A Psycho-dynamic Exploration
from within The Leader-Follower Dyad

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“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

- Carl Jung -
1. Abstract

My research focus will be on the influences on the leader-follower dyad from psychodynamic systemic point of view as well as on the psycho dynamics within the dyad.

This does matter because it has an influence on the performance of the work relationship but more importantly an effect on life balance of the individuals in the dyad.

Although a lot has been written about leader vs. follower, little is known about the dyad itself; my thesis will try to give an insight into the dynamics at work within the dyad as well as the system dynamics influencing the dyad from both leader’s side as from the follower’s side.

To achieve this inside view, I adopt an explorative method through an autoethnography using a narrative style. I have used the critical incident method as well as socio-analytical interviewing and a questionnaire.

It is important that executives, working in a change context, are aware of the potential impact of dyadic dynamics on their life balance.

Key words:

dyad, leader-follower, attachment styles, transference, countertransference, Critical Incident Technique, autoethnography, ORA, TEF, socio-analytical interviewing, narrative, EMCCC, ILT, IFT, safe space, trust, fair process, CCRT, life balance.

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2. Prologue

Pre EMCCC (Executive Master in Consulting and Coaching for Change INSEAD)

Since six years I work as an executive at an international industrial company. I was recruited by the CEO as CIO and was asked to challenge the status quo.

The first 2 years I restructured my department to prepare them for the challenges ahead. This was a motivating time for me, creating a department vision and a strategy, working out roadmaps on the different strategic streams and connecting the yearly objectives, creating transparency and introducing KPI’s to measure and improve services. I worked with a small management team and was in very close contact with the people.

We launched interesting projects, but to move to another level I needed to increase the overall quality. This was a first big hurdle which resulted in an outsourcing project. The objective was to concentrate with a smaller team on where we could add most value to the business through better process knowledge. The outsourcing happened but it also caused an incident between myself and my boss, which had an important impact on me.

Around the same time, I finished a multiyear cross-departmental project, which I presented at a major event and this in return lead to a reference visit by our biggest client. This visit caused a second conflict with my boss.

With the IT restructuring done, I started working more outside my department in order to support the business better. I tried to improve business processes but struggled as each department was behaving like a silo. I couldn’t get interest nor agreement from the business to improve end to end processes. As there is no shared vision, no operational strategy and the executive board is not acting as a team, it is difficult to come to consensus and to move forward. This made me look for alignment with my CEO, which did not work. I have tried in many ways to get his support, always challenging myself, questioning why I could not achieve to capture his interest and endorsement. I kept questioning myself but started to feel less and less secure. I felt nervous and stressed and I over reacted at home and in my team to small incidents. After about a year I decided to do the INSEAD Leading for Result training in order to find solutions. It went better for a while with the team, but in front of my boss I still felt insecure and nervous. I wanted to find out what was wrong with me, how I could get a decent conversation with my boss, how I could convince him that my ideas made sense, or how I could at least get an
understanding or explanation why he did not think so. Meanwhile, I had more and more difficulties keeping a good life balance and I became slowly highly sensitive and anxious. I knew I needed to do something, and it is while looking for solutions that I came to EMCCC. I knew what I was looking for: to find a way for myself to get a better life balance with less effect on my loved ones.

**EMCCC**

“But I also saw a different Jeroen from all other meetings that I had observed. I felt you less confident during your presentation than what I had seen in all your other meetings during the day. In a flash, I had the image of a scared rabbit at night in front of the headlights of an approaching car.”

One EMCCC practicum is an observation exercise. One of my EMCCC peers observed me in a board meeting where I presented. This is how she described her experience. I could only agree, I was afraid about being pushed back, down, away again.

The last 1.5 year was a bit of a rollercoaster, sometimes mounting slowly (getting to understand, learning), then reaching the top and hanging over the edge but still moving slowly (reaching a tipping point - Kets de Vries, 2013 -, an insight when the pieces fall into place), before speeding up almost uncontrollably while taking some loopings putting my life upside down, with fast sharp bents (which gave me a shockingly different view of things) to be pulled up slowly to another top again, searching and gaining new views and (in)sights.

