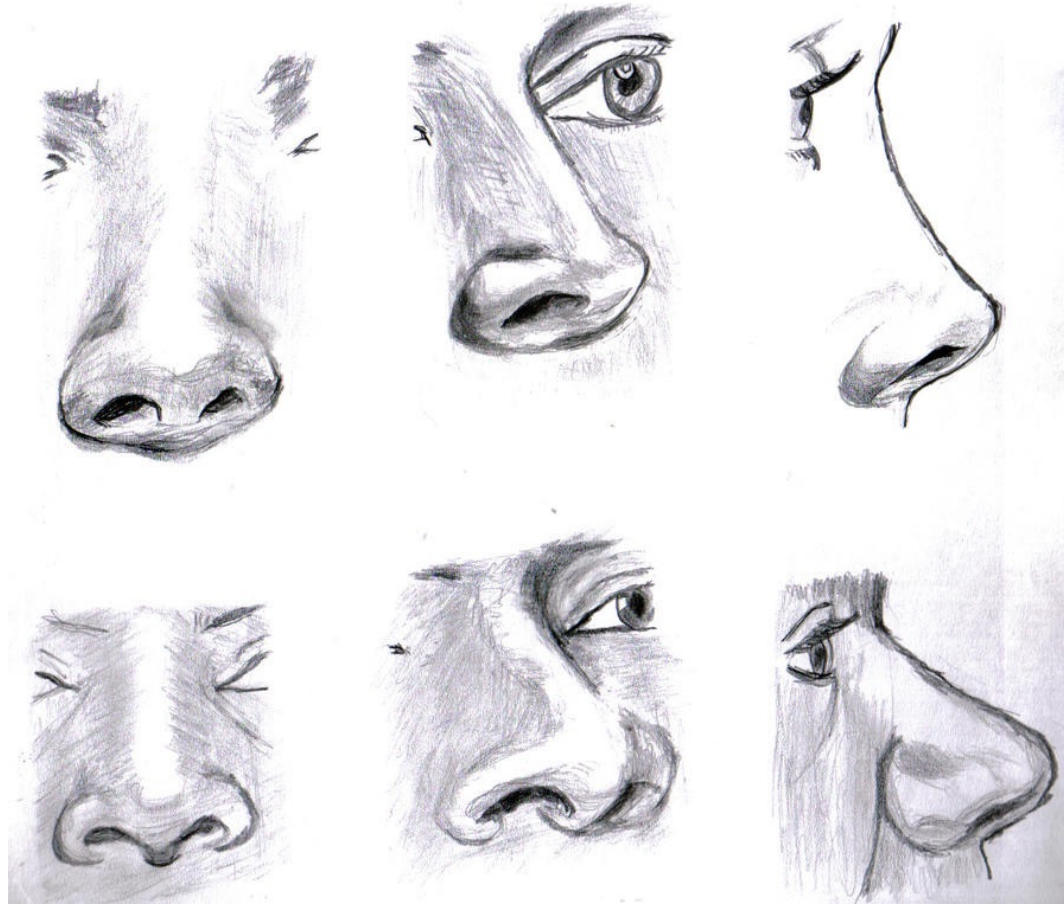
The diagram consists of two horizontal orange bars. The top bar is labeled 'Expression'. Below it, a large brown circle contains a white arrow pointing to the right. This arrow points to the start of a second horizontal orange bar, which is labeled 'Production'.

Production

Communication hack #1

When we communicate with others, we need to focus more on what we want to accomplish & produce and not just what we want to say.

Between noses, not ears



Communication life hack #2

Listen closely to the many voices
we all always express.

Belly-speaking, or the many voices we speak for



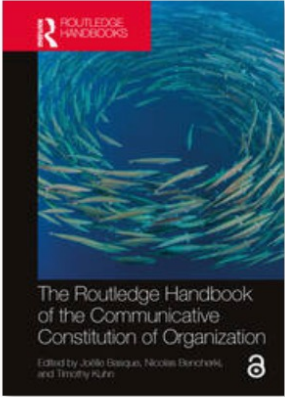
Article

Speaking about vision, talking in the name of so much more: A methodological framework for ventriloquial analyses in organization studies

Ellen Nathues , Mark van Vuuren¹, and François Cooren²

Abstract

Organizations have long been treated as stable and fixed entities, defined by concrete buildings, catchy names, and strategic goals neatly written on paper. The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) school proposes an alternative, practice-grounded conceptualization for studying organizations as emerging in communicative (inter)actions. In so doing, CCO invites organizational scholars to trace back organizational phenomena to *how they are communicated into existence*. The concept of *ventriloquism* can help us explain the communicative constitutive view as it depicts how various elements of a situation are communicated into being and make a difference in interaction. However, ventriloquism lacks a proper methodological outline. Taking employee conversations about visions—a classic constituent of organizations—as our venue, we created a four-step framework for ventriloquial analyses and explored how visions are talked into existence. In this paper, we introduce and illustrate our analytical framework, showing how to identify, order, and present ventriloquial effects. We thus provide organizational (communication) scholars with a new methodological tool that facilitates the systematic inquiry into organizing and the organized from a communicative constitutive perspective.



