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**Mindfulness in companies between  
exploitation and intrinsic value –  
A systemic analysis of the field of tension**

**Master-Thesis**

**2018 | Nr. 1**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Prof. Dr. Georg Müller-Christ of the faculty of business administration & sustainability at University of Bremen. He was always very helpful whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. He consistently allowed this paper to be my own work and encouraged me to trust in my intuition. I am very thankful not only for supporting and enabling my choice of a systemic research method but for introducing me to the method of systemic constellation and all its potential during my previous studies.

I would also like to thank Denis Pijetlovic for becoming the second reader of this thesis, supporting my data collection by participating in the systemic constellation as a representative and offering me advice and support for my research and evaluation.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to all the participants of the systemic constellation involved. Without their voluntary participation and input, the data collection could not have been successfully conducted.

I would particularly like to thank my partner for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my son as my constant motivator and reminder to give my best each and every day.

This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. **Thank you.**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Problem

The world we live in is characterized by complexity and constant change. In every aspect of life people try to become faster and better in what they do but gradually this continuous race seems to turn against us. Nature and Society become more and more exhausted and we watch first systems collapse as a consequence of these disruptive times (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). At the same time, we see humans and organizations reach out for ways to counteract these tendencies. One big trend that proclaims the return to simplicity, deceleration and human core values, is the practice of mindfulness. The theory that originates in old Buddhism tradition is nowadays a major subject of interest for research in neuroscience and psychology but also for individuals looking to reconnect with themselves. Moreover, it has reached the world of business, becoming permanent feature in leadership development and employee health programs (Garms, 2013). This latest development, however, calls for a closer look at the motives to deploy mindfulness. As our current economical system is based on growth and profit accumulation, it should be considered safe to assume that mindfulness in organizations is likely to be subject to exploitation. One danger of utilizing mindfulness for business purposes is that the very old practice is robbed of its historic and spiritual context and all values and ethics attached. To put it differently, an attitude that originally presented an alternative to the predominant paradigm now becomes subject to the very same system. As a tool that is associated with increased productivity and resilience, making use of mindfulness for profit reasons keeps the paradigm running that gradually destroys our systems (Laloux, 2014).

Apparently, motives and overall world view seem to be of utmost importance in the discussion about mindfulness. This, however, is not surprising, considering that many authors suggest that we have reached a turning point in history that announces the dawn of a new paradigm. Different future models promise a shift from an ego-centric to an eco-centric thinking and society (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Laloux, 2014). Taking into account that new times call for new thinking, this thesis aims not only to explore the role of mindfulness in the evolution of human consciousness but also aims to use systemic constellation as a qualitative research method in order to generate new, insight-leading hypotheses on this field. This is extremely relevant both, for praxis and research. In addition, this research might induce

rethinking in companies and institutions, if they get an understanding of what mindfulness can and cannot do in an organizational context. An additional goal is to transfer some inspiration on how to get to collective mindfulness beyond the limits of companies. Thus, researcher and academics might get new insights and ideas in a field that is still relatively unexplored. The new hypotheses resulting from our methodical approach can, and hopefully will be, used as starting point for future research and exploration.

## **1.2. Goal**

The overall goal of this research is to explore the true potential of mindfulness in the light of its increasing exploitation within a growth and profit driven system. In addition, this research aims to use systemic constellation as a qualitative research method to explore the relevant field of tension.

The objectives of this research are divided into a descriptive and an analytical part. The descriptive goal is to lay the theoretical foundation for the subsequent part of this thesis. In part one of this work, the essence of both individual and collective mindfulness will be depicted. Furthermore, a demonstration of the two conflicting poles exploitation and intrinsic value that make up the relevant area of tension for this research will be given. Last but not least, the literature search includes the theory of spiral dynamics as a frame for this thesis as well as an introduction of systemic constellation as a research method to explore the unknown.

The analytical part two presents the design, implementation and analysis of a systemic constellation that allows for a deep exploration of the relevant system and leads to creative hypotheses that enables new perspectives and insights.

## **1.3. Strategy**

Starting point of this research is the theoretical foundation that includes a profound examination of mindfulness practice, individually as well as collectively, an introduction of Spiral Dynamics as the mental frame of this research and a presentation of the two conflicting poles exploitation and intrinsic value that form the relevant field of tension.

After the theoretical basis is laid in chapter 2, chapter 3 gives the reader an understanding of the methods used. It illustrates systemic constellation as a method of qualitative research including data collection and its analysis in order to construct new hypotheses.

Chapter 4 presents the actual process of the constellation, its examination and findings.

Eventually, the compact results of this research are offered in chapter 5 as well as a critical appraisal of such and implications for further research.

## **2. Theoretical frame**

### **2.1. Individual Mindfulness**

*“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom“* [Viktor Frankl]

#### **2.1.1. Defining Mindfulness**

As addressed in more detail in chapter 2.2., mindfulness is a Buddhist meditation practice with over 2,500 years of history (Shonin et al., 2015). Therefore, it makes sense to keep in mind the Buddhist understanding of the term when looking for a definition. According to the traditional teaching humans have the tendency to ruminate constantly about the past and/or the future. This is associated with a distorted perception of reality and a lessened ability to consciously participate in the present moment (Dalai Lama, 2001). Accordingly, not being mindful is linked in Buddhism to going through life as a “walking corpse” or on autopilot.

In spite of its traditional roots, there is currently no consensus in terms of western psychology’s understanding of what defines mindfulness (Van Gordon et al., 2013) but it is generally accepted that mindfulness:

- is fundamentally concerned with becoming more aware of the present moment;
- can (and should) be practiced during everyday activities and not just when seated in meditation;
- is generated more easily by using a ‘meditative anchor’, such as observing the breath;

- should not involve any forced breathing (i.e. where the breath is used as a meditative anchor it should be allowed to follow its natural course);
- is a practice that requires deliberate effort and sustained meditative concentration;
- is concerned with observing both sensory and cognitive-affective processes; and
- is generally easier to learn if individuals are taught using guided mindfulness meditations (Shonin, E. et al., 2014b).

Probably the most prominent definition of mindfulness is the one from developer of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program Jon Kabat-Zinn who defines it as ‘paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4). However, his use of the term “non-judgementally” has been criticized for suggesting a complete indifference of the mindfulness practitioner regarding an ethically wholesome conduct (Shonin, E. et al., 2014b).

Another subject to debate is the fact that mindfulness traditionally is practiced in context of spiritual development and in connection with different other meditative or spiritual practices. Psychologist argue that where mindfulness is isolated from its spiritual roots, as it often is in clinically focused Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs), it is not technically accurate to refer to the resultant construct as mindfulness (Shonin, E. et al., 2014a) . In order to address these issues a number of alternative definitions have been proposed, all having their own strengths and weaknesses. However, DR EDO SHONIN and colleagues favour an approach that addresses the issues stated above: “Mindfulness is the process of engaging a full, direct, and active awareness of experienced phenomena that is spiritual in aspect and that is maintained from one moment to the next” (Shonin, E. et al., 2014a, p.29).

### 2.1.2. Historical development and modern application

Mindfulness meditation has developed over 2,500 years (Shonin et al., 2015). As the following chapter outlines, taking a closer look at its origin helps understanding its modern application and potential limitations. Its roots can be found in Eastern philosophy and its principles are known in Buddhism as the Four Noble Truths, which can be outlined as follows:

The truth of suffering (Dukkha)



Despite the obvious forms of suffering like old-age, sickness or death, Buddha's teaching says that human beings are subject to constant desires and cravings. Even if one is able to satisfy these desires, the satisfaction is only temporary before the state of non-fulfillment sets in again. Being unsatisfied is therefore the truth of suffering.

The truth of the origin of suffering (Samudāya)

Again apart from obvious causes of everyday troubles like thirst, pain from injury or sadness from the loss of a loved one, buddhistic literature claims that the true origin of suffering lies deep within us and comes in three different forms; greed and desire, ignorance or delusion and hatred and destructive urges.

The truth of the cessation of suffering (Nirodha)

Buddha explains that the only way to avoid desire and therefore suffering is to liberate oneself from attachment. Someone who attains Nirvana, meaning extinguishing, and thereby reaches enlightenment has compassion for all living things. It can best be understood as a state of mind a human can reach that implicates profound spiritual joy and no negative emotions and fears.

The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Magga)

The final truth is a set of principles called the Eightfold Path; Buddha's prescription for the end of suffering. The eight stages are not to be taken in order but rather support and reinforce each other: Right Understanding, Accepting Buddhist Teaching, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration (Gordon et al., 2015).

The teaching of the Right Mindfulness involves that mindfulness should be developed across four different sources, also known as the four foundations of mindfulness; body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. These four frames of reference are considered to be the vehicle for all suffering, without there would not be any. As previously indicated, the individual that has not yet reached enlightenment is subject to constant suffering which emerges in at least one of the four domains. Therefore, to practice Right Mindfulness means to be fully aware of the constant suffering radiating from body, feelings, mind or phenomena. This includes both, the suffering that is currently manifest (i.e. suffering of suffering) and the suffering that is yet to manifest (i.e. suffering of change). The former can be cultivated by using the breath to tie the mind to the present moment while directing awareness to any of the four foundations. The

latter requires more insight, effort and intuition of the practitioner as the suffering of change can easily be neglected by the individual in comparison to the suffering of suffering which is hard not to notice. That is why the aim of cultivating mindfulness of the suffering of change is to maintain a continuous awareness in all processes of thought regarding what collectively are known as the Four Summaries of the Dhamma. These include the knowledge that life in any world is unstable, incomplete and has to be left behind at some point. Accordingly, the practitioner requires perspective, clarity of vision and a full understanding of the principles of impermanence. Good health in the present moment only serves as a cause for poor health at a later point of time. The fact that we are born and live only serves as a cause that we will die at some point in the future. There is no exception to this law (Gordon et al., 2015).

The old Buddhist knowledge became more and more relevant as the complex and dynamic world we live in today developed. For that reason, JON KABAT-ZINN, a molecular biologist with a Buddhist meditation background, began to develop a non-religious version of meditation in 1970s. By 1979 he offered his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to individuals with different chronic health conditions. It had not been possible to cure these patients by available medical interventions, and so they were left with the prospect of having to manage the chronic symptoms in their bodies without further treatment. JON KABAT-ZINN offered a new approach, suggesting that there is no cure but it is upon the individuals themselves to find new ways to respond to their conditions. Instead of addressing each condition separately, KABAT-ZINN focused his class on the shared nature of human distress. He developed a program where people attended a two-hour class once a week for eight weeks and where asked to practice mindfulness in their daily lives at home. One of the fundamental aims of the program was to make people see how they focus solely on what seems to be wrong in their lives or what needs to be changed and thereby neglecting all the things that are satisfying and pleasurable (Silverton, S., 2016).

MBSR has become the foundation of other approaches that have grown out of it and combine the mindfulness practice with other types of therapy. A very successful example is that of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). As the name suggests it combines MBSR with practices from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and was intended especially as a treatment for people with a history of recurrent depression. Research shows that MBCT halved the likelihood of depression recurring in cases where the participants had three or more previous episodes (Teasdale et al., 2000). Moreover, it was recommended in the UK by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and by the American Psychiatric

Association (APA) as the treatment of choice for recurrent depressive illness, thereby out-competing treatment with anti-depressant medication (Silverton, 2016). In addition to depression and other mood disorders, mindfulness-based interventions have also been shown to be effective in helping treat a broad range of mental health problems and somatic illnesses. Examples include anxiety disorders, substance-use disorders, eating disorders, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, behavioural addictions (e.g. problem gambling, work addiction), schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, sexual dysfunction, diabetes, coronary heart disease, HIV aids, fibromyalgia, psoriasis, brain injury, and cancer (e.g. Arias et al., 2006; Baer, 2003; Chiesa & Serretti, 2011).

Outside of clinical settings, findings also suggest that mindfulness has applications in (but not limited to)

- forensic psychology as a tool for reducing reoffending, modulating impulsivity and regulating anger,
- occupational psychology for improving work-related well-being, work productivity and job performance,
- educational psychology for improving academic performance, knowledge acquisition, quality of learning environment and cognitive functioning,
- positive psychology for facilitating wisdom acquisition, flourishing and wellbeing optimization,
- sport psychology for achieving peak performance, situational awareness and task focus, and
- transpersonal psychology for improving spiritual and meta-cognitive awareness (e.g. Dane, 2010, Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012, Shonin et al., 2013b, 2013c).

The connection between mind and body is highly recognized in the eastern tradition but almost neglected completely in the western world. Research in neuroscience has shown that the human brain can change in both structure and activity. This neuroplasticity is known to be directly linked to how we use our brain. In 2003, RICHARD DAVIDSON and colleagues, supported by JON KABAT-ZINN as mindfulness meditator, proofed that participants of the MBSR program showed significant changes in brain activation in the prefrontal cortex. In addition, DAVIDSON et al. demonstrated a shift of neuronal activation from right to left hemisphere in key areas of the brain, which are associated with regulation of emotion. This suggests an increase in ability to deal with situations in a more balanced way. After four

months, a second test revealed that the changes in the brain were still evident (Davidson et al., 2003). Moreover, a study conducted with experienced meditators found changes in the thickness of the cerebral cortex that in some areas was equivalent with the thickness expected in people 20 years younger. These results indicate that longtime mindfulness practice may slow down age-related processes of degradation in the brain (Lazar, S.W. et al., 2005).

To summarize, increasing evidence suggests that meditation can alter both the structure and activity of our brain and thereby affect our well-being positively. Particularly influenced by meditation practice seem to be the areas of the brain that are linked to helping us regulate our emotions (Silverton, S., 2016).

### 2.1.3. Mindfulness at Work

In General, there are different components through which mindful meditation exerts its effects: attention regulation, body awareness, emotion regulation (including reappraisal and exposure, extinction, and reconsolidation), and change in perspective on the self. Findings suggest that these mechanisms synergistically establish a process of enhanced self-regulation (Holzel et al., 2011). This ability seems to be highly desirable in an organizational context as a constantly increasing number of research and literature documents. Some experts consider mindfulness to be “the long-awaited answer to the challenges of today’s fast-paced and information-overloaded leadership reality” (Hougaard et al., 2016a) and that “Understanding and managing attention is now the single most important determinant of business success” (Davenport & Beck, 2002). However, considering the spiritual origin of mindfulness, a closer look at its implementation in western world organizations is necessary.

