

## Fields of Connection

The practice of business constellations

Fields of Connection – *The practice of business  
constellations*

Jan Jacob Stam

Editing: James G. Campbell

Translation by: James G. Campbell

Originally published under title: Het verbindende veld

© 2017, Het Noorderlicht

ISBN 978-9492331984 (NUR 801)

All rights reserved. For copying please contact:  
**contact@hetnoorderlicht.com**

# Contents

- Acknowledgements** **1**
  
- Foreword** **3**
  
- 1 The system we call ‘the organisation’** **5**
  - 1.1 A systemic ‘quick reference’ card . . . . . 6
  - 1.2 An organisation . . . . . 7
  - 1.3 What makes an organisation healthy? . . . . . 8
  
- 2 Dynamics** **15**
  - 2.1 Triangulation . . . . . 16
  - 2.2 Parentification: reversing the order . . . . . 18
  - 2.3 Identification with a goal . . . . . 20
  - 2.4 Facing something that someone else cannot see . . . . . 21
  - 2.5 Solving something unsolved at another level . . . . . 22
  - 2.6 I’ll follow you . . . . . 23
  - 2.7 Non-existent positions . . . . . 24
  - 2.8 The council clerk . . . . . 26
  - 2.9 Positions that are ‘burdened’ . . . . . 30
  - 2.10 Acknowledging what is present . . . . . 31
  
- 3 A new economy: Systemic money and turnover** **33**
  - 3.1 New values . . . . . 34
  - 3.2 Getting the balance between give and take . . . . . 35
  - 3.3 Debts and feelings of guilt . . . . . 37
  - 3.4 Using affection to take revenge . . . . . 39
  - 3.5 Freedom, dependency and dignity . . . . . 40
  - 3.6 Personal interest and company interest . . . . . 41
  - 3.7 ‘If you love someone set him free’ . . . . . 42
  - 3.8 New growth and profit . . . . . 42
  - 3.9 Grants . . . . . 43

3.10	Benefits . . . . .	44
3.11	Whiplash . . . . .	45
3.12	Second generation issues . . . . .	46
<b>4</b>	<b>Where is the boss?</b>	<b>47</b>
4.1	The first place . . . . .	48
4.2	Three principles of leadership . . . . .	48
4.3	Putting things in order . . . . .	49
4.4	Leading from the first or from the last position . . . . .	51
4.5	Self-managing teams . . . . .	51
4.6	Where is the boss, actually? . . . . .	52
4.7	How high and how far away is the boss? . . . . .	54
4.8	The rescuer . . . . .	55
4.9	Leadership and network organizations . . . . .	56
<b>5</b>	<b>Living in a family business</b>	<b>61</b>
5.1	Public property . . . . .	68
<b>6</b>	<b>Organisational change</b>	<b>71</b>
6.1	Points in organisational change . . . . .	76
6.2	Changing while staying in touch with reality . . . . .	78
6.3	How do we rid ourselves of that out-dated goal? . . . . .	79
6.4	Strong ideals isolate . . . . .	81
6.5	Orgenogram . . . . .	82
6.6	Systemic performance interviews . . . . .	84
<b>7</b>	<b>Blood is thicker than water</b>	<b>87</b>
7.1	The deceased twin-brother . . . . .	89
7.2	Father's and mother's daughters and sons . . . . .	91
7.3	The hidden boss . . . . .	93
7.4	Carrying a burden for someone else . . . . .	94
7.5	Double image . . . . .	95
7.6	The hidden spectator . . . . .	98
7.7	The work mid-life crisis . . . . .	98
7.8	Who are you honouring by doing it this way? . . . . .	101

**8 About the method of system constellations 103**  
8.1 An outline of some of the possibilities . . . . . 110  
8.2 Can you use constellations for just about anything? . . . . 112

**9 Can you send me your résumé? 115**  
9.1 The job opportunity . . . . . 117  
9.2 Intelligence work . . . . . 119  
9.3 Some sort of order of previous work experiences . . . . . 121  
9.4 Fulfilling someone else's dream . . . . . 123  
9.5 Being in service to something . . . . . 124

**10 Products are just like human beings 129**  
10.1 Baby food . . . . . 131  
10.2 What is going on inside repeats itself on the outside . . . . 132  
10.3 The hidden stakeholders . . . . . 133  
10.4 A choice between two markets . . . . . 134  
10.5 The title . . . . . 136  
10.6 Results from doing constellations on branding issues . . . . 138

**11 A systemic test for road-worthiness 143**  
11.1 Order: a reliable place for everyone . . . . . 145  
11.2 The balance between give and take . . . . . 147  
11.3 Everyone has equal rights to a place in the system. . . . . 150

**Literature 153**

**About the author 155**

**About the Dutch Bert Hellinger Institute 157**

**About Het Noorderlicht 159**



# Acknowledgements

First of all I need to thank some people. Actually, that's not completely true. I do not want to thank them, I want to mention them. Thanking them is a process of acknowledging what I got from them. As live examples and role models for me they gave me their ideas and insights, and I cannot give them much back, besides being grateful. And thanking them is something between them and me, and the reader doesn't have anything to do with this rather intimate process of wanting to thank them.