Chapter

Acting in the Name of Others

How to Unpack Ventriloquations

By Ellen Nathues, Mark van Vuuren

Book [The Routledge Handbook of the Communicative Constitution of Organization](#)

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Imprint	Routledge
Pages	13
eBook ISBN	9781003224914

More and more differences

How can we make sure we hear them?

Small Group Research
OnlineFirst, February 3, 2023
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<https://doi.org/10.1177/10464964221148682>



Article



Perk or Peril? Making Sense of Member Differences When Interorganizational Collaboration Begins

Ellen Nathues ^{1,2}, Maaïke D. Endedijk¹, and Mark van Vuuren¹

Abstract

Team member differences can be found in various characteristics and be seen as both perks and perils. But what makes one group focus on certain dimensions and differences' positive implications, while another collective notices other aspects and sees trouble ahead? We address this question in the context of interorganizational teams' first stages, when impressions are limited and valuations must be made promptly. Our findings from in-depth interviews offer a sensemaking perspective on perceived otherness and explicate when and why differences are interpreted as helping or hindering collaborative practices. Moreover, we illuminate how coorientation and representation dynamics shape otherness perceptions and valuations.

Surface-level differences	Deep-level differences	Job-related differences	Non-job-related differences
= immediately observable characteristics	= underlying and personal characteristics and traits	= characteristics that directly relate to one's profession	= characteristics that relate to aspects outside one's work
<i>Think of age, gender, ethnicity, ...</i>	<i>Think of values, personalities,</i>	<i>Think of education, knowledge, ...</i>	<i>Think of ideological beliefs, religion, ...</i>

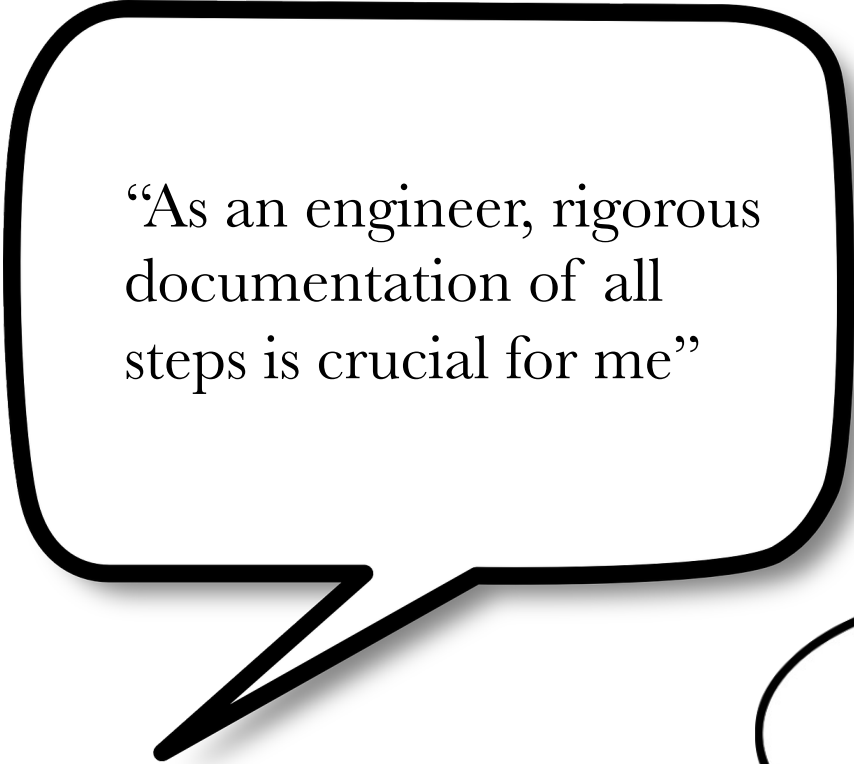
Exercise III: Stress balls




Organizational differences (voices)