Companies today face intense market competition and always look for ways to increase efficiency. The constant speed and pressure leads to harder working but less attending employees. HOUGAARD et al. refer to this situation as the PAID reality describing the fact that individuals at work are under constant Pressure, are Always on, experience Information overload, and work in highly Distractive environments (Hougaard et al., 2016b). As a result, working in a continuous state of partial attention leads to great financial impacts regarding productivity as well as immense costs for the ability to lead, innovate, and live meaningful lives. Many companies including Deutsche Bank, U.S. Army and Google identify the importance of mindfulness for business success and teach it to their employees (Ehrlich, 2017).

Mindfulness differs from other development tools of organizational psychology such as modeling or feedback as it suggests an inside-out approach. It gives access to information, both internal and external, thereby enabling sustainable change in individual behavior. That seems to be especially relevant for individuals in management and leadership positions. The research on mindful leadership identifies six categories of mindfulness practice that are linked to different positive outcomes as shown in table 1 (Ehrlich, 2017).

| <b>Factor</b>     | <b>Outcome</b>  |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Spirit</b>     | Greater employee motivation, engagement, empowerment, career development, job and life satisfaction, customer loyalty; less absenteeism and theft |
| <b>Emotion</b>    | Higher EQ, emotional stability, positivity, psychological and moral maturity, tolerance for anxiety, ambiguity, and uncertainty                   |
| <b>Mind</b>       | Increased focus, clarity, flexibility, objectivity, perspective, learning, memory, creativity, IQ, accuracy                                       |
| <b>Body</b>       | Lower stress, fatigue, burnout; higher immune response, life expectancy, resilience, energy   |
| <b>Connecting</b> | Improved listening, empathy and mentalizing, clear communication and strong relationships; collaboration, employee retention                      |
| <b>Inspiring</b>  | Greater innovation, new product development, sales, quality, performance, leadership presence and attractiveness                                  |

Table 1 Mindfulness Research (Adapted from Ehrlich, 2017, *Organizational Dynamics*, 46, 233 -243)

The categories shown on Table 1 relate and support each other. The mindful leadership model by JOSHUA EHRLICH (see Figure 1) situates body, mind, emotion and spirit in the center as they are essential for and define what it means to be fully present. In addition, EHRLICH suggests that a person needs to be completely present with all four aspects before you one is able to connect to others and ultimately inspire and lead them. This is one reason why practicing mindfulness is not only believed to be beneficial for the individual but also for business. It promotes a mindful mindset throughout the company and supports a high-performance culture based on clear thinking and effectiveness (Ehrlich, 2017).

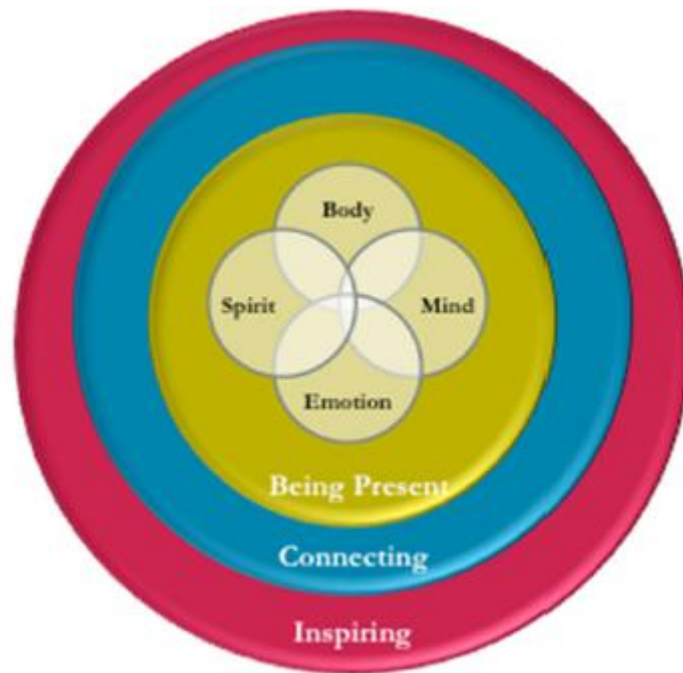


Figure 1 Mindful leadership model (Ehrlich, J. 2017, *Organizational Dynamics*, 46, 233 - 243)

Similar to EHRLICH, ASHFORD and DERUE argue that mindful engagement is necessary for developing leadership skills as it ensures that employees learn from their experience by focusing on their approach, their action and finally it's reflection. Moreover, they suggest that the return on investment in leadership development would be much greater if companies would invest in developing individuals skills related to the learning of leadership by lived experience instead of teaching leadership tools and skills directly (Ashford & DeRue, 2012).

ERIKA GARMS describes mindful leadership as a positive agent for change in organizations that can alter the tone of the work environment. She sees the greatest benefit of mindfulness at work in the focusing and prioritizing of attention as it is a limited resource. People who think they are multi-tasking are in fact task-switching which can be considered negative stress. The human brain is made to wander, constantly taking in information from external and internal sources and checking these for something worth paying closer attention to. By practicing mindfulness leaders are able to manage the constant onslaught of inputs and stimuli while maintaining their presence and centeredness (Garms, 2013).

Another strong argument for companies to promote mindfulness among their employees is the fact that only individuals who are able to lead their own inner team are able to collaborate or lead a team of others. Practicing Mindfulness leads to an enhanced self-awareness and deeper understanding of the presence and interacting of different parts of the own personality. For many individuals dealing with the own inside is an emotional and challenging experience that

they try to avoid. Offering mindfulness training for employees provides the opportunity that they connect with themselves and, thereby, undergo a personal development that would otherwise be hard to realize (Schrör, 2016).

Focusing on the connection between individual and collective mindfulness in companies, ANETTE GEBAUER stresses the importance of a tight interlocking of both. She describes the structural coupling between the psyche and the organization as key success factor for the development of mindfulness (Gebauer, 2017). In addition, it seems to be of utmost importance to regard mindfulness not as a program to increase personal performance but as a fundamental attitude. The described positive effects of mindfulness are likely to appear when the individual lives mindfulness as an attitude and likely to stay away when he aims solely at the performance and health improving benefits (Sauer et al., 2011). This paradox of mindfulness will be addressed in more detail in chapter 2.4. which introduces the area of tension.

## **2.2. Collective Mindfulness**

### **2.2.1. Defining Collective Mindfulness**

The understanding of mindfulness varies strongly between sources, which makes it difficult to establish a definition of collective mindfulness. Despite the vast number of diverse conceptions in the literature, studies addressing collective mindfulness in organizations distinguish between two major perspectives. One is referred to as mindfulness in a strict sense or eastern view, the other one defines mindfulness in a broader sense or western view. Even though only a few papers actually address this differentiation openly, it is not difficult to deduce which side the individual authors are arguing from.

Mindfulness in a strict sense is based on the traditional understanding of the term originating from Buddhism practice (see chapter 2.1.2.). It associates mindfulness with processes of attention. For example, mindfulness is described as a state of consciousness in which attention is focused on present-moment phenomena occurring both externally and internally (Dane, 2011). Mindfulness from the “eastern” perspective also entails “enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality” (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p.822) and “the nonforgetfulness of the mind with respect to a familiar object having the function of nondistractedness” (Wallace, 2005, p. 226). The focus is on disciplining attention by making it

more vivid and stable in order to becoming alert and aware of present details. Mindfulness, therefore, is seen as a “non-superficial awareness which sees things deeply, down below the level of concepts and opinion [...] it manifests itself primarily as a constant and unwavering attention that never flags and never turns away” (Gunaratana, 2002, pp. 147 – 148).

ROMHARD and PLISCHKE (2016) go a step further by attributing a guiding and meaningful ethics to mindfulness. According to them a mindful organization is a means to a greater end that encourages common good. Companies engaging in mindfulness want their employees to become more compassionate, wise, understanding, composed, happier and meaningful. They want them to fulfill their true potential. The fact that the employees simultaneously become more effective, relaxed and healthy is considered a nice and reasonable but secondary side effect.

In Contrast, mindfulness in a broader sense is based on a more modern understanding that developed through the utilization of mindfulness in economic contexts. In this view, mindfulness is seen as the antidote to mindlessness that naturally emerges through routine in organizations. Performance is believed to improve when coded information is differentiated more fully and more creatively. Differentiation, therefore, defines a “joint product of refining existing categories, adopting new categories, and developing greater awareness on multiple perspectives on context” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, p. 516). By focusing on information-processing, organizations can be understand as embedded routines through which information is stored, processed, and coded in a computational manner (Lant & Shapira, 2001). Mindless processing of information leads to mindless action and ultimately poor performance. That is why these tendencies in organizations have to be counteracted with mindfulness (Levinthal & Rherup, 2006). The western approach sees mindfulness as a way of organizing that enables seeing similarities in things thought different and differences in things thought similar (Langer, 2005). In short, it emphasizes perception and conception.

ROMHARD and PLISCHKE reproach organizations operating by this thinking to use mindfulness as new means to an old end. The authors state that the priority is on getting more effective, efficient, faster, cheaper, focused or successful and that the overall connection between mindfulness and ethics is not made (Romhard & Plischke, 2016).

However, SUTCLIFFE & VOGUE argue that a closer consideration of organizational mindfulness shows how it blends and integrates the two perspectives. It accentuates both, perception (i.e., awareness of detail) of the eastern perspective, and conception (i.e.,



differentiation of conceptual categories) of the western perspective. Therefore, they conclude that the chasm between the two might be more artificial than real (Sutcliffe & Vogue, 2014). Following their argument it is essential to take a closer look on the action of organizing on its own. “Organizing implies generalizing [...] the subsumption of heterogeneous particulars under generic categories” (Tsoukas, 2005, p. 124). In order to organize, coordination is needed, which in turn has important implications on the generalization of things. With increasing need for coordination, categorically-based knowing is substituted for perceptually-based knowing by interdependent people (Weick, 2011). The danger of people imposing discrete concepts on continuous perception is referred to as shareability constraint and describes the fact that perceptual details get lost as people shift away from details (Baron & Misovich, 1999). These organizational challenges can be responded to by processes of organizational mindfulness. It develops the capability to discriminate details and continuously notice, thereby weakening the shareability constraint.

BECKE labels the described perspectives as meditative mindfulness on the one hand and social-cognitive mindfulness on the other hand. He too, acknowledges that they have some things in common as the redirection of attention towards new things and processes but also highlights their differences. Firstly, he notes that social-cognitive mindfulness in comparison to the other is characterized by the western understanding of science and rationalism, making it subject to operationalized and scientifically proven concepts, experiments, tests and therapies. Secondly, he points out that whereas meditative mindfulness focuses the presence of attention on specific objects, social-cognitive mindfulness focuses on the cognitive application of mindfulness with the purpose of social problem-solving. Lastly, he stresses the different practices and techniques favoured by two views on mindfulness. Meditative mindfulness promotes meditation and breathing techniques as well as an acceptance of present thoughts and feelings. The other relies on practices that encourage doubt on existing mental categories, the search for information and data supporting such, and the development of new patterns of thought and action (Becke, 2011).

### 2.2.2. Organizational Mindfulness

Organizational mindfulness describes the degree of collective mindfulness within a group or organization at a specific time. Over time it describes the expected, regularly manifested, level of mindfulness. “The mindful organization”, however, refers to an ideal-typical organization where organizational mindfulness is high and permanent in all processes and

places to all times. Organizations can only try to get close to this ideal, adjust accordingly and use it to reflect upon themselves. In order to strengthen organizational mindfulness they can cultivate practices of individual and collective mindfulness. These practices aim to increase and prolong the mental state of mindfulness and include various forms of meditation, yoga, body scan and many more (Romhardt & Plischke, 2016).

“Mindful organizing is a function of a collective’s (such as a subunit or work group) attention to context and capacities to act. It provides a basis for individuals to interact continuously as they develop, refine, and update shared understanding of the situations they face and capabilities to act on that understanding. When workgroup members focus sustained attention to operational challenges, they enhance the likelihood that they will develop, deepen, and update a shared understanding of their local context and emerging vulnerabilities. “As they better understand what they face, they enhance the collective’s ability to marshal the necessary resources and capabilities to act upon that understanding in a flexible manner that is tailored to the unexpected contingency” (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2014, p. 410).

There are five interrelated processes associated with mindful organizing: Preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and flexible decision structure.

Preoccupation with failure describes the organization’s continuous wariness that small failure, mistakes or near mistakes might be indicators for larger problems. It is seen as a mean to avoid hubris, the liabilities of success (Miller, 1993), or the arrogance of optimism (Landau & Chisholm, 1995), that can lead to inertia and mindlessness (Sutcliffe & Vogue, 2014). Employers are encouraged to actively search for analytic errors and possible vulnerabilities that are embedded in ongoing operations. They are therefore not automatically rated negatively and ascribed to the misperformance of an individual but rather seen as an opportunity to learn something previous unknown about the system of the organization (Gebauer, 2010).

The second practice tackles the tendency to look for the familiar in new situations. Moreover, it is not taken for granted that the past provides relevant lessons for the future, nor is it considered beneficial to simplify the complex (Gebauer, 2010). In fact, ambiguities are embraced and members tend to make fewer assumptions, bring in more perspectives, and actively question received wisdom. Reluctance to simplify interpretations enables the member to see more possibilities and to detect and cope with the unexpected. In practice, this means

frequently discussing alternatives as to how to go about their everyday work (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Another characteristic of a mindful organization is a sensitivity to operations, which describes a high level of mindfulness regarding the here and now. Collaboration is designed to encourage the members seeing their environment not as it should be but paying attention to the reality that unfolds. Typical elements of such structures are closeness between management and shop-floor as well as various channels of interaction and communication between members, teams and hierarchies (Gebauer, 2010). The aim is to create and maintain a big picture of the current situation through ongoing attention to real-time information. Organizations that act on these real-time information and situational understanding are able to make small adjustments when necessary and as a consequence prevent small mistakes from lining up to grow into bigger crisis (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2014).