You might even feel a little bit as though you are watching a peep-show when I thank the people from whom I got so much. No, I want to mention them, to let you know, and shout to the world, that these are people who made important and decisive contributions to the development of business constellations. Without these caring, dedicated, professional people, the whole systemic approach of business constellations would not exist, nor would this book.

So please, a warm round of applause for:

- Gunthard Weber, who took on the idea of doing organization constellations in the first place as a godfather and who has created a solid and broad base for their further development.
- Matthias Varga von Kibéd and Insa Sparrer, with their endless stream of fresh ideas, their observations, both acknowledging and supportive, that inspired one like a warm bubble bath.
- Bert Hellinger, for making constellation work possible at all, sharing all his insights without wanting anything back for it, like a fresh mountain spring, always available and from which all may drink their fill.

For a long time I was hesitant and reluctant about having this book translated into English. It would be better just to re-write the whole book; as it was written it is too Dutch; I felt it would need to be more solid in En-

glish whereas I had allowed myself a certain lightness in the Dutch version. The only way we could have this book translated into English was to have it be far from perfect. I do hope, you as a reader can live with that.

Robin Temple and Hendrikus Schumacher translated this book into English. For a control-freak like myself, I felt grateful that I could trust my product into their hands without reservations.

And I agree with the advertisement which states that the man behind an achievement is often a woman: my wife Bibi, who knows me so well and had to deal with all the doubts, bad temper and last minute work.

Jan Jacob Stam  
Groningen, august 2006



# Foreword

This book is designed to offer a short guided tour through the worlds of work and organisations, from a ‘systemic’ point of view. As we live our individual lives, surrounded by all the myriad possibilities and limitations that confront us each day, we can so easily forget that we are also intimately connected to the larger whole. The ‘systemic’ way of thinking and looking at the world helps us become aware of the many mechanisms and dynamics that are at work in systems that we normally never notice. These are the dynamics that can, in one moment, give us the wings to fly and in another moment hold us completely paralysed and unable to act. The German philosopher and psychotherapist Bert Hellinger has discovered a way to make the hidden dynamics of any system visible. He uses what he calls the ‘constellation’ to do this. Gunthard Weber, together with many colleagues, has developed Bert Hellinger’s pioneering ideas further and taken constellations into the world of work and professions and organisations. A ‘constellation’ has the unique capacity of being able to bring fundamental truths about any particular system to light. It bypasses the opinions or judgements that so we easily impose on reality and which tend to filter out and distort the truth. And, as such, the constellation approach is very directly connected with perceivable reality.

Constellations have been able to provide us with many new insights into how organisations actually function and how people within organisations can flourish. The interest in organisational constellations is naturally growing very rapidly now with so much new information becoming available about what is actually going on in organisations, when considered from a systemic point of view.