During the EMCCC, I have learned a lot about myself through reflections and the different psychodynamic (Kets de vries & Cheak, 2016) concepts. I enjoyed it and felt safe enough to talk about my feelings. After a few modules I started to feel better, but that turned out to be an illusion. After having received the results of a 360° review, in which my boss’s score was opposite to mine, that of my team and peers, and after a phone call of my daughter who had an issue with some girlfriends at her sportsclub, giving me a flash back to when I was 14 years and being bullied, I collapsed. I felt bad, lonely, lost and not knowing what to do, but I also felt strangely enlightened: maybe the problem was not laying with me. I got the feeling that I understood what was going on: my boss was consciously or unconsciously bullying me. I also felt anger towards my boss but also disappointment in him.

When driving home from EMCCC, I did not have a plan on how to cope with this. I was even not sure I could go to work. Back home I started working on a plan. I prepared the next week
well, cancelling some meetings and preparing the others in detail, especially these with my boss. I started keeping a diary and used reminders to focus on containment and reality checking (Stein & Book, 2011). I worked on my ‘screen time’ on my phone in order to be more in the moment. I listed a few people I would contact to find help; one was my coach (who once recommend EMCC). To my team I explained that I was understanding their message through the 360° and that I was going to spend more energy on them. They seemed happy to hear and I felt supported. With my boss, I decided not to look for alignment anymore but to use a more “take it or leave it” approach when I explained him a project or proposal, which seemed to work. I started to feel the energy coming back.

My coach confirmed that I was doing the right things. She recommended a therapist-coach, as well as writing my diary in the third person which helped me to take a distance from my own feelings and behaviour. I started doubting if I was being bullied. The meeting with the therapist-coach the following week, was another step. The assumption of being a victim of bullying was put aside as there is not pattern. He did ask me why I was still working there, which was really an eyeopener as I could not answer him with good arguments. This felt like a second relief, I could get out of this.

We are now about 10 months later and I have gone through the last EMCCC modules. My health has been improving steadily. I have renewed energy. I am working better with my team. I am more in the moment, less emotional and less sensitive and thus better with containment. All this happens with its ups and downs, but with positive effects on myself, my family and my team.

But I still did not know what was happening, I had tried to understand my boss, I analysed my own behaviour… It was only after working for some time on my thesis subject that I understood that I had been polarising! The interesting part is what is happening in between us, between my boss and me.

3. Introduction

Now that I understand it is nor me nor him, but it is ‘between’ us, I want to know what is happening. To find an answer on this, I first need to understand, I need to explore further ….

Hence my research question: “What is going on, and why does it have such impact on me?”
Until now, research focussed either on the view of the leader or the view of the follower. However the dynamics within the dyad seen from both sides are understudied in literature. I hope that this work will be a valuable insight.

I will explore psychodynamic systems to uncover the impact these have on the role. Then I will look at how the dynamics within the dyad have an impact on the relation and on the individuals within the dyad.

This thesis gives insights in a personal journey, in which self-reflection was key. Using different concepts I have learned in EMCCC, I will try to uncover which dynamics are going on within the dyad, impacting myself, my loved ones and my performance. This work could be of value for executives in environments going through intense transformation or other changes.

This journey shows that neither the follower, nor the leader is the cause of this difficult relationship, but it’s the dynamics between both that can lead to a dysfunction.

4. Objective

I want to understand what has been going on the last years and why it had such an impact on me. My first objective is to explore the dynamics in and around the dyad and understand how they influence the leader-follower relationship. Understanding how these dynamics function, will enable me to recognise these and prevent them from having such impact. By sharing this experience, I hope people recognise the importance of these dynamics in a change environment and that it helps them to understand and manage potential dysfunctions within the leader-follower relation.