In Comparison to the first three practices of mindful organizing that are meant to prevent any possible damage, the last two come into effect the moment a state of emergency actually arises. Even though much effort is put into anticipating any possible dangers, commitment to resilience accounts for the fact that there is no way to reduce all uncertainty regarding the organizations inner and outer environment. It involves continuous enlargement of capabilities to recover from the unforeseen and unanticipated, such as improvisation, learning, multitasking and adapting (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). Capabilities of resilience are a consequence of an extensive action repertoire, which is built through training and simulation, varied job experiences, learning from negative feedback, and ad hoc networks, that allow for rapid pooling of expertise to handle unanticipated events (Weick et al., 1999).

Finally, a flexible decision structure allows for quick and informed decision making in emergency situation that does not necessarily come from positions high in hierarchy. The practice takes into account that the process of decision making in classical hierarchies often proves dysfunctional in moment of crisis. Managers often lack the time and information to come to a well-briefed decision. Instead they pace on their decision making competence to the individual that has the greatest expertise, experience or overview in the moment events unfold (Gebauer, 2010). Consequently, the organization has more skills and expertise to draw on. It thereby extends the capabilities to deal with unenviable uncertainty and imperfect knowledge (Weick et al., 1999).

Preoccupation with failure, sensitivity to operation, and reluctance to simplify interpretations, all aim at anticipating vulnerabilities or contingencies either to prelude them or prevent them from accumulating into bigger crisis. Together they enable a representation of the complexity of potential threats. A commitment to resilience and a flexible decision structure jointly ensure a pool of expertise and the capability to use it in a flexible manner that allows for a quick recovery from unexpected events. These practices combined establish mindful organizing (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2014).

VOGUS and WELBOURNE (2003) indentify three HR practices that generate innovation through collective mindfulness: use of skilled temporary employees, positive employee relations, and an emphasis on training. They argue that these practices enable and rely on three of the five processes of mindful organizing: reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, and commitment to resilience. The Use of skilled temporary employees leads to divergent ideas as the employees introduce different ways of seeing that allows the organization to notice more in its environment and create a greater number of potential recombination of existing knowledge. As a result it increases the reluctance to simplify interpretations within the organization. Positive employee relations creates a supportive climate that facilitates intensive ongoing communication, real-time information sharing and updating across levels that are all crucial for a sensitivity to operation. Lastly, an emphasis on training values recovery skills and resilience and builds the competences to enable them. By increasing the capacity to both absorb and harness change, it determines the organizations ability to remain viable in a dynamic environment (Vogus & Welbourne, 2003).

The theoretically and empirically literature on organizational mindfulness predominately concern the structures and processes of high-reliability organizations (HRO), such as nuclear power plants and air traffic control. These HRO are considered to cultivate collective mindfulness which in this context is defined as a informed and reporting culture that leaders create by specific behaviours (Mellor, 2015). In contrast to mainstream organizations, HROs operate high-hazard technologies where small failure swiftly accumulates to catastrophic magnitude. Simultaneously and paradoxically, they are still used as reference and source of deduction for everyday organizations. Despite the fact that human mortality rate is low in the latter, VOGUS and WELBOURNE (2003) recognize that small failures often amplify organizational mortality, therefore, accounting for the relevance of collective mindfulness. Consequently, the authors establish the term reliability-seeking organizations. Due to the high-hazard environment these organizations operate in, they organize to remain open and

flexible to emerging information and achieve an intensity of innovation (Vogus & Welbourne, 2003). Thus, they agree with LANGER who suggests that by creating new categories, exploring different perspectives, and focusing on process, mindfulness increases the possibility that a novel approach to a problem will be discovered (Langer, 1989).

Although most of the existing literature on work-related mindfulness depict it as an entirely positive attribute, there are significant costs associated with creating and maintaining mindful organizing (LaPorte, 1996). VOGUS and WELBOURNE suggest that the benefits of mindfulness and its constituent processes are largely contingent with the organization being a high-risk organization (HRO) or reliability-seeking. Thereby, they imply that organizations that do not face a tightly coupled or interactively complex environment benefit very little if at all. Moreover they assume that maintaining mindfulness in a stable environment could cause efficiency losses as a firm unnecessarily expends resources on updating the picture of its environment when nothing or only very little has changed (Vogus & Welbourne, 2003).

Similarly, LEVINTAL and RERUP note that establishing organizational mindfulness does not only imply a cost of attention which is known to be a limited resource but also a cost of opportunity. They explain that experimenting with a novel action implies forgoing the use of existing, established actions and can turn out dysfunctional in a complex, interdependent organizational system. In that sense, they link mindfulness to exploratory and less-mindfulness to exploitative behaviour (Levintal & Rerup, 2006). Additionally, they try to connect the rather new notion of mindful behaviour in organizations to that of less-mindful, routine-based behaviour which is based on a long-standing body of organizational literature. These two disparate approaches to organizational learning both imply important arguments for their perspective that cannot be denied. As described above, mindfulness in organizations encourages a collective state of active awareness that is characterized by a continual creation and refinement of categories, an openness to new information, and a willingness to view contexts from multiple perspectives. Consequently, a less-mindful state of mind is associated with reliance on past categories, acting on “automatic pilot”, and fixation on a single perspective without awareness that things could be otherwise. Yet, routine-driven behaviour also enables attention to shift from processes that do not need vigilance or intervention to those that do. Moreover, it can be considered an important storehouse of organizational accumulated experience. The authors conclude that the two perspectives are not contrasting but complementary, both including elements that underlie the other one (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006).

In addition to the general costs associated with organizational mindfulness, there exist some blind spots in the original concept from WEICK et al. (1999) that engender criticism. BECKE points out that the flexible decision-structure they promote might be realistic for organizations with high reliability but that for most others a permanent decentralization of decision making responsibilities are more advisable. Moreover, he criticizes the concept for solely focusing on the performance-oriented management perspective and neglecting relevant aspects like the organizational conflict dimension and individual needs of employees. Thus, he concludes that organizational mindfulness needs to pursue multiple goals that go beyond organizational functioning and reliability (Becke, 2011; Becke, 2012).

### 2.2.3. Societal mindfulness?

*“The most exciting breakthroughs of the twenty-first century will not come because of technology, but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human.”* [John Naisbitt]

The fact that the western or social-cognitive understanding of mindfulness is transferred to a collective context, resulting in the concept of organizational mindfulness, calls for doing the same with the eastern or meditative perspective. While this might seem unlikely at first glance, the thesis exist that establishing collective mindfulness in society is the only way to ensure future living on our planet. The increasing interest in mindfulness-based lifestyles like Veganism, Minimalism or Zero-Waste seems to support this claim. Also the Spiral Dynamics theory that is presented in the following chapter in more detail sees the future stage of human consciousness in a holistic, planetary perspective (teal stage) that seems to be highly relevant for the constitution of a collective mindfulness (Beck & Cowan, 1996).

One of the authors promoting a shift to a more communal and shared mind-set is OTTO SCHARMER, senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His theory U is based on the assumption that our current situation is determined by an ecological, a social and a spiritual-cultural divide that lead to multiple systemic disconnects. It can be considered a tool to use for decision-makers or any other individuals to shift from the old ego-system to an eco-system awareness. As shown in Figure 2, the model suggests a journey along the U, going down the left-hand side by opening mind, heart and will, pass the phase of presencing, and going up again on the right-hand side to bring the new into reality (Scharmer & Kaufer,

2013). The whole process is in line with the concept of mindfulness that includes listening within, being present and non-judgemental.

In his book “Leading from the emerging future” he gives many impulses on how to get from “Me to We” or from “Ego to Eco”. He believes that “a new type of awareness-based collective action is emerging” and that “this shared awareness that allows for fast, flexible, and fluid coordination and decision-making [...] [is] far more adaptive and co-creative than any other organizational model currently being used in major societal institutions” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Therefore, his Presencing Institute and his Global Wellbeing and Gross National Happiness Lab can be considered good examples of existing institutions that main purpose is on researching and promoting the development of a collective mindfulness.

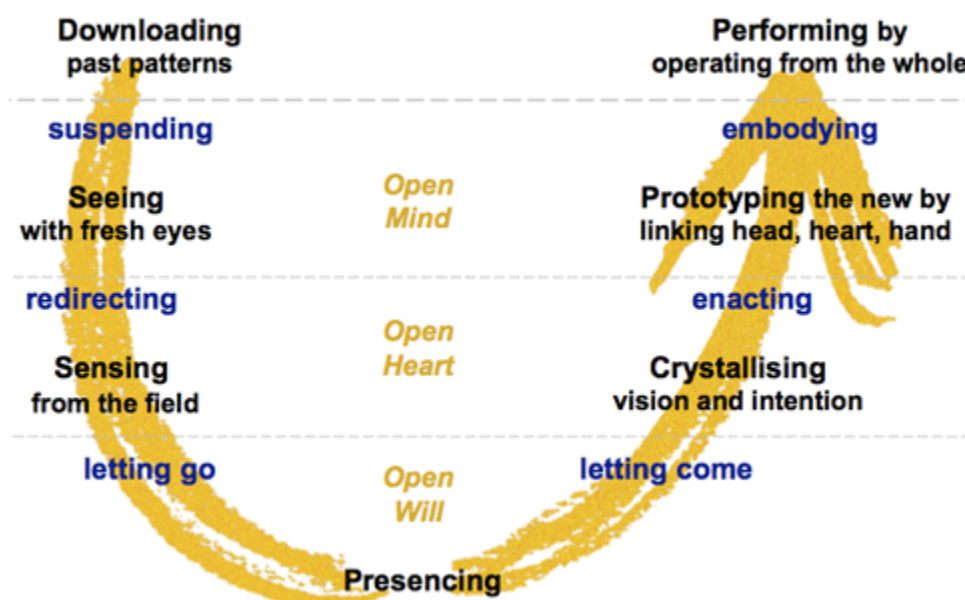


Figure 2 The U process of co-sensing and co-creating: presencing (Web reference 1)

Another author looking into collective mindfulness, especially organizational mindfulness, is FREDERIC LALOUX who examined the structures and processes of different organizations he believes to be already operating from the teal stage of Spiral Dynamic. In his book “Reinventing Organizations” he describes three big breakthroughs teal organizations have in common, namely the principle of self-management, the striving for wholeness as individuals and the listening to evolutionary purpose. All three resonate well with both, theory U and mindfulness in general. The examples of mindful organizing he gives seem to have overcome the field of tension between exploitation and intrinsic value as the practices serve everyone involved including the organizations as a whole without rigidly following a specific purpose. To name an example, Heiligenfeld, a German company running mental health hospitals with

600 employees, uses large group meetings at regular intervals to sense into its future. In fact, none of the 12 organizations researched had a strategy in the form of a document because people working in these organizations have a clear sense of the organization's purpose that empowers everyone, individually as well as collectively, to sense what might be called for. Moreover, these organizations are run by the principle of self-management either regarding parts of the organization or the whole unity. This practice gives power as well as responsibility to the individual and allows for a collective mindfulness to emerge as a natural consequence (Laloux, 2014). Many other stories in his book document that mindfulness as a key principle in companies can have immense positive impact when not exploited under the old, top-down paradigm of business.

### **2.3. Spiral Dynamics**

Spiral Dynamics theory was introduced by Professor of Psychology Clare W. Graves in the sixties and was further developed by his two dedicated followers Don Beck and Chris Cowan. It addresses the systems of values of humans, organizations and societies by offering a model to explain the development of human consciousness. In addition to the different levels of human existence described by Graves, so called memes play an essential part in Spiral Dynamics. A mem is a unit of cultural information and instruction that is passed on from one generation to another. These memes are clustered into value systems that represent a world view or belief structure and are referred to as vMemos (for value Meme). vMemos are believed to make up systems and influence human behaviour and decision-making fundamentally. They build on one another like stages and develop alongside a spiral whose focus alternates between me and us as well as inside and outside. Spiral Dynamics theory proclaims that no stage is superior to another but that every stage can manifest itself in both healthy and unhealthy forms. Moreover, it suggests that the quality of a stage depends on the extent it allows a subject to adapt to its environment. The vMemos can in fact brighten and dim as the life conditions change (Beck & Cowan, 1996).



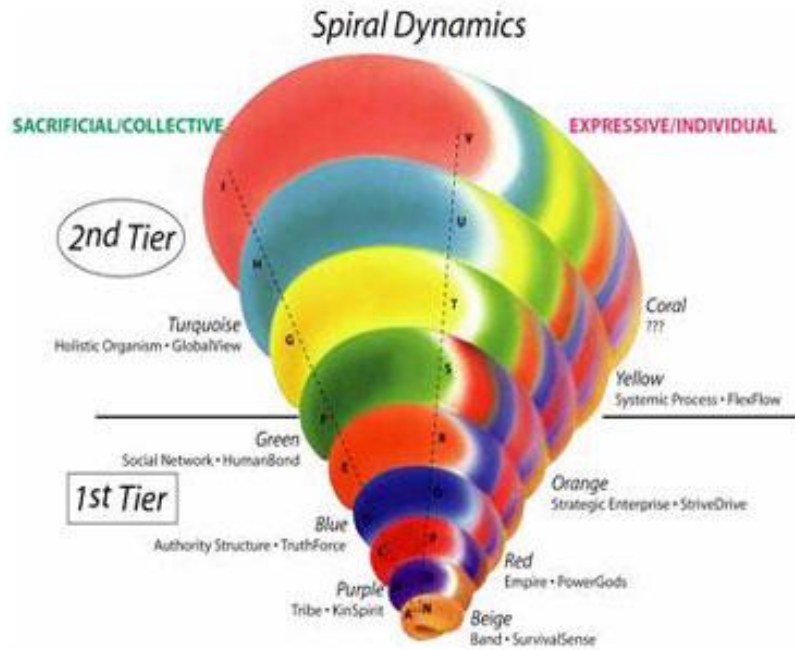


Figure 3 The spiral and it's different stages (Web reference 2, 2012)

Up to this point there are 8 different stages known but as humanity evolves further, there are expected to appear new stages on top of the spiral. The different stages are colour-coded and resemble stages also recognized by other authors, like LAWRENCE KOLBERG's stages of moral development or ABRAHAM MASLOW's hierarchy of needs. In contrast to existing frameworks that mainly derive from psychology, Spiral Dynamics looks at the development of human needs in a historical context. Therefore, it suggests that humankind took a spiral development from the beige-coloured vMeme since the middle palaeolithic age. Nowadays, most people and companies belong to the orange-coloured vMeme that proclaims the dogma of effectiveness, leading to innovation and competition but also to overconsumption and exploitation on a world-wide scale. As all vMememes co-exist simultaneously, organizational examples can be found for every stage. For instance, the military and church follow the blue-coloured vMeme that is dominated by immutable rules, morals and a strict thinking of in-group and out-group. The red-coloured egocentric and power-focused vMeme can be found in prisons, failed states or violent inner-city neighbourhoods whereas the green-coloured vMeme that emphasizes fairness, community and cooperation makes up the foundation of many NGOs and start-ups (Beck & Cowan, 1996).