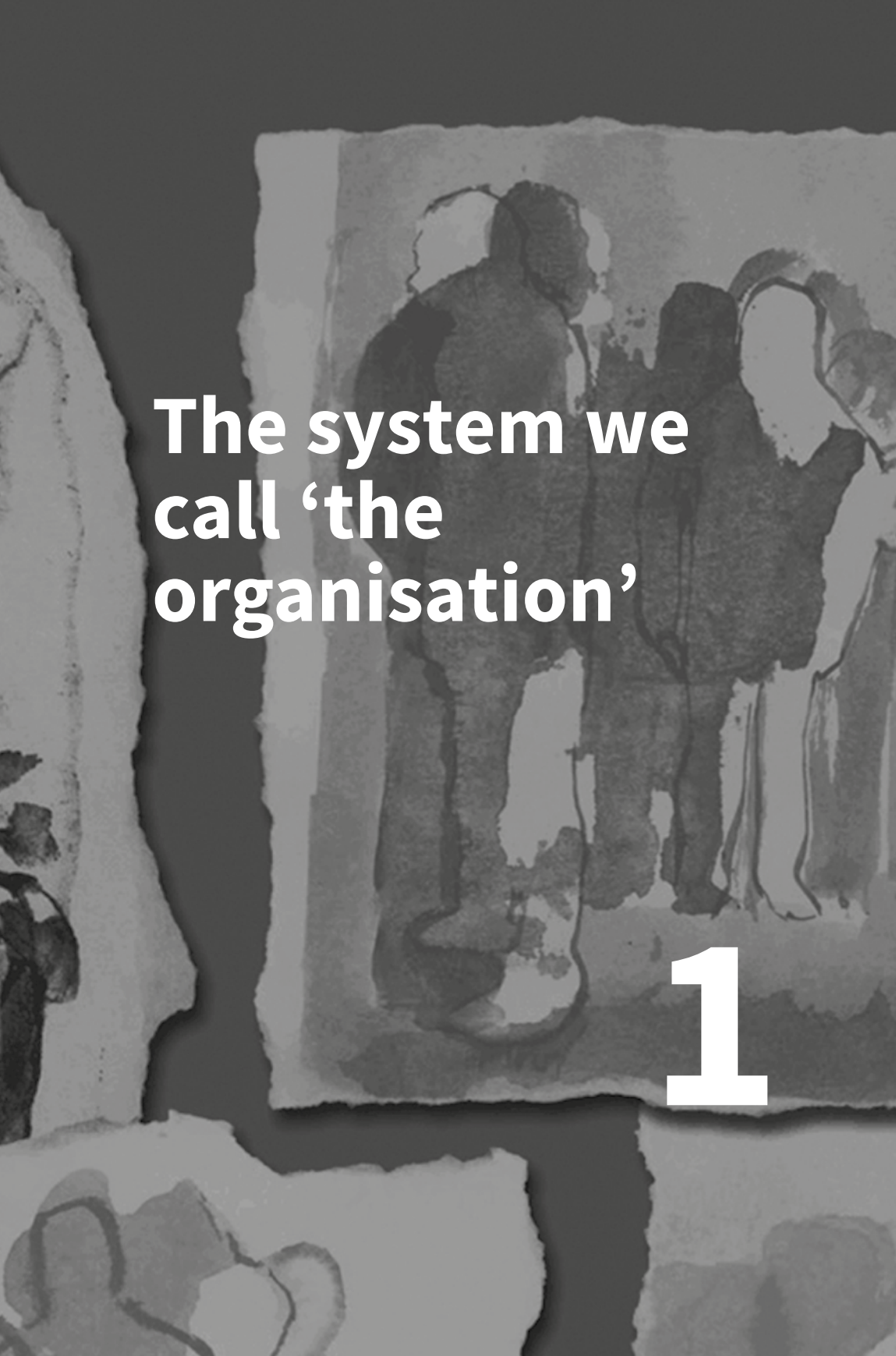
I, myself, through my work as an organisational consultant, have now had six years of experience using the systemic approach in organisations. I’ve brought many insights together in this book, examples from our consulting practice, and my own experiences gained from working in the field of organisation constellations.

The material in this book is presented as a series of articles, arranged in no particular sequence. So I invite you to choose for yourself the order in which you read them.

If you are someone for whom the methods of organisation or system constellations are new you, might want to start with Chapter 7. How about a conducted tour? Perhaps, by wandering through the landscape of our working lives, with this book in your hand, your attention will be drawn to a few special places of interest. I wish you a pleasant walk as you explore!



Jan Jacob Stam  
Abries, France, october 2003



**The system we  
call ‘the  
organisation’**

**1**

## 1.1 A systemic 'quick reference' card

Perhaps a couple of years from now you could be someone who is arriving at your first day in a new job in a organisation you will be working for. Alongside the standard issue of your I.D. card with PIN code, map of the building, org. chart and list of abbreviations used in this organisation, you are also handed a systemic quick-reference card. On this card you would be able to see, at a glance, all the most important systemic dynamics that are operating within the company for whom you are about to start working. These systemic dynamics are the invisible winds that blow through this company. These unseen winds have the power to give people wings to fly. Equally, against their wishes and without their being aware of it, these unseen forces can actually make people ill. The 'orgenogram' is a sort of org. chart of the history of the company. By looking at this chart, together with the systemic quick-reference card that you have been given, you would be able to get a much clearer picture for yourself of the place where you are about to start working and where you hope to remain happily working for the foreseeable future.

On the systemic quick-reference card the following dynamics of the company might be indicated:

The founder of this company was a man of ideals who wanted to help many people in a poor neighbourhood and decided to set up a co-operative venture to do this. After working in this company for many years he finally left to set up a new company.

Many of the present employees still remain more loyal to the original founder of their company than to the present board of directors.

Many years ago the company changed from being a cooperative to being a limited company and entered new market sectors. One member of the present board of directors still identifies himself with the original market sector that the company was working in, even though the company no longer operates in this sector. His fellow board members often experience him as a bit of a 'pain in the ass', although some employees actually do like him very much.