5. Literature Review

The dyad

The overall focus will be on the dyad. As we should use our own reflections about leadership as the starting point for leader and leadership development, I will try to get both sides. (Schyns, Tymon, Keifer & Kerschreiter, 2012).
Followers play significant roles in shaping interactions that create leadership. As they observe and respond to leaders based on their experience with current and past leaders, both leaders and followers influence the creation and maintenance of a distinct dyad. Van Vugt, Hogan, and Kaiser (2008, as cited in Eberly, Johnson, Hernandez & Avolio, 2013) highlighted that goal convergence between leaders and followers is important in effective leadership. When both agree on the goal, the relationship and resulting leadership actions are clear. When they do not agree on the goal, the relationship is ambivalent, and leadership represents a more complex interaction between leaders and followers that impacts communication, trust, and ultimately performance. (Van Vugt, Hogan, and Kaiser, 2008, as cited in Eberly et al, 2013)

Leadership occurs between roles, between leaders and followers, and exists in the relation between these role holders. (Long, 2010)

Studies from Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995 & 2000, as cited in Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009) show how development of trust, respect, and obligations to each other is the basis to transform the leader-follower dyads from individual interest to shared interest.

Discovering the system-dynamics

When we join a work organisation, we get a title for the role, but the nature of our role will be determined by the interplay of forces between what we bring, individually, (personality, skills, capacities, interests, motivations, emotional propensities and personal history – Long, 2016) and the expectations of the “system”, a group of other role-holders around us. This interplay of forces has been called the dynamic of “the role as taken and the role as given” (Krantz & Maltz, 1997, cited in Long, 2013). It is our challenge to negotiate at work a shared reality with those other role-holders who have a stake in the task, and be mindful that they too, are grappling, with their role histories (Long, 2013). Long (2016) cites that people do not create the role, but “colour” the role with their own way of doing things and with the valences (Bion 1961, as cited by Long, 2016) that drive them.

It can get very complicated when expectations cannot be openly discussed, and performance anxiety pushes individuals to take up roles from other settings. (Long, 2013)

Organisations achieve their outputs and outcomes through the way in which staff take up their work roles. Since this does not always happen as it should, as explained above, the methodology of organisational role analysis (ORA) was developed. Organisational role analysis is a process
for assisting individuals and organisations to clarify and support effective role performance in achieving the aim of their organisation. (Long, 2013)

Borwick (2006) cites that the ORA is an organized process for freeing the individual to understand her role within a system. It is a systemic process, using the system to uncover the system. Essentially, the ORA is a system process that functions at the role level, not at the individual level. It holds the individual hostage, so the role can appear. Once the role has been uncovered and the relations and rules have been revealed, it is no longer possible to revert to older roles. The individual has encountered the containing format, the system, and having altered it, can no longer operate in the old system. In other words, the change takes place at the system level, not at the personal or psychological level. It is for this reason that it is called an organizational role analysis and not a personal analysis. (Borwick, 2006)

Only with a person in the role, the role becomes alive and real, without it, it is just an empty description. It is the person in role that has an impact. From this, the concept of the “institution in the mind” can be invoked (Armstrong 1997, cited in Long, 2016). According to Long (2013), this is a mental image of the organisation that is connected to the role in the mind of the role holder. The psychological role is the role idea in the mind of the person. It includes the expectations we have of ourselves in role. The sociological role is the role idea in the minds of others. It includes the expectations that other have of us in role. These two – the psychological and the sociological roles may or may not co-incide. (Long, 2016)

Roles are constantly in need of renegotiation given changing persons, systems and contexts. These are dynamic not static concepts. (Long, 2016)

The transforming experience framework (TEF) centres around role because it is within roles that decisions can be made and actions taken. (Long, 2016)

In the past, leadership has often been studied from the leader perspective. Junker and van Dick (2014) demonstrated that the follower perspective adds significantly to our understanding of leadership and the formation of leadership. Follower-centered leadership research bring the implicit leadership theories (ILT)s and implicit followership theories (IFT)s. ILTs represent raters' subjective views of leaders (Eden & Leviatan, 1975, as cited in Junker and van Dick, 2014); IFTs represent the respective views of followers (e.g., Sy, 2010, as cited in Junker and van Dick, 2014). Both dyad members have their own expectations about followers and leaders and they compare their own behaviour and that of the other to these ideal prototypes and act in accordance with this correspondence (Junker & van Dick, 2014). Dyad members benefit if they show substantial overlap with this impression, they suffer if they do not (e.g.,
Heilman, 1983; Junker, Schyns, van Dick, & Scheurer, 2011, as cited in Junker & van Dick, 2014). Therefore, followers have higher levels of job satisfaction if their leader fits their implicit theories of leaders (e.g., Epitropaki & Martin, 2005, as cited in Junker & van Dick, 2014). Exploring the follower implicit theories of leadership would be helpful in developing leader and follower dyadic relationships (Eberly, Johnson, Hernandez & Avolio, 2013).