In Spiral Dynamics a fundamental distinction is made between the first 6 and the last 2 stages that is referred to as tier 1 and tier 2 stages. All first-tier stages believe that their worldview is

the only valid one and that all other people are terribly mistaken. People transcending to tier 2 can accept all other stages and the fact that there is an evolution in consciousness (Laloux, 2014).

Spiral Dynamics has been chosen as a frame for this research as the author assumes that the effect of mindfulness depends on the stage of consciousness an individual or system operates from.

#### **2.4. Exploitation versus Intrinsic Value**

As every social system, the subject of interest in this research is affected by tension that arises as a consequence of two contrasting forces or poles. Naturally, there are multiple dualities working simultaneously but as the visualization by systemic constellation and later on the analysis of such a construct would be impossible, this research focuses on the field of tension between exploitation and intrinsic value.

The term exploitation describes a use or utilization, especially for profit or selfish reasons (Web reference 3). Applied to the context of this research, exploitation of mindfulness describes its utilization motivated by the prospect of individual or company profit as a result. As indicated in the first chapter and theoretically explained in the previous section, the world of economics that is predominantly ruled by the orange vMeme at the moment has found in mindfulness a promise of more efficient, more resilient and more healthy humans, that allow for more productivity and eventually more money to make. Consequently, exploitation of mindfulness always leads to the exploitation of humans practicing it.

On the contrary, intrinsic value describes the relative worth or importance that belongs to something by its very nature (Web reference 4). Therefore, the intrinsic value of mindfulness refers to its natural merit or importance. To give an exact definition of the intrinsic value of mindfulness does not make sense as the term refers to a value that exists without any esteem given by humans.

These two poles constitute the field of tension that mindfulness is constantly subject to. Every individual or collective choosing to practice mindfulness will face these tensions and try to balance them out. The described conflicting poles of exploitation and intrinsic value are a special variation of the classic, well-known field of tension between means and end. Exploitation represents the pole means that describes an instrument, method or resources utilized to attain a desired outcome. The intrinsic value on the other hand equals the pole end

that describes one's intentions or aims. Means and end is the fundamental polarity of all social system (Müller-Christ, 2016a).

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Systemic Constellations**

To understand systemic constellation as a research method, it is necessary to have a look at the existing different forms of realization beforehand. There are four different forms of realization that differ mainly in their purpose of either explaining existing hypotheses or discovering new ones. In this context, deduction is the classical form of realization that aims to give reason to existing knowledge. By collecting, analyzing and categorizing quantitative data, the practice of deduction tries to trace special statements to general observations. Induction is another widely known form of realization. It aims to generalize specific findings for a more universal context and is mainly realized by interpreting qualitative data. The two forms of realization that both intend to create new hypotheses are not as accepted as the other ones but still very much legitimate. Abduction is the process of finding an explanation without making use of existing knowledge or routine. Therefore, what is needed is a lightning understanding that occurs only after a process of knowing the problem and facts at hand. Finally, intuition is a form of realization whose source and functioning cannot be explained easily. It is new knowledge that has previously not been available for the researcher. Intuition in form of ideas, brainwave or gut decision, does not happen randomly but strikes someone completely absorbed in his task or topic. While quantitative, empirical research and qualitative social research mainly promote deduction and induction, systemic research methods like systemic constellation allow for finding the new by abduction and intuition (Müller-Christ, 2017). That is why it has been chosen as the research method for this thesis.

In order to use systemic constellation as a method of realization, individuals are positioned within a given space representing elements of a system. They visualize the system and the elements relationship to each other by their distance and viewing direction. Due to the representative perception, the representatives get information about the element they are representing and make them accessible for interpretation via verbalization (Müller-Christ, 2016a). For GMINDER the representative perception includes the general feeling, awareness of body and emotions, viewing direction and connection to others, feelings about closeness or distance, impulses to change position and ongoing thoughts. Verbal and non-verbal

observations of the constellation combined provide information about the system, the request and its solution. The representative perception is an interpersonal phenomena that like many other discoveries in their early stage cannot be explained scientifically yet, but whose functioning has been shown by countless constellations world-wide (Gminder, 2006).

In comparison to organizational constellations that look at how an individual's role within a organization influences its structure and culture, a structural constellation focuses on how culture and structure of an organization influences an individual (Müller-Christ, 2016a). Structural constellations do not claim to depict a system as a whole but rather a partial structure. Potential examples for such constellations are the tetralemma constellation, decision constellation and constellation of the hidden subject. The structural constellation also allows for the exploration of typical patterns of a system without the need of a specific problem or question. For that reason, elements like "the problem" or "the obstacle" have been introduced (Sparrer, 2009). In order to highlight the setting or sphere of a constellation, MÜLLER-CHRIST uses the term field constellation. The "knowing" field is described as a field of energy that is ubiquitous and connects everything, therefore possibly holding all information of the universe. It is often used to explain the functioning of the representative perception as the representatives in a constellation are able to receive information from this field without the presence of the actual elements. The field is believed to contain numerous, compact spheres of information that can be used and revealed in constellations. Every system is affected by these spheres of duality or areas of tension and its elements position themselves accordingly (Müller-Christ, 2016a).

Using systemic constellations in research aims to reveal and recognize typical patterns of a system and does not need a concrete question as starting base. Looking at a system without having a specific focus can be realized in three different forms of structural scenes. Firstly, an undirected structural scene allows the depth and quality of elements relationships to be shown. Additionally, the directed structural scene depicts the system within an area of tension as the main challenge of social systems is considered to be the mastery of such. Lastly, the multi-directed structural scene assumes an even more complex setting, adding another relevant field of tension. The chosen areas of tensions are possibly only a fraction of the numerous polarities that affect a system and should therefore be the most relevant ones for the research setting (Müller-Christ, 2016a). Designing the constellation for this thesis, a directed structural scene with the two conflicting poles exploitation and intrinsic value was chosen as described in chapter 2.4..

### 3.2. Evaluation

Systemic Constellations in research aim to reveal unknown structures of the observed system. In order to achieve that goal a profound analysis of the constellation process is necessary that allows for coherent interpretation afterwards. Therefore, video records of the constellation are edited in a systemic and comprehensible manner as proclaimed by social research. Transcripts can be used additionally but are not sufficient in depicting all relevant data. Though the statements of the elements during the constellation are the main source of data, movements and position as well as body language, facial expressions and accentuation can be of similar importance. The criteria of video analysis in qualitative social research can be used as model for the analysis of systemic constellations. Based on these criteria, the process of evaluating a systemic constellation can be divided into 7 steps (Müller-Christ, G. 2016a):

- Epistemological interest and parts are predefined before the constellation takes place
- The different parts divide into several phases which in turn are composed of various subordinated sequences. These arise as the result of the process and are registered during a first sight of the video record. The information is given by time intervals.
- A constellation results in numerous sequences that cannot all be interpreted analytical. For that reason, the focus is on sequences that contain surprising or irritating statements and movements.
- In each of the chosen sequences, the instructor and all elements are observed and all statements and positions are registered.
- During the transcription all surprising information is registered separately. Intuitive readings of the constellation group and the interpreters are registered separately too.
- Information can also arise as a result of the self-observation of the group and are registered separately as well.
- Eventually, new Hypotheses are constructed based on the interpretations that can be recorded as reading of the constellation

Doing a constellation, insights do not emerge as causally linked phenomena but have to be interpreted in more detail (Müller-Christ, 2016b). There are multiple approaches to interpreting that differ in their depth of reading. Firstly, a constellation can be fully analyzed by the statements and positions of its elements based on the content analysis of MAYRING (2015). The authors described research technique follows explicit rules. Therefore, it possesses an intersubjective verifiability and consequently, meets the criteria of qualitative

social research (Mayring, 2015). A level of interpretation that goes a little deeper is the analysis of sequences as part of the qualitative video analysis described by REICHERTZ und ENGLERT (2011). The focus is on the knowledge of context that comes up as a result of the process and the question how relevant this knowledge is (Reichert & Englert, 2011). Lastly, a constellation can be interpreted in depth by looking for contexts that brought forward new or surprising insights (Müller-Christ, 2016a).

New insights resulting from this research project are going to be presented in form of hypotheses. Academic hypotheses satisfy the criteria of being logically consistent, falsifiable and empirically revisable (Hartmann & Lois, 2015). To be logically consistent hypotheses need to stand to reason and be without contradiction. Moreover, it needs to be falsifiable because there is no way of logically verifying a hypothesis without doubt. As a result, the researcher wanting to publish only secured knowledge can only try to falsify his hypothesis by all available means. If he does not succeed the hypothesis can be considered reliable and be kept for future research. Lastly, a hypothesis needs to be empirically revisable meaning that there has to exist a way of validating its statement (Häder, 2015).

Due to the nature of hypotheses derived by systemic constellation, it can be argued that they do not fulfil these criteria strictly speaking. However, as the overall aim is to discover the new and not explain the existing, the statements derived by this research will be referred to as insight-leading hypotheses.

Thus, the evaluation of systemic constellations follows the established and universal criteria of qualitative social research. The described research is methodically sound, the process systemic and rule-governed and the documentation transparent and comprehensive (Müller-Christ, G., 2016b).

## **4. Systemic Constellation**

### **4.1. Process**

The systemic constellation took place on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at the University Bremen. It was conducted with students and PhD students of the university and led by Prof. Dr. Georg Müller-Christ. The constellation involved the following elements that the author and the instructor had agreed upon primarily:

Individual mindfulness

Collective mindfulness

Human

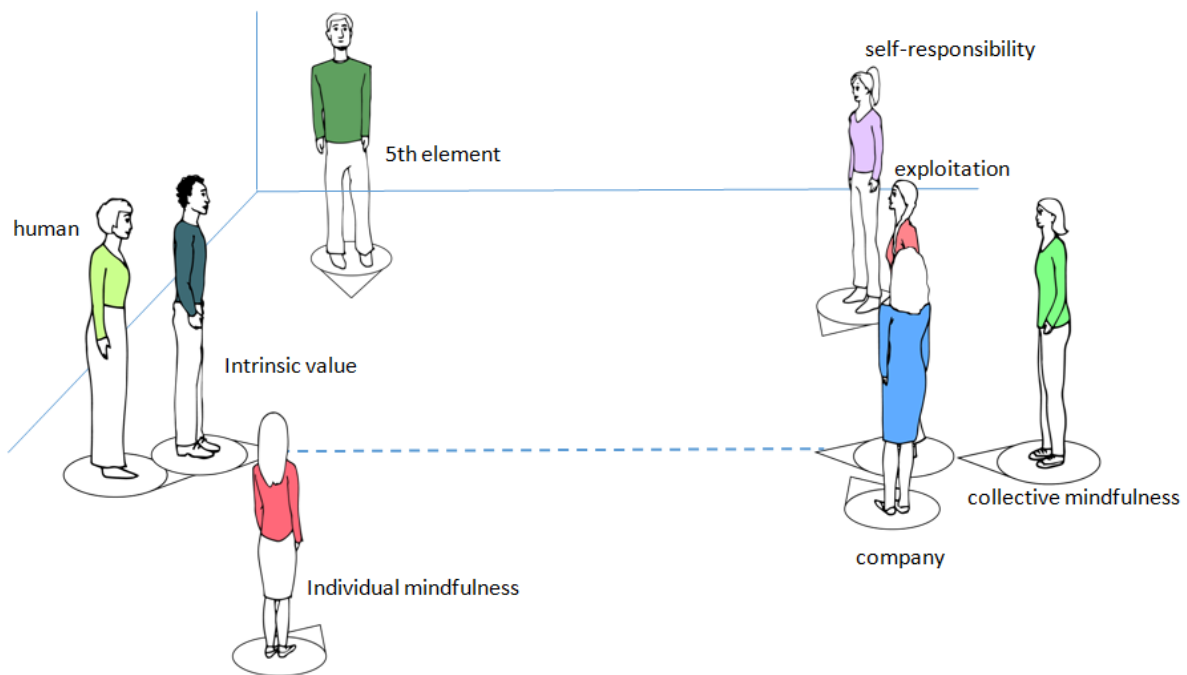
Company

Self-responsibility

5<sup>th</sup> Element

All elements act within the poles of exploitation and intrinsic value. The elements Self-responsibility and 5<sup>th</sup> Element are considered free elements that can move freely at any time during the process. The constellation was conducted blindfolded meaning the instructor was the only one knowing what each element stood for. In fact, apart from the author who participated as a representative, the others did neither know the context of the constellation nor the research interest of the thesis. In total the constellation took 87 minutes.

At the beginning all elements are asked to find a place within the field of tension. The scene for the prototypical system unfolds as depicted in figure 1. The instructor asks the elements about the certainty of their position choice and requests them to answer on a scale between 1 and 10 (1 for no certain decision at all, 10 for absolutely certain). The human, the company, individual and collective mindfulness answer in the same order 9, 7, 6 and 3. Afterwards all elements are asked individually about their self-perception and their connection to the other elements. A strong warmth and kindness of the pole intrinsic value is perceived by the human (08:25), the company (09:03) and the individual mindfulness (10:25) that feels repelled by the other elements and very distant (10:40). The collective mindfulness states that her intention is to hide and that maybe the self-responsibility might give her support (11:05). Both poles describe their self-perception as positive (11:23; 11:49). The pole intrinsic value describes the area around him as secure and safe to experiment in (12:16). He compares the human standing behind him with an idea that is emerging and that eventually will move to the other pole when fully developed (12:35). He also ascribes the individual mindfulness an important role in that development (13:25). The 5<sup>th</sup> element describes the elements as moons circling the poles (14:00) and points out that he has no wish to interact at all but to observe (14:10). Finally, the self-responsibility indicates her sense of responsibility for the whole system and her fear that it will drift off the correct course (14:38).

