

## The illusion of extreme horizontality or why do we gravitate to extremes?

What has been instructive this week is discovering that there are multiple horizontals, and when I say I don't believe in one of them, it is easy to be misunderstood. I don't actually believe in extremism, but there are so many sides to this issue that have yet to be unpacked.

We often think that being horizontal means that everyone decides everything together, contributes equally and is therefore the fairest. When I think of horizontal operation, this is what immediately comes to mind. But this is for me an idealised concept that depends closely on the situation in which it is used. Could be a bartender or the worried relatives decide during a surgery? They can decide, but I would be more happy if a doctor makes the decision in that case.

So why do we think that in other areas this model can always work?

Yet many insist on extremes. Perhaps because it sounds good? Communism sounds good on paper - equality, justice - but in reality it is impossible to maintain because 'equal' is never equal. **It requires constant interference that invades individual freedom of choice without recognition.**

The same is true of horizontalism taken to the extreme, because in joint decision-making, compromises are made in different proportions.

The other question that arises is **where are the boundaries of the individual in shared decision-making**, and how **can a clear position be created to defend them?**

## Delegation within horizontality

I feel true horizontal functioning is not about joint decision-making at any price, but about **transparent sharing of responsibilities**. My belief is that to be effective, you need to recognise and delegate skills, knowledge and values, and apply gentle leadership styles that are empathetic, collaborative and reflective.

Why would this not be compatible with working horizontally?

Operating horizontally does not necessarily mean abolishing leadership, but transforming it. In such a system, team members recognise each other's skills and values and delegate tasks accordingly. The emphasis is on trust and collaboration: the leader leads gently, empathetically and reflectively, listens to team feedback and is prepared to change the approach if necessary. In this structure, everyone contributes to the common goal according to their own strengths, and decisions are made where the most knowledge and competence are found.

## **Power dynamics between the group and responsibilities**

**And if we believe in delegation, how can you get to know the potential of a team in 12 weeks?** Won't those who move easily in a large group be at an advantage, while other valuable skills remain hidden?

In a constantly uncertain environment, people have to constantly position themselves - redefining their place and role. This constant adjustment and redefinition is extremely exhausting.

A significant part of their energy is spent not on the core of their work, but on navigating the group. Over time, this situation can lead to frustration and burnout, if no one feels stable.

## **Verbalisation and being challenged by the amount of people**

The first thing that has occurred to me this week and now, as I write my individual contribution, is how language, verbatim, involves so many dead ends, misdirections, labyrinthine situations. Especially when there are seven of us. Some people grasp the essence of a thought easily, some have difficulty verbalising and some have difficulty focusing in a large group setting. In fact, I hadn't really measured how challenging it would be for my introverted side to spend so much focused time with so many people.

The micro version of constant positioning in life can also appear in verbally (subconsciously/consciously) - "yes, but", "yes, and", no because, "I agree, I'll go with it". Without a clear division of responsibilities, we have to constantly redefine our own position.

**Self-reflection is a key point, as we can fall into passive-aggressive or aggressive modes of communication when emotions take over.**