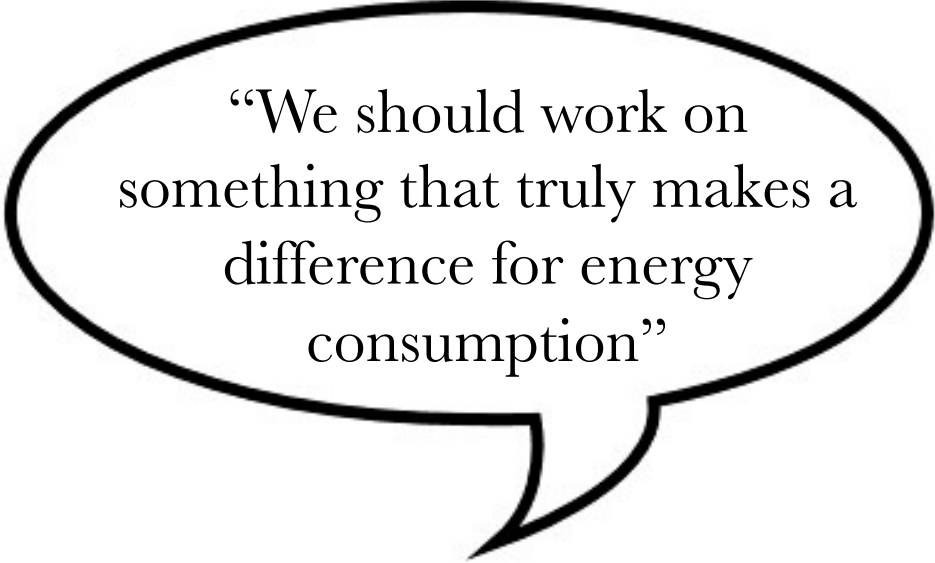
Not just *actors*, but also *passers*...



“As an engineer, rigorous documentation of all steps is crucial for me”

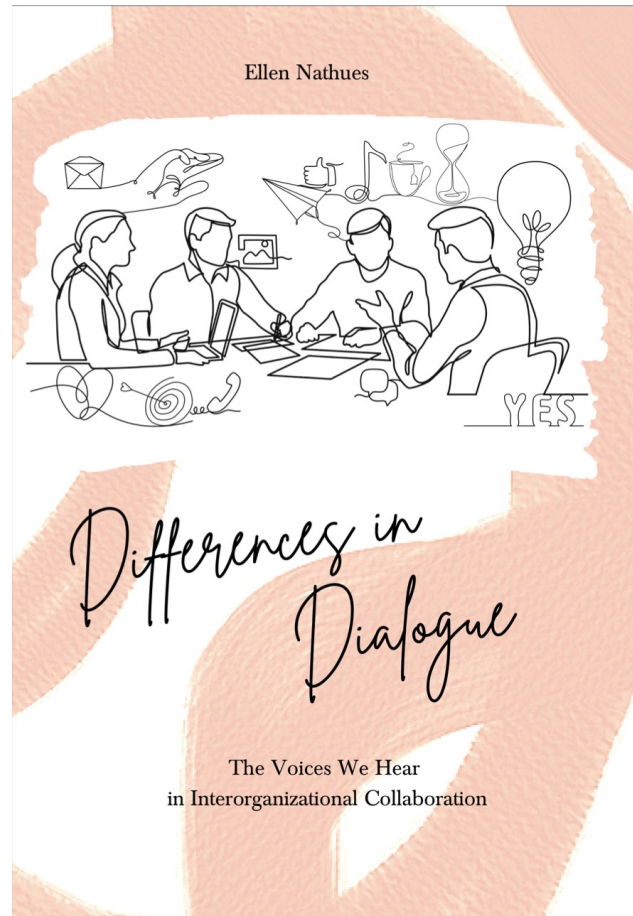


“Trust me, in my long experience, it never works that way”



“We should work on something that truly makes a difference for energy consumption”

A more crowded communication scene...



...with performative effects!



Article



Coauthoring collaborative strategy when voices are many and authority is ambiguous

Ellen Nathues , Maaike Endedijk, and Mark van Vuuren

Abstract

In interorganizational teams, processes are more complex and structures less clear than in intraorganizational settings. Different perspectives come together and authoritative positions are often ambiguous, which makes establishing *what to do* problematic. We adopt a ventriloquial analytical lens and pose the question: How exactly do interorganizational team members build a collaborative strategy under these conditions, in their situated interactions? Our findings show how many different voices (individual, organizational, team, and other) shape members' strategy-making and reveal these voices' performative authoritative effects: Members established their team's strategy and produced the needed authority to do so through three coauthoring practices, namely, the *proposition*, *appropriation*, and *expropriation of voices*. When members switched between the practices and different voices, these voices were either woven together or moved apart. We sketch a conceptualization of *strategy as a relational assemblage* and develop a process model of strategy-coauthoring to illuminate these dynamics.