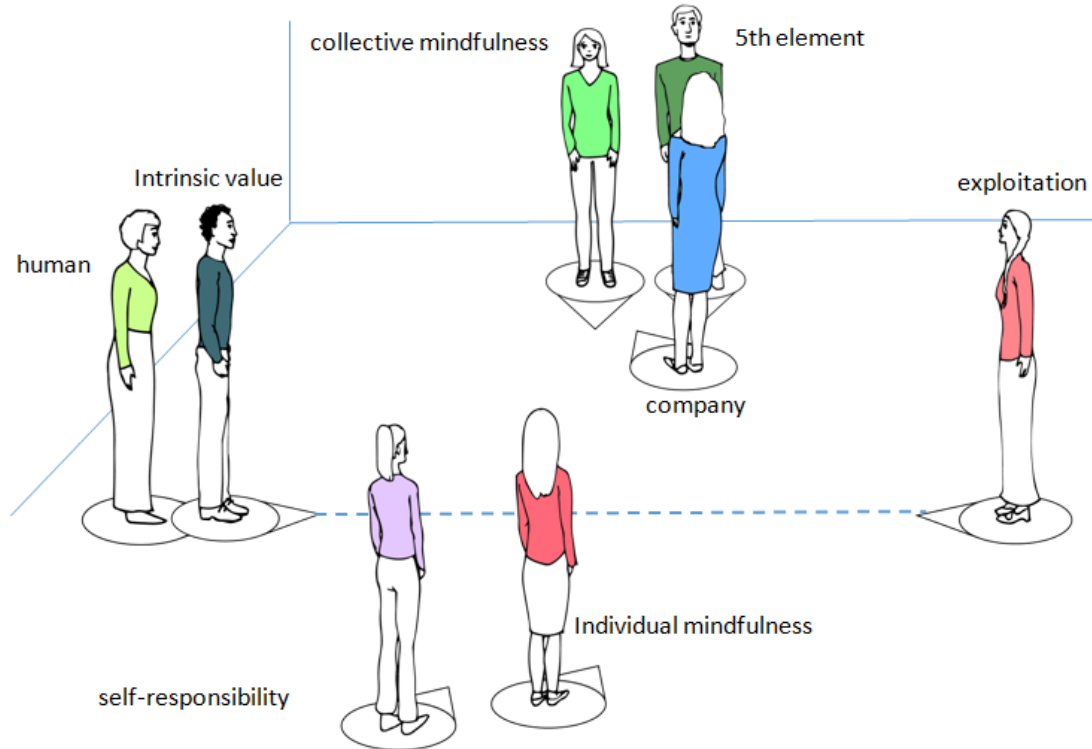


**Figure 4** The positions of the elements during phase of induction (prototypical)

Subsequently, the system is shifted using the company to the first stage of Spiral Dynamics, the red stage (16:00). Apart from the human who still seeks shelter behind the intrinsic value, all other elements stand aloof from the area of tension and form a lateral axis (see figure 2). The human needs the warmth of the pole intrinsic value even more as she describes the space in front of him as a cold, windy outside world (17:40). The company wants to invite the 5<sup>th</sup> element (18:30) to step closer but he refuses, instead wanting her to leave the system with him. The individual mindfulness describes her state as angry and wavering and highlights that everything turned out negatively for her in the new stage (19:08). The collective mindfulness on the other side notes that her need of hiding has vanished and that self-responsibility has helped her move to a place outside the field of tension (20:10). Hearing that, the 5<sup>th</sup> element adds that he cannot bear the tension either (21:00). The exploitation states her annoyance of the fact that the elements seem to avoid the poles (21:28) and the self-responsibility agrees immediately. The intrinsic value accuses the company of being over-motivated and the collective mindfulness on supporting that behaviour that endangers the system as a whole (22:35). The company replies that she indeed is no longer able to perceive the elements behind her but that she could give everyone something who decides to turn towards her (23:12). Finally, the collective mindfulness points out that she feels a lot better than before



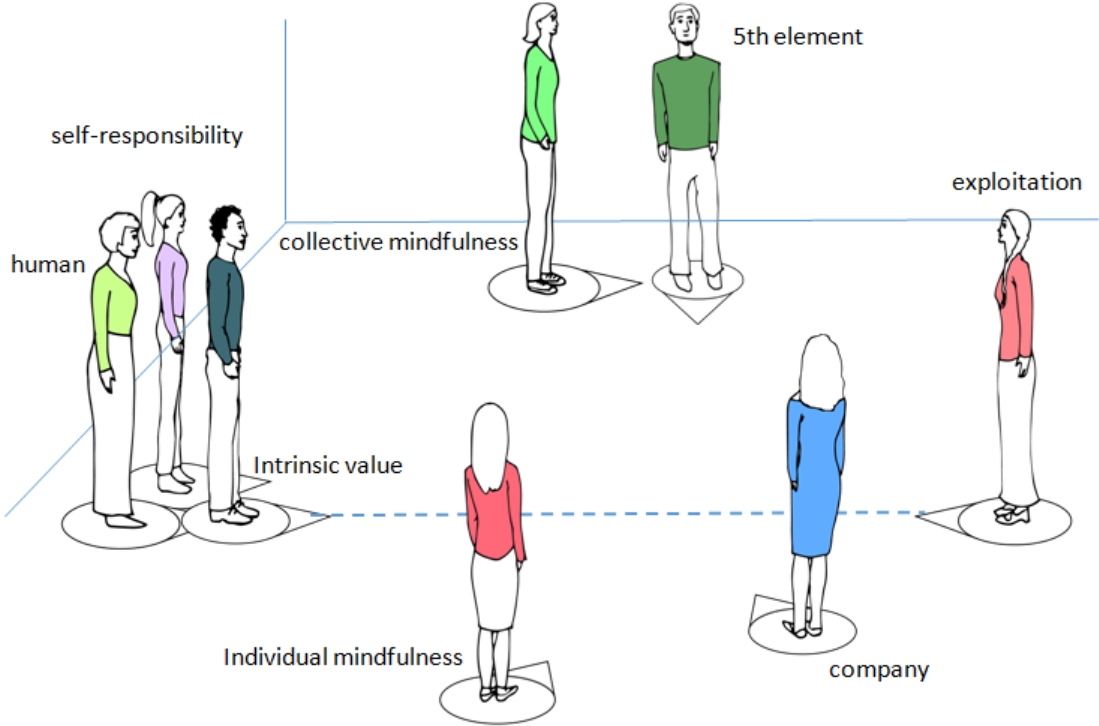
and suggests that the small group consisting of her, the company and the 5<sup>th</sup> element could simply start their own system (24:22).



**Figure 5** The positions of the elements at the red stage

The next shift makes the company and self-responsibility change positions immediately. The human, still positioned behind the intrinsic value, knows that she should venture outside her comfort zone but there is still not enough pressure to get her moving (27:05). The company describes the system as stagnant and stresses that she is not able to perceive anything anymore (27:35). Similar to that statement, the individual mindfulness states her uncertainty on how to get the system moving again and her feeling of being a lone fighter (27:55). The collective mindfulness on the opposite side is looking at the 5<sup>th</sup> element in order to avoid dealing with the rest (29:15). Exploitation is increasingly irritated by the elements behaviour and does not like the company blocking her view towards the individual mindfulness (29:52). The intrinsic value thinks that the stage gives no room for development of the individual elements, describing them as frozen (30:12). Subsequently, the instructor asks all elements about their individual development during the different stages. The Company responds that she only acts when needed by another element but that she has no intrinsic energy herself (31:47). The self-

responsibility states that she constantly feels the need to balance the system and hence feels stressed (32:03). The individual mindfulness describes her levels of energy over the three stages as indifferent, demanding and undecided (32:55). Exploitation observes her power as a pole decrease constantly (32:59) and the 5<sup>th</sup> element finds himself interested in the process but never inclined to act, observing happily from his so called “Candy World” (34:04). The collective mindfulness describes her existence during all stages as totally dependent on others (34:50) and hints that the individual mindfulness could become the new focus for her (37:05). Last but not least, the Intrinsic Value compares the poles as playing chess whereas the others decided to play something different (36:30).



**Figure 6** The positions of the elements at the blue stage

The transformation to the orange stage makes almost every element move and find a new position. The human is attracted by the “Candy World” of the 5<sup>th</sup> element (38:32). The latter thinks positively of the human but fears her destructive power that he cannot control (38:35). Due to the fact that multiple elements gather at that spot, a huge gap between the area of tension and the “Candy World” opens up. The self-responsibility feels not important for that stage but still decided to balance out the system (39:50). The company, who has shifted to the other pole, admits to have feared the transformation even before it took place and lists how

the stage has brought out the negative side of each element. Moreover, the only potential she sees for the system is the pole intrinsic value (40:50). The individual mindfulness feels the need to act and convince the opposite side to step closer towards the poles (41:47). The collective mindfulness responds by appreciating her efforts but notes that she cannot move even though she is in a new dependency with the individual mindfulness this time (42:35). Exploitation is glad about the fact that the other pole has lost his attractiveness for the elements too so that both now “are in the same boat” (43:10). The intrinsic value interprets their situation more positively, highlighting that they are now able to provide the individual mindfulness with all their power (43:45). Moreover he accuses the collective mindfulness of standing at the wrong place yet again, bringing the system to overbalance (44:47). After that, the instructor asks the poles to declare who of them navigates and who rows the boat both are sharing. The exploitation believes the intrinsic value to navigate since he, compared to her, is able to reach out and interact with the other elements (45:20). The perception of the intrinsic value differs as he sees himself at the comfortable lookout position whereas the exploitation has to do both, row and navigate (45:32). As the instructor asks the elements for a final statement, the human explains that she is bored by the poles who are “old-school” and do not know how to have a good time (46:16). The self-responsibility is glad that finally another element (the company) realized that the system is moving into the wrong direction (47:34).

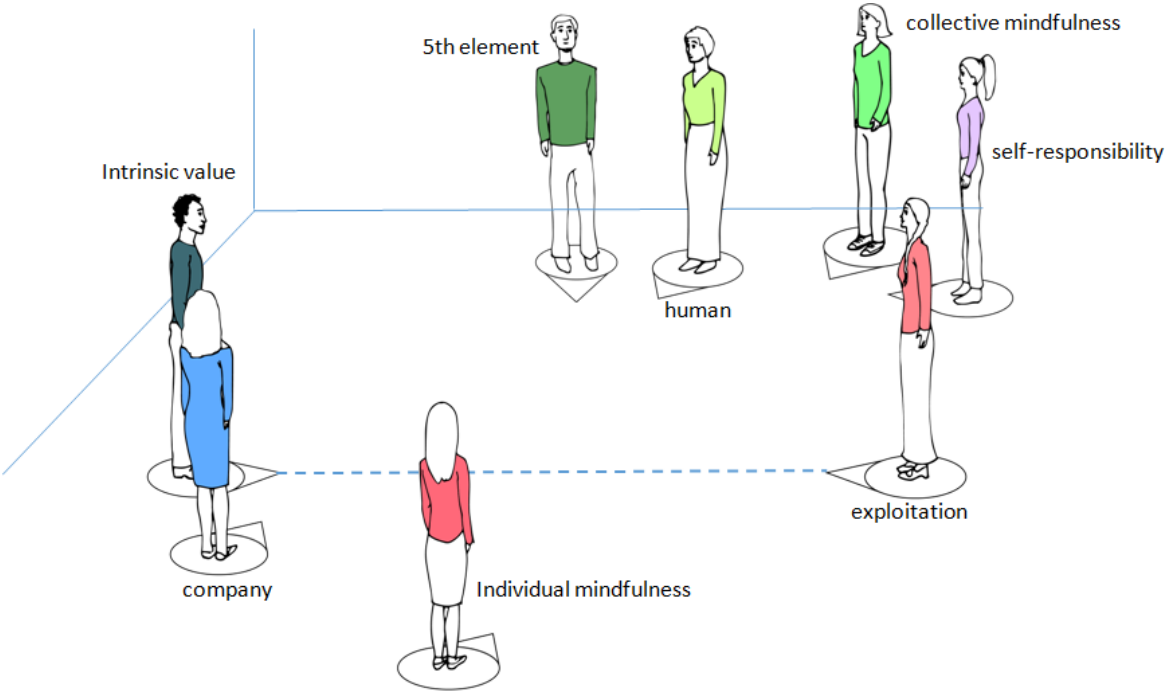


Figure 7 The positions of the elements at the orange stage

The transformation to the green stage brings the elements closer together and makes them face each other. The free elements stand side by side watching the scene from afar. At first, the instructor asks for a description of the overall change (49:22). The individual mindfulness responds first, stating that she is able to connect with all other elements for the first time and that the system appears whole to her (50:00). The self-responsibility reports that she does not feel the need any longer to balance out the system (50:05) and the intrinsic value sees constructive connection but at the same time is worried about the human missing out (50:40). She in turn feels like her skills have been used for making the system move but that she herself is of no interest and has to suffer the consequences (52:00). Being asked to name her new position which is the opposite side of the “Candy World”, she describes it with responsibility, leadership and being a lone focused fighter (52:35). The company highlights the responsibility of each element to do its best and contribute to the system as a whole (53:10). Being asked what she can do best for contribution, her answer is “giving” (53:15). The individual mindfulness agrees with the human’s description of their side of the system. She goes on identifying her contribution to be recognizing what needs to be done to make the system move forward (54:28). The 5<sup>th</sup> element describes the picture as coherent and the collective mindfulness confirms what had previously been said about connection (55:18). The exploitation is glad that the attraction of the poles has returned (55:45).