Attachment styles may also impact how one behaves with different leadership models. Behavioural adaptation to different leadership models may be positive when the leader perceives satisfying performance and when the follower is satisfied with the leader and job tenure (Keller, 2003).

Exploring the dynamics within the dyad

Maccoby (2004) cites that transference is like the emotional glue that binds people to a leader. Positive transference is when an employee sees its leader as better (smarter, nicer, more charismatic) than he really is (Maccoby, 2004). Transference is defined as a displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behaviour, originally experienced in relation to significant figures during childhood, onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship. Transference represents a confusion of time, person, and place (Van de Loo, 2007). Transference and transference-like phenomena are unconscious dynamics, playing a part in all professional relationships (Van de Loo, 2007). Perhaps the biggest risk in transference is the fact that it works in 2 ways: a follower projects his past experiences onto his leader, the leader responds by projecting his past experiences back onto the follower. Freud called this phenomenon countertransference (Maccoby, 2004). On the one hand, transference creates followership and is therefore a source of strength for leaders; on the other hand, it destroys objectivity and therefore can be a real threat to leaders (Maccoby, 2004).

These transference and counter-transference reactions are neither a sign of pathology nor an indication of dysfunctional relationships. But they may become a source of dysfunctionality when they interfere with good and productive relationships and cooperation (Van de Loo, 2007). The transference dynamic is most likely to get out of control during periods of organizational stress (Maccoby, 2004).

Transference and counter-transference reactions emerge in all relationships. These patterns are very consistent over time, and individuals can be characterised by their core conflictual relationship theme (CCRT). The CCRT influences not only one’s own behaviour, but also the
behaviour of the other. Individuals unconsciously try to cast others in roles in line with their CCRT (Van de Loo, 2007).

One of the core concepts of the psychodynamic paradigm is the “inner theatre” (Mc Dougall, 1985, as cited in Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2016). It is the stage filled with people who have influenced, for better or worse, our experiences in life. Within the inner theatre, certain relationship themes develop over time – themes rooted in our deepest wishes, needs, and goals, which contribute to our unique personality style. These “core conflictual relationship themes” (CCRTs; Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1998, as cited in Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2016) become recurring relationship patterns that we take along in our life. In hierarchic relationships at work, we act out these themes onto others and, based on those wishes, anticipate in a certain way how others will react to us; then we react to their perceived reactions, and not to their actual reactions (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2016). The Core Conflictual Relationship Theme consists of three components: a Wish (W), a Response from the Other (RO), and the Response from the Self (RS; Luborsky, 1984 as cited in Book, 1998). The CCRT itself is generated from a number of relationship episodes (Res) (Book, 1998).

There is poor agreement between leaders and followers on the level of exchange they experience in their relationship (Gerstner & Day, 1997, as cited in Harms, 2011). That can be explained by the different expectations the leader and follower have of the relationship. Attachment theory can be used to explain the individual differences underlying these perceptions (Harms, 2011). Popper and Mayseless (2003, as cited in Davidovitz, Mikulincer, Shaver, Izsak & Popper, 2007) argued that adult attachment theory, may provide important insights into leadership processes and leader–follower relations.

Leaders can be compared to caregivers who provide followers with a sense of security and a platform for personal growth and development (Mayseless & Popper, 2007, as cited in Davidovitz et al, 2007). According to Popper and Mayseless (2003, as cited in Davidovitz et al, 2007), the attachment behavioural system is activated when turning to a leader for support and guidance during threatening or challenging times. This is reaching out for proximity and security and forming a bond with the leader. Research has also shown that the need for a strong leader increases in times of personal or collective crisis, trauma, or uncertainty (e.g., Mayseless & Popper, 2007; Shamir, 1999, as cited in Davidovitz et al, 2007).