Man in white:

“So I would really like to work on co-creation platforms in this project. In the fashion industry, everyone seems to be already doing that, or at least they have started to explore what the options are. I think that we’re running behind. A lot actually, at least at Company-X. So yeah, I would really love to work on that in this project, to learn more about it. Not sure how things are in your companies? Have you started to look into co-creation platforms already? Or are you just as new to that topic as we are? Would be great if we could learn from how others do this, of course!”



Woman in white:

“At Company-Z, we have been experimenting with customer co-creation already for a bit. So I guess I could share with you how we are doing things. But to be honest, I wouldn’t like it if this project would be all about co-creation platforms... I also want to learn something new... And one thing that we realized at Company-Z is that co-creation platforms sound very engaging, fruitful and productive in theory but successfully implementing this form of collaboration with customers is just so difficult! From my experience, I think it is a very thin line that companies are balancing on when experimenting with co-creation. So we would be more interested to find out how we can better understand our customers’ needs and wishes via for example social media channels. I mean, we do want to tailor our products to customers’ needs but in a more implicit way than what happens in co-creation.”



Man in blue:

“I can totally understand your concern about co-creation platforms and I also think that we should not work on that topic in this team. At Company-Y, we’re already finding it very difficult to keep up with our steadily increasing product variability. Maybe we should work on topics as customer engagement, needs responsiveness, those sorts of things. When you *((addressing the man in blue))* speak about wanting to learn more about co-creation platforms, that is probably because you, as a company, want to better tailor your products to your customers, right? And there I see a link to what you said *((addressing the women in white))*, you also want to better understand customer needs. And for us, at Company-Y, customer needs are a big part of the problem too: Because these become more and more diverse, our products also steadily increase in variety. So maybe we can take that as a starting point for what we want to work on in our team?”



Man in white	Women in white	Man in blue
<p>“so I would really like to work on co-creation platforms”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voicing his own (professional) interest to suggest what to work on 	<p>“at <i>Company-Z</i>, we have been experimenting [...]”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking as an org. representative, speaking for her organization 	<p>“I also think that we should not work on that topic in this team [...] we should work on topics as [...]”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting as an individual, then switching to speaking for the team as one collective
<p>“in the fashion industry”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invoking the voice of another bigger industry, to make a better case for his suggestion 	<p>“I wouldn’t like it if this project would be all about co-creation”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voicing her own (professional) interest 	<p>“at <i>Company-Y</i>, we’re already finding it very difficult”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing forward an organizational concern
<p>“we’re running behind [...] at least at <i>Company-X</i>”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking for his organization, claiming how they are running behind 	<p>“one thing that we realized at <i>Company-Z</i> is [...]”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing forward the experience of her entire organization 	<p>“you, as a company, want to better tailor your products to your customers, right?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing a team member as an org. representative
<p>“not sure how things are in your companies?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing the others not as team colleagues but as organizational members and representatives 	<p>“so we would be more interested to find out how we can better understand our customers’ needs [...] via [...] social media channels”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking for her entire organization, bringing forward their concern 	<p>“So maybe we can take that as a starting point for what we want to work on in our team?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking in the name of their team, as one collective

Figure 1: The complex voices and perspectives that can matter in interorganizational collaboration

	Intrasubjective I	Intersubjective You	Intersubjective We	Generic It
Individual	<i>I-as-individual</i>	<i>You-as-individual</i>		
Organizational	<i>I-as-organization</i>	<i>You-as-organization</i>	<i>We-as-organization</i>	<i>It-as-organization</i>
Collective		<i>You-as-team</i>	<i>We-as-team</i>	<i>It-as-team</i>
Other				<i>It-as-ext. party</i>

Again, what does this mean for practice?

- Be aware of the possible variety of concerns that are brought forward. Try to understand whether the suggestion in question was motivated by an individual or an organizational objective, for example.

Did your team colleague talk as an “I”, or did she talk as a “we” to refer to her organization? She might also mask her individual interest as a company- wide one, in order to speak with more power.