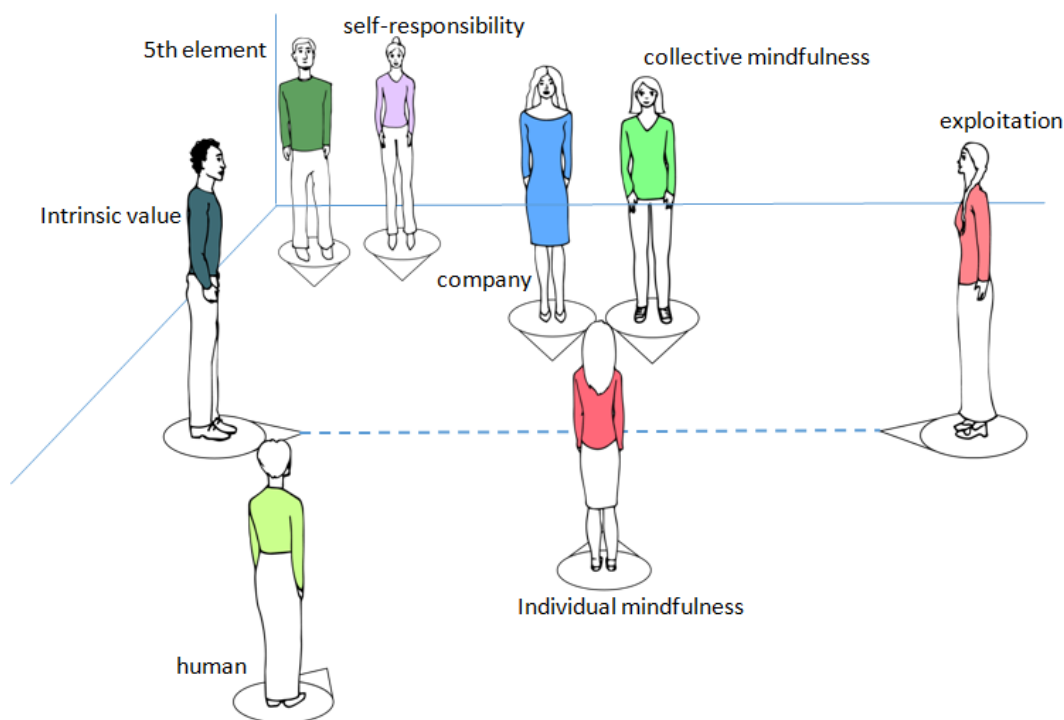
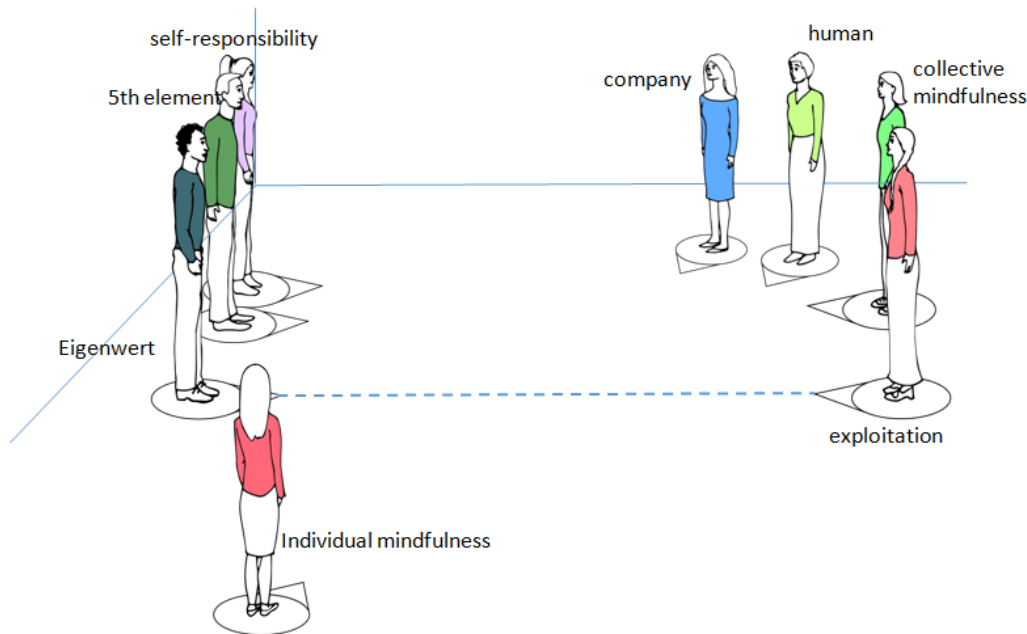


Figure 8 The position of the elements at the green stage

The following transformation (yellow stage) leads the system to big changes. The free elements position themselves at the side of the pole Intrinsic Value. The elements company, human and collective mindfulness stand side by side facing the individual mindfulness. Trying to describe the new picture, the intrinsic value suggests “fight for survival” (61:02). The human explains how every new stage makes her more and more miserable. She feels like she has to meet expectations and would prefer to leave the system if possible (62:05). The company explains that she has tried to make the human stay and compares the new situation with the blue stage (62:58). The individual mindfulness blames the human to obstruct the progress, comparing her to a big black hole that absorbs all energy (64:25). The self-responsibility notes that she has lost track of what it is all about and complains that the constant alteration between a wish to act and stagnation within the system is very tiring for her (65:12). The collective mindfulness is shocked about the human’s statement and points out that she feels more self-confident for the first time (65:48). The exploitation shares her fear of the human, explaining that she has the power to destroy the field of tension completely (66:20). Her opposite agrees that the poles meaning seems to have vanished and that he is only able to hold his position with the help of the two observing elements, self-responsibility and 5<sup>th</sup> element (67:38). He goes on saying that the human seems to represent a new idea or paradigm and that the individual mindfulness on the other side tries to hold on to the old qualities (68:15). The human responds noting that during her development she had always tried to stay out of all events but that the elements wished for her to become active and now that she is, they are not satisfied because they have not thought about the possibility that things could turn out negatively if she starts interfering (70:15). Subsequently, the 5<sup>th</sup> element supports her and highlights that the human is not to be blamed for the situation. Being asked if blame is the right category to think in this moment, he explains that the system is broken and that is why they talk about blame and negativity (70:55). The company suggests that the new situation is not necessarily bad but different and new. She explains that every element has what he had previously wished for (72:01). But the individual mindfulness and the 5<sup>th</sup> element insist on the fact that something feels not right about the new situation and that after the transformation there is a complete new quality (72:17). The human tries to explain what had happened using the metaphor of the tiger that headed for Panama and ended up home without realizing it (story “Oh, how beautiful is Panama” by JANOSCH) (72:40). The 5<sup>th</sup> element is completely irritated afterwards. He feels as if she is right but is shocked about how easily she could take all orientation from him (74:10). The instructor asks the human about her development during the present stage. She responds that she had realized that she has been

treated unfairly so far and that she is now enjoying confronting the others with their own ignorance (75:27). Eventually, the individual mindfulness reports that over the time a quite intense rivalry between the human and herself has developed leaving her with only two options, killing the human or leaving the system. She explains that she has decided to resign and hand over the system to the human (76:30).



**Figure 9: The positions of the elements at the yellow stage**

The last transformation to the teal stage brings the system to clear up. The self-responsibility describes the picture as completely new and different (78:10). The intrinsic value compares the situation with the excitement before a having blind-date (78:35). The collective mindfulness points out that there is now a lot of space for many opportunities (78:43). Being asked about what the change meant for the human, she states that everything seems to be lighter and vivid. She goes on explaining that she feels as if her matter has merged and spread over the system and she now has a very different position, providing the basis for the whole (79:33). The company notes that the system looks similar to what it was like at the beginning but that things have changed. She describes the elements to be more conscious (80:35). Following, the individual mindfulness depicts itself as being retired at the warm place behind the intrinsic value. She illustrates her feelings by recognizing that despite of all fights and misery she has experienced during her life, she now sees that the system turned out good even though it is not how she expected it to be (81:32). The collective mindfulness highlights her

own development, noting that she is now able to stand independently (82:00). The self-responsibility adds that there now seems to be hope in the system (82:03). The exploitation pole speaks about her perception that the elements were overwhelmed by the transformation but that it turned out positive. She describes the atmosphere by “everything can, nothing must” (83:03). The other pole disapproves of the fact that all attention is focused on the human because he believes that it should be somewhere else. He thinks that the elements are blinded by the human’s beauty (84:35). Eventually, the 5<sup>th</sup> element is asked to reflect on his role within the system. He responds that he feels disappointed of himself because he should have known a lot more than he actually did throughout the constellation. Moreover, he complains that it is impossible for him to trust the human now with bringing up a new paradigm after she took away all his orientation so easily (85:40). He also highlights again that up to the transformation to the yellow stage he could watch without interfering but at that moment he felt the need to get involved as the poles did not longer function as guidance for the system (87:18).

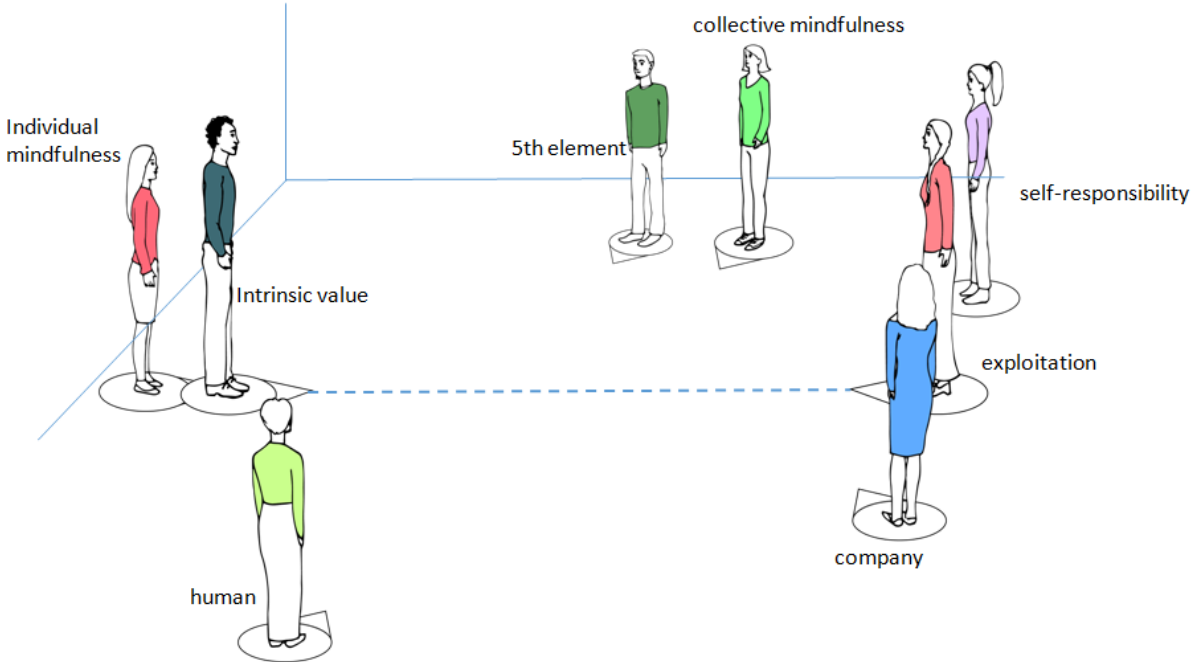


Figure 10 The position of the elements at the teal stage

## 4.2. Comparison of elements throughout the stages

The following table gives an overlook of the key statements made by each element at the different stages. The colour of each line indicates the specific stage of Spiral Dynamics.

| <b>Human</b>  | <b>Individual Mindfulness</b>   | <b>Self-responsibility</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| My only orientation was the warmth and cosiness of the intrinsic value.   | I feel repelled and very distant to all other elements.   | I want to navigate, to be in control. I feel as if the system is mine and it is burdensome. |
| Now I need the poles warmth and comfort even more. Outside it is cold and windy. I like to stand on his lee side.   | My mood has shifted negatively and I am angry. I feel torn between the poles, going and staying, doing something or just being stubborn.  | /   |
| Still it is too cold for me outside. I feel like I am supposed to put on my coat and go outside but there is not enough pressure for me to do so yet.   | I am clueless about how to get the system to move and how to get involved myself as it is not possible for me to connect to others. I feel like being a lone fighter. [...] With every transformation my level of energy changes drastically. | I am stressed about feeling the constant need to balance out the system.                    |
| Hearing the 5 <sup>th</sup> element talk about the Candy World, it sounded very appealing to me. As the intrinsic value was complaining about me hiding behind him all the time, I decided to go. [...] The more time I spend at the Candy World, the more I think the poles to be boring and old-school. | My level of energy is back up again. I feel the need to take matters in my own hands and try to get the other elements back interested in the system.   | I do not think that the stage has much to do with myself.                                   |
| I would name the new connection responsibility. It feels like I have only been used to move the system which is   | For the first time there is a sense of wholeness and not egoism. It is good that the two observers withdrew as the  | I do not feel the need to balance out anymore. The elements can handle it on their own.     |



|  |  |  |
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| <p>exactly what I had feared would happen when leaving my Candy World. I now have to bear the damage. [...] The new position is all about responsibility, guidance, focus and being a lone fighter.</p>  | <p>elements now have the connection they always wanted. [...] My biggest contribution is to recognize what needs to be done and act accordingly even though I see myself in the background in the long run. This part of the system is about guidance, management and the system as a whole.</p>   |  |
| <p>I did not want the transformation and it turns out that I have been right about it. For me everything seems to get worse with every new stage. I am annoyed by the system and the expectations of the others. [...] So far I tried to stay out of all events but that was not acceptable for the others. Now I am involved and they are still complaining. They have not thought about the possibility that my interference could turn out negatively. I now enjoy confronting them with their own ignorance. [...] It is like the story about the tiger that headed for Panama but ended up home without realizing it.</p> | <p>So far the human was a seeking character but now she is blocking the whole system. She absorbs all energy like a black hole. I believe she knows that she could and should change the situation but still she behaves stubborn. [...] Over time the Human developed into my nemesis. My only options are to kill her or leave the system. After putting all my efforts into changing the system for the better, I have now decided to pass it on to the Human so that she can see how long she will last in the system that she destroys herself.</p> | <p>For me a few elements seem to be hypocritical. The constant change between stagnation and activation is very exhausting. I lost track of what the system and my own element is about.</p>                         |
| <p>For me it feels easier and vivid. I feel powerful and like representing the foundation for the system. My position is now of a different nature, more distant and aloft. [...] Even though I have never felt</p>  | <p>I am very tired and exhausted. It feels like sitting on my rocking chair in my retirement home at this very warm and comfortable place. I look out to the world I created and it turned out good even though it is not how I</p>  | <p>Now it is something completely different, completely new. It is much easier. [...] There seems to be hope now within the system. Like a merry-go-round that for the first time has stopped at the right spot.</p> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| affection for the Individual Mindfulness before, I am now very glad that she found a nice place to retire. Right now that is all that matters to me. | expected it to be. Despite of all the fights and sorrow in the past, I can now retire having a good conscious as I know I cannot help anymore. They all go their own ways now. |  |
|--|--|--|