People approach their work consistent with their attachment styles. For example, secure individuals do not use work to satisfy unmet needs for love (as do anxious–ambivalent individuals) nor do they use work to avoid social interaction (as do avoidant individuals) (Hazan
& Shaver, 1990, as cited in Keller, 2003). Thus, this suggests that attachment influences expectations, motives, feelings, and actions toward others (Keller, 2003).

Secure followers may not deliver satisfying performance to their anxious–ambivalent leaders or avoidant leaders. The anxious–ambivalent leader may find them not needy enough to respond to their dependency needs. The avoidant leader may find them too dependent as they are uncomfortable with people being emotionally dependent upon them and may be suspicious of secure followers requesting for help (Keller, 2003). Attachment styles may impact implicit leadership theories, impacting the leader–follower interaction (Keller, 2003).

Research beginning with Ainsworth et al. (1978, as cited in Davidovitz et al, 2007) and continuing through recent studies by social and personality psychologists (reviewed by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, as cited in Davidovitz et al, 2007), indicated that individual differences in attachment style can be measured along two orthogonal dimensions: attachment-related anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998, as cited in Davidovitz et al, 2007). The first dimension, attachment anxiety, reflects the degree to which a person worries that a partner will not be available or adequately responsive in times of need. The second dimension, avoidance, reflects the extent to which a person distrusts his or her relationship partners’ goodwill and strives to maintain autonomy and emotional distance from the partner. People who score low on both dimensions are said to be secure, or securely attached (Davidovitz et al, 2007).

6. Methodology

The subject of my thesis has been emerging over the last months. The spark was the moment I realised that I was not the problem, neither was my boss, but the issue was between us. I always got back to the same question: what happened, why, and why did it have this effect? Therefore, I started to explore. An autoethnographic method seemed logic. Reading the EMCCC thesis “In the Footsteps of Hansel and Gretel” (Flandre, N. at INSEAD, 2016) inspired me as I understood how the autoethnography not only enables to explore but also to share profoundly personal experiences.

Ellis and Bochner (2000, as cited in Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010) defined autoethnography as: An autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural . . . then they look inward, exposing a
vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. Holman Jones (2005, as cited in Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010) explained that autoethnographers attempt to set a scene and tell a personal story by “weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation”, with the hope that the story will resonate with readers and cause them to reflect on their own lives (Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010).

I liked the idea to write and re-write my own story, to read myself. My story is filtered through the lens of time, it emerged. I liked the importance of reflection in the emerging of the story, while writing the autoethnography, using a narrative style. The most difficult was to deal with the ambiguity, not knowing where this exploration was going to take me, uncovering blind spots (Kets de vries, 2012) and describing my most vulnerable self.

When I started thinking about my thesis subject, this subject was still very sensitive to me, and I did not know if I would be capable to write about it, let alone involve my boss in it. Over the last months however, through reflection and reading, I have found the basis as well as the methods to work on my subject. An important point was the confirmation by my boss that he was willing to cooperate. However, I had to find a method to make sure that we did not end up in the same dynamics as before. To do this, I used socio-analytical interviewing (Long, 2013) and the critical incident technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) (Hettlage and Steinlin, 2006). I used the work by Hettlage and Steinlin (2006) as a guide to understand this technique and how to apply it. They explain that CIT is a qualitative research methodology. The critical incident method is often classified as a cognitive technique because it focuses on the acquisition of knowledge or information by the interview partner. However, the process by which the information is given by the interview partner is in a sense experiential: information is given in the context of a possible incident, which simulates the experience of entering an incident as an actor, but without the risks of failure and embarrassment. This realistic story allows to cover attitudes, emotions, behaviours and skills of the people involved. Furthermore, the method uses the behavioural techniques of feedback and reinforcement. Therefore, the cognitive, affective, and behavioural components are brought together in the critical incidents method, both in the content of what is learned and the process of learning. The CIT is a method for getting a subjective report while minimising interference from stereotypical reactions or received opinions. Hence, they minimize the effect of desired answers as the interviewees are drawn into the story. A critical incident is defined as one which can have an important effect on the final outcome. The CIT is an open-ended retrospective method of finding out how the people
concerned situate themselves with regards to the field being explored. It focuses on patterns of behaviour, resources, skills and knowledge. It focuses on people’s behaviour, so it can be used as long as the inherent bias of retrospective judgement is understood (Hettlage & Steinlin, 2006).

