

Preface

I was in Atlanta a week before the 2016 Presidential election and you could sense the tension about what was going to happen. For many people unexpectedly, Donald Trump became President Elect. Barbara Kellerman² was one of the speakers during the Atlanta International Leadership Association (ILA) conference in that year, as she had won an award for her work. In her five-minute speech she gave the audience a wake-up call: our assumptions are wrong! It is about the followers. We have to change our perspectives from leader-centric to follower-driven views. And, even more important, technology has changed the relation between leader and followers. A week later, the outcome of the elections proved this to be true. After a Brexit, we had an unexpected winning of Trump for President. In our work as leader-follower researchers we have to pay attention to this change: stop thinking that being a leader is more important than being a follower. Stop thinking that context is not important. Stop thinking that leadership is static, it is a dynamic and unpredictable relation between people, which are not primarily rational. And we have to stop thinking that our (business) universities are capable of delivering good leaders, in the sense of effective, ethical and authentic leaders. We are not. We thoroughly have to rethink our view on leadership and followership, the role of technology and internet, and the context of a globalized world. We have to reconsider how we can teach leadership in a manner that it might contribute to better (in the triple sense as mentioned before: effective, ethical and authentic) followership and leadership.

It is my hope that this book contributes to this adaptive challenge, as our contemporary world seems not to be able to make this shift happen, although we know we should. *Change starts with us*, in leading ourselves, in—not—following others, in leading others in the right direction, in being authentic. We can contribute to the common good, however little and small our influence might be. If you are present in your daily working, with your colleagues, your superiors, with your partner(s), with your children, that might be the start of a transformation. As a follower and as a

²Kellerman 2012.

leader, act relationally effective, ethical and authentic. I hope this book can help you on that journey. It is not easy, but if you manage to live from the center of this triangle of effectiveness, integrity and authenticity, it will contribute to your reason of being, to the integral purpose in your private life, in your career, and in your professional life in society and organizations ('ikigai'³).

Although I tried to write this book accessible and readable, the topic of dialogical leadership and transformation is an adaptive challenge. I am not giving easy answers, as this will not help you in the end. You have to work through the challenge yourself, you have to reflect, to think and to develop discipline. Since a book is not a living dialogue, and you—as reader—are free to determine your own sequence of reading and digesting the text, I offer a form of guidance. Those who want to read practical examples and cases, start reading Chaps. 6 and 7. Also without the depth of the theory, you are able to get an understanding what is intended here. Those who are primarily interested in how you set up a dialogical transformation process with leaders and followers in an organization, start reading Chaps. 4, and 5. Apart from general explanations, many details are described in these chapters, examples and practical guidelines given. Those who are more deeply interested in the theory of the self, dialogue as an epistemological, ethical and relational form of conversation start with Chaps. 2 and 3. The fundamental assumption in this book is that the self, including the self of leaders and followers, is relationally constructed, dynamic and open for continuous change. If you grasp the essence of what is described in Chap. 2, you understand the basic concepts of Dialogue and Dialogical Leadership. And you will be able to apply this in a natural and spontaneous way. Feel free to read as you wish. The book is a document that comes to live in relation with you. Write your comments in the text, agree, disagree, think and rethink, become more aware of your assumptions. If this happens, I feel we reach what I hope. Chapters 2–6, and 8 start with an overview of key points, and at the end of each chapter there are some questions for further reflection.

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³'Ikigai' is the Japanese concept, meaning a *reason for being* or a *life worth living*, all elements of life including: work, career, hobbies, relationships, friendships, spirituality, and so on. Nick van Dam used this concept in his inaugural address as a professor of Corporate Learning at Nyenrode University (The Netherlands), to illustrate the importance of the discovery of your purpose as bringing meaning to your life. This is important in the corporate world, where employees can be at risk as work-life gets out of balance. (van Dam 2016, p. 93).



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