**Table 2 Statements of the Human, the Individual Mindfulness and Self-responsibility compared over all stages (video analysis)**

| <b>Company</b>  | <b>Collective Mindfulness</b>  | <b>5<sup>th</sup> Element</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| I believe I belong to the pole Exploitation (Arms on Hips).   | I feel the need to hide behind the Exploitation. I think that the Self-responsibility might give me strength.  | For me the most important thing is watching the poles with the elements circling them like moons circle planets.      |
| I have a complete new focus. I want to invite the 5 <sup>th</sup> Element. I feel like I could give everyone something but they need to turn towards me and get it themselves. I feel like being a frame or foundation. | The Self-responsibility helped me escape the field of tension. I feel a lot better than at the last stage.   | I want to be near the Company and would love to go away with her. I cannot bear the tension of the poles.             |
| I think it is all stagnant. I cannot perceive anything anymore.[...] I am only present if requested by others. I have no energy of my own.  | I look at the 5 <sup>th</sup> element in order to avoid dealing with rest of the system. [...] I am constantly dependant on other elements.                  | I feel no need to get involved. I am completely relaxed and enjoying myself, watching the system from my Candy World. |
| It feels like the system moves away from the right course and every transformation brings up a more negative side of each element. The only potential for the system I see in the Intrinsic Value.                      | I am very happy about the Individual Mindfulness sending positive energy but still I cannot move towards her. I am in a new dependency with her though.      | The Human has superpowers, I cannot handle. I fear for my Candy World as she could easily destroy everything.         |
| I approve of the Humans development to take responsibility. It is hard work and everyone needs to contribute to the whole. [...]  | I can confirm that the key word is connection. I enjoy looking into the eyes of the Individual Mindfulness but I could not do so without the Company next to | For me everything seems to be consistent.   |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>My biggest contribution is my ability to give. [...] I believe it is important that every element identifies its own strength and use it for the whole.</p>  | <p>me. I am completely dependent.</p>   |  |
| <p>It is similar to the Blue Stage, like frozen. I tried to give something to the system by holding the Human but she does not react. It feels like no one starts working. [...] I think it does not necessarily have to be bad but that is simply different and new. Everyone has what he always wished for.</p> | <p>I am shocked about the Human indicating to leave the system. For the first time I feel a bit stronger and ready to deal with the field of tension.</p>   | <p>So far the poles stabilized the system throughout all stages and I could trust in that. Now it does not work any longer and I think we have an outcome that should not be. [...] We are talking about who did what wrong and who is to blame because the system now is broken. After the transition there is a complete new quality and it does not feel right. Something went wrong. [...] I am shocked that the Human can take away all orientation with a blink of an eye.</p> |
| <p>I have completed my task and returned to the Exploitation pole. I think the picture now is not as different as it was at the beginning but that the elements are more aware of their positions. I believe it was our goal to change ourselves.</p>   | <p>There is a lot of space now, enabling many new opportunities. [...] To get here, I had to go through a massive self-development. Now I can stand on my own and have a good relationship with the others.</p> | <p>I am disappointed with myself for not knowing all the things I should have known including what the Human said previously. I am overwhelmed by the task to deal with her now as she represents the new but after she took away everything from me so easily, I cannot trust her.</p>  |

Table 3 Statements of the Company, the Collective Mindfulness and the 5th Element compared over all stages (video analysis)

| Intrinsic Value  | Exploitation             |
|--|--------------------------|
| <p>I believe the area around me to be safe and secure to experiment in. I am glad that</p> | <p>I feel energetic.</p> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>the Human is here because I believe she needs development. The pole opposite me is all about being grown up and the outside world. I see the Collective Mindfulness like she is standing behind a veil.</p>  |   |
| <p>The Human has made the system tip over by being over-motivated.</p>  | <p>I can perceive a harsh climate and feel discomfort. I am unhappy about the elements avoiding the tension.</p>  |
| <p>My impression is that the development of the different elements is not given at this stage. Everything seems to be frozen. No one dares to take the lead or to cause irritation.</p>   | <p>I am more and more moody. I am annoyed by the elements making everything complicated and by the Company blocking my view to the Individual Mindfulness. [...] I feel my strength as a pole decrease with every stage.</p>                                  |
| <p>The poles can now provide the Individual Mindfulness with all of their energy, making her a focal point. I can understand that the Human now needs to test herself at the Candy World but I believe the Collective Mindfulness endangers the system being there.</p> | <p>I approve of the elements not interested in the poles keeping their distance as the field of tension feels more right than before. I like being in the same boat with the Exploitation who seems to have lost all his attraction for the elements too.</p> |
| <p>For the first time I can perceive constructive connections.</p>  | <p>I like the fact that the poles brought the elements back together, making them face each other.</p>  |
| <p>“Fight for survival” is how I would describe the new system. [...] So far the poles gave the system orientation, now the Human puts up a new</p>   | <p>I can feel the strength of the Human immensely and I fear her because she can destroy the field of tension completely.</p>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>paradigm, staggering me. I can only hold my position with the two observers next to me. I think it is sad and dangerous. I am melting. [...] The Human is questioning everything there was so far but without giving a new direction. [...] I am not happy and I feel empty.</p> |   |
| <p>For me it is exciting like having a blind-date. [...] I do not like the focus to be on the Human at this stage because it should be somewhere else and we are blinded by her beauty.</p>   | <p>I could feel the elements being overwhelmed due to the transition but in a positive, exciting way. Now it feels like “everything can do, nothing must do”.</p> |

Table 4 Statements of the poles Exploitation and Intrinsic Value compared over all stages (video analysis)

### 4.3. Analysis of specific sequences and results

The following chapter aims to present the findings of the constellation in a structured, comprehensive manner. In order to achieve that goal, relevant sequences are portrayed in more detail and a coherent insight will be outlined. In case that the sequence is inconsistent with the author’s inner map, an additional interpretation will be given. Eventually, new hypothesis arise that constitute the results of this research.

#### **Finding 1 The method of systemic constellation**

**Observation** The representatives are able to detect relevant differences in the stages of Spiral Dynamics. At each stage one or more very precise and coherent statements regarding the dominant characteristics of the specific stage were made by different elements. The table “the constellation process by comparison of the stages” holds numerous evidences.

**Insight** Different levels of consciousness as suggested by Spiral Dynamics Theory exist and are highly relevant for the dynamics of a system and its individual members.

The process of a system constellation is not random.

## **Finding 2    The field of tension**

Observation    The pole Intrinsic Value was perceived as “warm”, “cosy” and “welcoming” by various elements throughout the stages (08:25, 10:25, 80:50). Yet, no comments at all about the opposite pole were made during the process.

The pole Exploitation felt her strength decrease throughout the first stages (32:59) and both poles felt a loss of attraction from the elements (43:20). At the same time, various elements mentioned the need to avoid the tension and their unwillingness to deal with it (21:00). At the yellow stage, the poles feel as if they have no relevance any longer and believe the human to be the new source of stability and orientation for the system (64:00). The 5<sup>th</sup> element feels the need to step in and support the pole intrinsic value.

Insight        The field of tension exists and is vibrant.

Individually, the pole Exploitation is perceived neither positive nor negative.

Hypothesis    *“At tier 2 of Spiral Dynamics the field of tension loses its tension due to a fundamental change in the human.”*

## **Finding 3    The transition from tier 1 to tier 2**

Observation    Every stage of Spiral Dynamics brings about changes within the system and makes the elements detect differences to the previous stage. The transition from the green to the yellow stage though, stands out and seems to be of a different, more profound nature. The yellow stage was described by the elements as “completely different”, “new” (72:01) and “of a different quality” (72:17) but at the same time “broken” and “not right” (70:55). Another important observation in this context is the fact that the 5<sup>th</sup> element who was watching the process with interest but had no urge to get involved up to that point immediately felt the need to step in at the moment of transformation (87:18). Representing the pole exploitation my personal experience of the shift to tier 2 was dominated by a felt loss of meaning regarding the poles as well as a sudden awe of the human.

Insight        The fundamental change in quality between tier 1 stages and tier 2 stages causes great stir within a system. The first and predominant reaction to that change is mostly discomfort and rejection. In a system operating at tier 2 there are elements or forces present that we are not aware of yet.

#### **Finding 4 The role of the company**

Observation At the red stage the company has an intensive focus on the 5<sup>th</sup> element and wants to invite him. At the blue stage, she explains that she has no intrinsic energy and can only act when asked for by another element. At the orange stage, she sees the only potential for the system within the intrinsic value. Afterwards she reminds all to contribute to the whole at the green stage and tries to change their perspective about the new situation at the yellow stage. Finally she returns to the place where she says she belongs, beside the pole exploitation.

Insight At the orange stage, the company turns toward the intrinsic value for hope even though it is not of her nature. Throughout the stages the company always tries to remember the other elements to see the bigger picture and other perspectives.

Hypothesis *“To overcome excessive exploitation at the orange stage and progress a company needs to face up to its own intrinsic value.”*

#### **Finding 5 The development of the human**

Observation The human experiences an obvious and constant development throughout the stages that can be observed by choice of position, body language and statements. While she wants to hide during the first two stages, she chooses to seek fun at the “Candy World” during the orange stage and becomes more self-confident, calling the poles “boring” and “old-school” (46:16). At the green stage she shifts to the opposite side and becomes very serious. She feels responsible but used at the same time (52:35). During the following yellow stage the human transforms from a moody and stubborn state to a mocking and, yet again, very confident state. At the last stage she still feels powerful but also more distant to the other elements. She describes her state as being foundation and orientation for the whole system (79:33).

Insight Each stage of Spiral Dynamics makes a huge difference for the human regarding self-awareness, behaviour and interaction with others. During the overall process the human becomes more self-confident and responsible.

## **Finding 6      The superpowers of the human**

- Observation**      While the Human was hiding for the first two stages, she decided to join the 5<sup>th</sup> Element at his “Candy World” after the transition to the Orange Stage. While the latter was welcoming her friendly, he also explained that he feared her superpowers (38:35). Both agreed that she could easily make the “Candy World” hers. At the following stage the Human mentioned that she is very good at doing something but felt her skills being used (52:00). At the yellow stage she decided not to let others treat her unfairly and became very self-confident and mocking. She accused the other elements of not thinking things through before asking her to get involved as the outcome does not seem to please anyone (70:15). The pole exploitation explains that she fears the human that could easily destroy the area of tension (66:20). Moreover the human describes herself as created by the system and the intrinsic value compares her with artificial intelligence that takes on a life of its own. At the last stage the human feels like her matter has spread over the system and now makes up its basis (79:33). The intrinsic value does not like the focus being on the human and suggests it should be somewhere else. He explains that the elements are blinded by the human’s beauty (84:35).
- Insight**              The Human is very powerful. At the yellow stage her attitude changes from being influenced by the current stage to controlling the system. At the teal stage the nature of the human changes significantly, resembling a transformation into a complete new element.
- Interpretation**      It seems like going through the different stages the human learns about the power that lie within her. It is as if the human recognizes over time that she is not one of the pieces of chess but in fact the player controlling the game. With the increasing awareness of her role, other elements are able to perceive the strength radiating from her. This could mean that as soon as humans discover that they have an immense influence on the system they live in, things progress quickly but to get to that realization, it takes humans a lot of time and development. At the Teal Stage it looks like humans complete that long journey and shed their self-centeredness for a more holistic perspective.



Hypothesis      *“At teal stage humanity becomes the foundation of our system and thereby it opens the door for the development of a collective mindfulness.”*

**Finding 7      The Individual Mindfulness**

Observation      Throughout the whole process the individual mindfulness stays an isolated element and shifts her position only slightly until she places herself behind a pole at the last stage. She states that her level of energy changes with every new stage (32:55) but that she is unable to connect with the others, feeling repelled by them (10:44). She does not prefer one pole over the other, rather seeing them as an important unity. She also identifies her strength to be “recognizing what needs to be done” and wants to develop the system further but sees her role working from the outside (54:28). At the orange stage individual mindfulness feels all eyes on her and the need to take matters in her own hands (41:47). The pole intrinsic value points out that at the orange stage all the poles energy is concentrated on the individual mindfulness, calling her a focal point (43:45). There is no special relationship between her and the collective mindfulness.

Insight            The element individual mindfulness is of a different nature than all other elements and works best being on its own. At the orange stage, the one most businesses work from at the moment of time, individual mindfulness plays an important role in making the system move on.

Interpretation    Throughout the whole process the persistence and distance of the individual mindfulness to other elements stand out and rise questions. A possible answer might be that the concept of mindfulness is ancient and mysterious in a way that there is little connection to more modern elements. Moreover, it could lie in the non-judgemental nature of mindfulness to be fully present in the system without feeling the need to bond with other elements. Another reason could be that it is innate in human’s nature but modern humans do not remember about its existence nor its importance, so the element in the constellation stays isolated in the background like the mindfulness in our lives. Watching small children explore the world around them it cannot be denied that we all have been experts of mindfulness at some stage but lost that capability over the course of growing up. At the orange stage individual mindfulness might help

people to reconnect to themselves so that they recognize what it means to be human and what kind of world they want to live in. Thus, it paves the way for the green stage and eventually the transition to tier 2.