We tend to take our pronoun use for granted, but especially in settings where diverse professionals come together, paying extra attention to the question of *who a professional is talking for* can reveal a lot about the underlying dynamics of the situation.

Again, what does this mean for practice?

- Shifting from organizational to individual to team

Is one of your team members constantly talking from her organization's perspective? Is she bringing up organizational concerns and objectives again and again?

If in your team you feel that organizational concerns are dominating too much, you might want to try to twist members' perspectives from organizational to individual. Ask them about what they, as individual professionals, would like to get out of the project and see if you can find some common ground that way. A very mature organization might find little value in learning from a very young one, but this does not mean that team members cannot learn from each other as individual professionals. Actively reminding people to think from different perspectives can help to find common ground and to form a collective team “we”.

Again, what does this mean for practice?

- We as one team: Something to be created.

The “we” as one team is not something that immediately exist. Instead, such a “we” needs to be created and actively worked on.

If you wonder whether the group of people you brought together as one team really is a team, maybe pay attention to the words and pronouns each of you uses when talking about the team. Do members talk about us, our team, and we? And if so, do really all members do that? Or are just some of them talking about us and we while the rest speaks from their own or their organizations’ perspective?

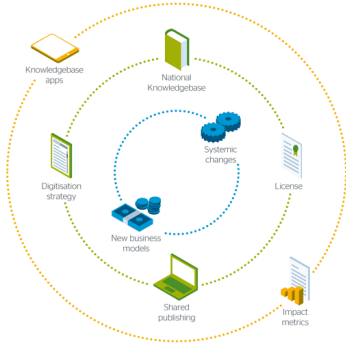
Collaboration is ultimately all about forming a collective we: If there is no we, there is hardly a reason to speak of collaboration and teamwork at all. Team managers might want to purposefully invoke pronouns and phrases as we, us and our team in conversations and their questions to others. Or they might want to translate others’ organizational and individual concerns into collective or team concerns.

Again, what does this mean for practice?

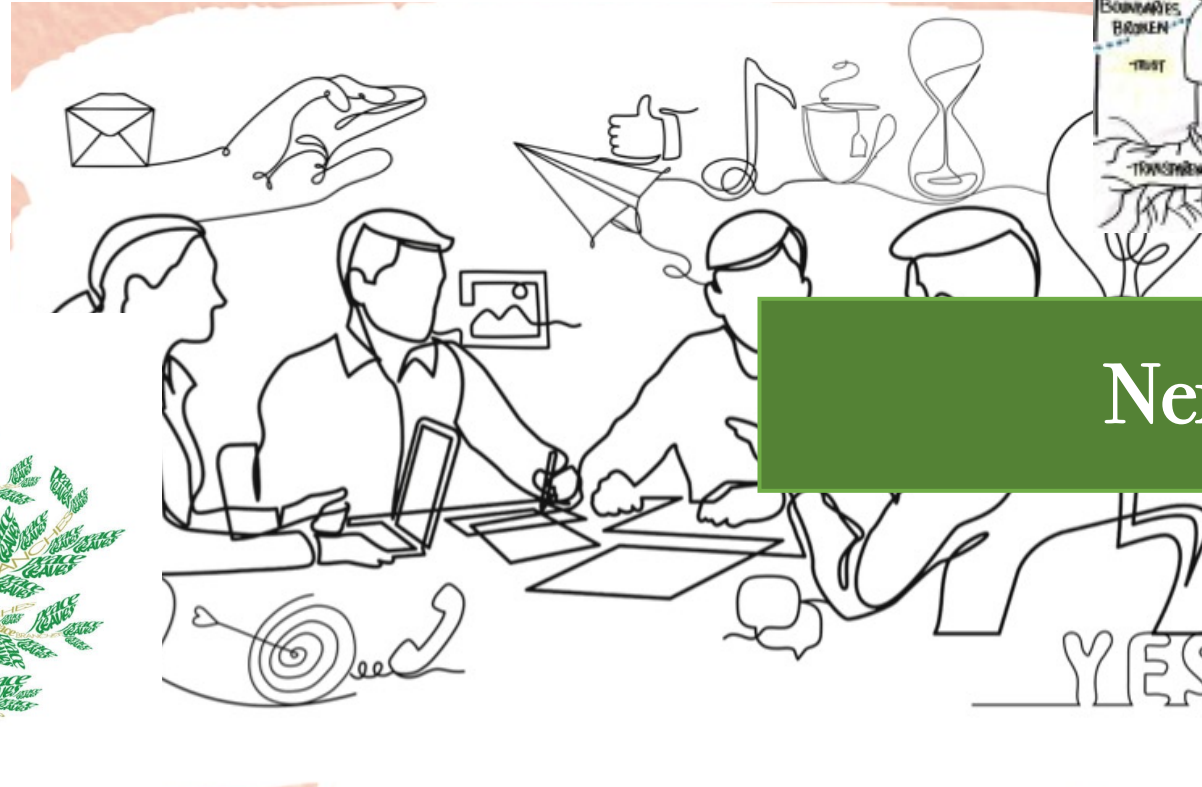
- Distinguishing between a real we and a claimed we.

The team's collective "we" can be a powerful resource: Those that use it are in a position to author and define what the team should work on. Some members might try to mask organizational objectives under the team's we—they would simply present what they want for their organization as that what also matters for the team. Team leaders need to sensitize for that. A truly collective we reflects and brings together the concerns of diverse voices and not just one organization or one individual. This condition is something to always check against.

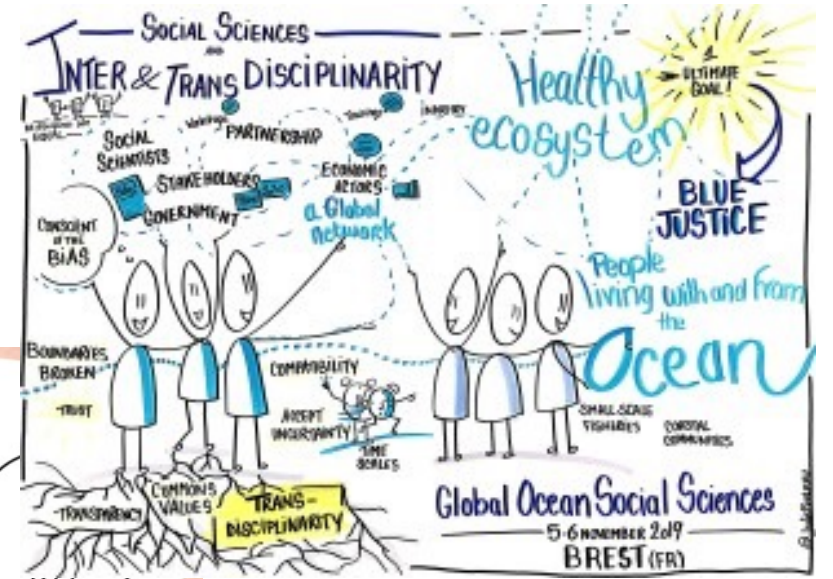
Voices of objects?



IT'S A METAPHOR



Next workshop?



COLLABORATION

E-PLM 2.0 - Experiment 5.1

Types of collaborative help shared sense-making

This report has been created within the E-PLM 2.0 project, Experiment 5.1. For questions, please contact:

Ellen Nathues	Prof. dr. Maaïke D. Endedijk
University of Twente	University of Twente
e.nathues@utwente.nl	m.d.endedijk@utwente.nl

AUTHORING SHARED SENSE-MAKING

E-PLM 2.0 - Experiment 5.1

Thinking about what products can be created

This information sheet has been created within the E-PLM 2.0 project, Experiment 5.1. For questions, please contact:

Ellen Nathues	Prof. dr. Maaïke D. Endedijk
University of Twente	University of Twente
e.nathues@utwente.nl	m.d.endedijk@utwente.nl

MEMBER DIFFERENCES

E-PLM 2.0 - Experiment 5.1

Types of member differences and how they can help or hinder collaboration

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University of Twente	University of Twente
e.nathues@utwente.nl	m.d.endedijk@utwente.nl

MEETINGS

E-PLM 2.0 - Experiment 5.1

Insights and materials for adapting meetings to team stage and needs

This report has been created within the E-PLM 2.0 project, Experiment 5.1. For questions, please contact:

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Dialogue in small groups

- Your stinky fishes...
- Your sea of assumptions...
- What have you learned...
- Your main take-away...
- Your remaining or follow-up questions...

Reflections and conclusions

Real collaboration requires a balanced reflection of the multiple organizational, professional, individual, and other aims and voices that come together.

For that, collaborators need to cultivate a keen awareness of the many voices expressed in their group.

Professionals are used to thinking of communication as processes and practices that happen in their teams or collaborative projects.

I would like to invite you to turn upside down this rationale and *consider your collaborations as happening—forming—in communication.*

Thank you!

Contact me at e.nathues@utwente.nl