Hypothesis *“Individual mindfulness needs space and freedom to take effect.”*

**Finding 8 The relationship between the human and the individual mindfulness**

Observation Up to the yellow stage there seemed to be no special relationship between both elements but that changed when the individual mindfulness blamed the human after the transition to impair all progress, comparing her with a black hole that absorbs all energy (64:25). The intrinsic value observes that the human seems to bring up a new paradigm, while the individual mindfulness tries to hold on to the existing, old quality (68:15). Eventually, the latter even declares that her only options are to kill the human or leave the system. The human agrees with her, seeing no other options herself (75:50). At the teal stage, the human takes the place the individual mindfulness was holding throughout all stages while the latter chooses to retire at the warm, friendly place the human originally started her journey from. At last, the human states that not having felt any affection for the individual mindfulness up to that moment, all that matters to her now is that the other is well and happy (85:42).

Insight At the yellow Stage great tension arises between the human and the individual mindfulness. At the teal stage the fight resolves and human takes over the role of the individual mindfulness.

Interpretation The relationship of the two elements is at times quite intense and puzzling. It seems as if at tier 2 there is no more space for both the individual mindfulness and the human. A possible explanation might be that the concept of individual mindfulness does not make any sense any longer as it becomes an innate feature of the human at that stage. The fact that the element still exists at the teal stage could support the thesis that the human swallows and incorporates it rather than just killing the element when taking its place. The literature research suggested that the human mind is programmed to wander constantly. As a result, incorporating mindfulness would mean humans learn how to train their brains to be present effortlessly.

During the constellation there is obviously a lot of tension between the two elements but it is always wise to remember that other representatives might have interpreted their perception differently, maybe even positively. In conclusion it can be registered that the individual mindfulness hold the pole of responsibility throughout the process and that tension arose when the human became more self-confident and powerful. That suggests the assumption that by becoming more self-aware, humans also become aware of their responsibility and develop a strong urge to take that responsibility in case it is hold by someone or something else.

Hypothesis      *“At the teal stage the human takes over the role of individual mindfulness being the holder of responsibility. Only then can the latter find its intrinsic value.”*

**Finding 9      Oh, how beautiful is Panama...**

Observation      At the yellow stage, the 5<sup>th</sup> element and the individual mindfulness keep noting that something is not right with the system and that something during the transition must have gone wrong. The human responds by telling the story “Oh, how beautiful is Panama” by the German author Horst Eckert also known as Janosch (72:40). The story is about the two friends little tiger and little bear, who decide to go to a place like paradise, Panama. After a long journey they end up home again, not recognizing their own house as it has been weathered heavily during their absence. The two friends believe they have reached Panama and live happily ever after. After hearing the story, the intrinsic value points out that in contrast to the figures in the story, he feels emptier after his journey and that he is not happy. The human explains that the elements wanted the wrong thing in the first place (74:45).

Insight            The system’s thoughts about tier 2 and especially the human’s role in it seem to be inaccurate, thereby causing great irritation.

Interpretation    The interpretation given by the author of the story is that it allows the readers a new perspective of home. Only from distance, it can be recognized as more beautiful than it appears to be from close up. In contrast to that, the elements in the constellation seem to be unhappy with their situation. A possible explanation could be that they experience the opposite effect as the tiger and the bear do. They wanted the system to change fundamentally (the equivalent

to Panama) but as it became reality at the yellow stage, they could see only negative aspects and neglected the fact that they already had all they needed long before the big changes. They did not realize that what they actually have wanted was not Paradise but maybe learning to function as a system within the real, complex and constantly changing environment. There is no obvious and simple interpretation to the metaphor used by the human at that specific moment of time but it certainly has something to do with the high expectations of the different elements, especially concerning the human, not being met. In systemic consulting, a situation where all elements of a system accuse a single element being responsible for a problem is referred to as the identified patient. The term indicates the fact that the members of a system try to reduce complexity by pointing at one individual who needs to be cured, thereby neglecting the fact that within a system everything is connected and cannot be separated easily (Reimer et al., 2000). For the constellation this could mean that the elements placed all hopes within the human without realizing that they do not need a saviour but to work together as a unity. Focusing on the negative and thereby neglecting the positive sounds very much like the phenomena KABAT-ZINN intends to counteract by his MBSR program. As a reminder, “one of the fundamental aims of the program was to make people see how they focus solely on what seems to be wrong in their lives or what needs to be changed and thereby neglecting all the things that are satisfying and pleasurable” (p.??).

Hypothesis

*“In the future humans will have to stop wishing for a different system but recognize the fact that happiness depends only on the individual’s concept of the world. Mindfulness is key to constantly refreshing that concept.”*

**Finding 10**

**The wishes of the intrinsic value for the Human**

Observation

During the constellation the pole intrinsic value stood out by having a lot to say about the other elements. He did not only comment on their behaviour, but also explained it from his point of view. Regarding the human, he explained right from the beginning that he believes she is a new idea that needs development. Several times he indicated that he wants her to side with

the pole exploitation as he links the pole with maturity (12:35, 50:50).

**Interpretation** The comments of the intrinsic value regarding the human are puzzling as the latter clearly enjoys being close to the pole. A possible explanation might be that the pole wants the human to become brave and deal with the hard reality of exploitation. Another explanation could be that the pole, not knowing what the he or his opposite are about, does not mean any harm but wants the human to develop by gaining new experiences. It does not seem sensible to over-interpret these statements as it turned out that the human did not near the pole exploitation once.

### **Finding 11 The invisible lateral axis**

**Observation** After the transition to the first stage of Spiral Dynamics, a lateral axis appeared that continued to be meaningful throughout the constellation. At the blue stage the 5<sup>th</sup> element referred to his position at the one end of it as “Candy World”. Afterwards this term was adopted by other elements. Different elements stated that they chose their position in order to avoid the tension of the poles. The other end of the pole was occupied by the individual mindfulness throughout all stages until the human took her place at the final stage. They described the spot to be about responsibility, guidance, management and the system as the whole (52:35). The “Candy World” on the other side was associated with having a good time and not feeling responsible (34:04).

**Insight** Even though not intended, a second axis with two opposing poles could be perceived by the elements. From the elements statements the invisible poles can best be referred to as responsibility and irresponsibility and seem to be relevant for the whole system.

**Interpretation** Every social system is influenced by numerous fields of tension. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of them showed up during the process as the constellation design allowed for that. The two opposing poles intrinsic value and exploitation apparently resonate with the tension between responsibility and non-responsibility. Obviously, these four are connected as you have to take responsibility for yourself and your environment in order to appreciate the intrinsic value of things and, consequently, behave irresponsible if you

decide to exploit something or someone. This is of great relevance in the context of mindfulness. Caring about the intrinsic value while deciding to take responsibility both seem necessary for mindfulness practice and be strengthened by it. The relevance of the new axis is especially interesting as one of the elements present was self-responsibility that paradoxically did not mention any connection to the invisible poles.

Hypothesis *“The conflicting poles between intrinsic value and exploitation are accompanied by the opposing poles responsibility and irresponsibility in the relevant field of tension for mindfulness.”*

**Finding 12 The development of the collective mindfulness**

Observation Right from the beginning, the collective mindfulness declared that she is completely dependent on other elements. The element she depend on changes with every new stage but she kept highlighting her dependency. At the yellow stage, she indicates for the first time that she feels more self-confident (65:48). At the final stage, she reflects upon her own development and points out that she is able to stand freely and deal with the field of tension for the first time (82:00).

Insight Collective mindfulness does not work at the lower stages of Spiral Dynamics. The yellow stage is a turning point for the collective mindfulness. The teal stage allows for its unrestricted development.

Hypothesis *“Collective Mindfulness evolves naturally when society reaches the upper levels of consciousness.”*

## 5. Résumé

### 5.1. Summary of findings

The main objective of this thesis was to get a better understanding of the concept of mindfulness in the context of its natural intrinsic value and its increasing exploitation in companies by choosing a systemic approach. In addition, possible ways for the development of a new collective mindfulness were examined. By doing an extensive literature review and a systemic constellation we hoped to demonstrate new, insight-leading hypothesis that would be useful for both academic research and professional practice.

A profound analysis of the theoretical background of the field of interest gave insights into the complex subjects touching the questions of research. Initially, the meaning and application of mindfulness has been introduced by different relevant disciplines including Buddhism, Neuroscience and organizational psychology. The literature showed a wide gap between the traditional concept of mindfulness which is deeply rooted in spiritual practice and its diversification in modern society. Subsequently, the term collective mindfulness was examined and findings showed that despite of being promoted by different future models it is up to now a rather unspoken topic in both academic and professional areas. The introduction of the field of tension including the opposing poles exploitation and intrinsic value provided the necessary understanding of the context this research was conducted in. Lastly, the theory of Spiral Dynamics by BECK and COWAN was depicted as it laid the foundation for the empirical part and its evaluation.

Following the stage of theoretical analysis, the chosen research method of systemic constellation was described and its choice explained. As part of the evaluation a profound description of the process was given both chronological and in comparison of the different stages of Spiral Dynamics which structured the constellation. Afterwards, key findings were presented separately including their insights or interpretations that, eventually, led to new insight-leading hypotheses.

For the first time, this new approach has linked mindfulness between the opposing poles of exploitation and intrinsic value with different stages of human consciousness which could have tremendous implications for its understanding and usage by humans and organizations.

The findings stress the important roles of both the individual human and the individual mindfulness. While humans undergo an immense development, individual mindfulness seems to be a constant promoter of responsibility within the system. Findings also suggest that mindfulness signs over that role to the individual human entering tier 2 of Spiral Dynamics. For the first time, this allows mindfulness to seek its intrinsic value and collective mindfulness to arise in a meaningful way. Moreover, findings suggest that the area of tension experiences a loss or at least a change of its meaning at that point. In addition, the results indicate that the human needs to look for solutions within himself and is well-advised to integrate organizations as own entities in his contemplations.

## **5.2. Critical appraisal**

This reflection of the research outcome aims to review the limits of validity and the restrictive influence of subjectivity.

Due to the nature of the field of interest as well as the chosen method of examination, the results are neither replicable nor generalizable. They can only serve as inspiration and orientation for further research. The new hypotheses could not be tested empirically due to a lack of relevant experts. This definitely calls for its realization should it become possible at a later point of time. For now, the aim was to explore the unknown field of mindfulness between the poles of exploitation and intrinsic value and to gain new insights. This has been achieved successfully.

The design of the constellation was crucial as it was the only source of collecting data. The seemingly incomplete area of tension that was planned with only one axis between two poles turned out to be a very helpful as it allowed a second axis to appear naturally during the process. However, as the literature review has revealed the existence of two different basic understandings of mindfulness, a differentiation of such might have been beneficial for the constellation process. It stands to reason that the eastern or meditative concept of mindfulness and the western or social-cognitive mindfulness would have reacted differently to the poles as the general element mindfulness has. This might have led to more detailed insights and implications for the future.

An important effect on the research process came with the decision to join the single-blind constellation as a representative. The experience from within the system had without doubt great influence on the following evaluation and interpretation of the video material as it



allowed for a different perspective as a simple observation. On the other hand, this meant that giving the instructions and thereby personal readings for the individual elements at the beginning of the constellation was not possible. To what extent the authors' understanding of the elements involved differed from the one of the instructor cannot be determined nor can it be confirmed that this had any impact on the process whatsoever.

Looking at the evaluation process, a subjective choice of key sequences for detailed analysis cannot be denied. That is why an even closer examination of all the material could lead to more or maybe even different insights. Needless to say, an evaluation of the same sequences by another interpreter might have come to other conclusions as well. Therefore, a contribution of subjectivity cannot be denied for the research design. However, in qualitative research this is no reason for underrating the process but it surely indicates that different interpretations and eventually different insights and hypotheses might have been possible. Fortunately, there is no claim for definite rightness or completeness of results, conducting abductive and intuitive research.

Despite the methodic limitations of our approach, we managed to extract useful hypothesis based on which we are able to further investigate the role of mindfulness in organizations and society.

### **5.3. Implications for research and praxis**

The findings of this research in form of hypotheses imply a rather theoretical understanding of the field of tension surrounding individual and collective mindfulness. This is why it is important to deduce more practical implications, both for further research and praxis, in addition. Nevertheless, it needs to be highlighted that this research did not aim at finding a solution for a concrete problem but gaining a better understanding and new impulses of the subject of interest. Because of this, implications deduced are rather general and wide-spread.

It became obvious that humans have more power and control of the system as it seemed at the beginning. Yet, the ultimate goal in western societies still is to become more powerful, especially in terms of financial resources. The findings show the importance of educating upcoming generations about the responsibility that comes with power as well as encouraging skills like ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance. In general, it can be stated that humans need to focus more on the potential that lies within them, so abilities like self-awareness and intuition

must be trained in order to both, adapt to an ever changing environment and simultaneously promote it.

Moreover, the research pointed towards the important role of individual mindfulness regarding the progression of the whole system. Especially at the orange stage that is predominantly present around us, institutions and organizations are well advised to encourage mindfulness practice on an individual level. Also, there seems to be no reason to worry about or strictly avoid exploitation of mindfulness as it contributes to a balanced system without affecting individual elements in a negative way. But still, it seems important to bear in mind that mindfulness had no desire to ally with other elements. Therefore, letting it unfold without any unnecessary intervention and trusting in its natural effects can be recommended. The organization seems to have an own perspective that is usually more holistic than the individual ones, so treating it as such can be very beneficial and enriching planning for transforming business and society.

The constitution of a collective mindfulness cannot be forced but depends completely on the human to reach higher levels of consciousness at tier 2 stages. Therefore, it will appear as a natural consequence and can only be supported by encouraging human development on an individual level. To advance the development of society along the stages of Spiral Dynamics seems to be useful as the systemic understanding that is necessary for complex problem-solving increases significantly at the yellow stage.

The research outcome provides a first understanding of an emerging future and its challenges. Further investigation needs to be done by both, academics and professionals, in order to enlarge the insights and take relevant action. But still, this thesis can be an inspiring example to venture out of familiar contexts and explore the unknown.

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