I have described three, to me, critical incidents. These are events that have had an important impact on me. It was not an easy exercise for me to describe these, while leaving emotions out. For this reason, I used the third person as it helps me to stay on the balcony as the interviewer/observer. I described myself in those stories as the CIO. I spent a lot of time writing and rewriting these incidents to ensure that they were as neutral as possible. This is recognized by Tripp (1993, as cited in Sence-Oatey, 2013): Very few critical incidents will be ‘fair copy’ or ‘final draft’; as in journals, the main characteristic of critical incident writing is lack of closure and continual revision. In fact, many of the entries will be actual events rather than critical incidents, simply because critique is a much slower and harder process than description of an event. The vast majority of critical incidents are not at all dramatic or obvious: they are mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be ‘typical’ rather than ‘critical’ at first sight but are rendered critical through analysis (Tripp, 1993, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2013). It is also apparent from this research that critical incidents are not discrete, isolated events as the term may suggest and it therefore often proves very difficult to define the chronological and perceptual boundaries of these events (Cope & Watts, 2000, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2013).

For the first interview, I prepared the critical incidents as a neutral story, which I read out as the observer. I used semi-structured interview questions to get my boss’s side of the stories.

I conducted a second interview to clarify and further explore some points, using again a semi-structured interview based on ORA/TEF, as well as some questions around his CCRT and the Collins attachment style questionnaire (see §13. Annexes). I chose the Collins questionnaire as it is not too long and has a version which is aimed at business relationships rather than romantic relationships. The Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990, as cited in Keller, 2003) has acceptable coefficient alpha levels and demonstrates convergent validity with both Hazan and Shaver’s (1987, as cited in Keller, 2003) and the Attachment Style Measure (Simpson, 1990, as cited in Keller, 2003).
To bring to live the incidents in this thesis, I described them as vignettes to take the reader more into my experience. Then, I built hypothesis to further explore the potential influence of attachment styles between us.

7. Data gathering and analysis

I did a first interview on 3 critical incidents; I describe each incident from three viewpoints: the observer (which is me as the interviewer), the CEO and me (CIO). I have split and adapted the transcripts in order to make it readable. The first interview was happening in the CEO’s office as planned. My CEO talked easily and at length, explaining extensively his viewpoint. This resulted in the following data, presented in vignettes:

- Vignette #1: Critical incident on unions
- Vignette #2: Critical incident on reference visit
- Vignette #3: Critical incident on being too conceptual

In a second interview, I further explore context, organisation in the mind, ILT/IFT, CCRT and attachment styles. This interview was more difficult. It was postponed twice before we agreed on a Skype call (voice only), with an interruption in the middle of it. I had more difficulties to stay on the balcony. It was also harder to explain some of the context and I had the impression that he was not at ease with some of the questions. From this I gathered the following data, summarized again in vignettes, which I will analyse shortly after each one:

- Vignette #4: viewpoints on context
- Vignette #5: viewpoints on organisation (system)
- Vignette #6: viewpoints on ILT
- Vignette #7: viewpoints on IFT

During EMCCC I discovered my CCRT. I tried to work with my CEO to discover his CCRT together, but this did not work out. I have used the data gathered over the 2 interviews to build a hypothesis on his CCRT. This gave the following:

- My CCRT
- Hypothesis on my boss’s CCRT

I looked at attachment styles through the Collins Questionnaire resulting in:
As a final step in the analysis, I loop back to the critical incidents, I deconstruct them and I highlight the patterns.

Vignette #1: Critical incident on unions

**Observer:** When he got in his CIO role, he looked how to improve the IT department. He took some months to establish a vision and with his management established a strategy. The CIO worked with his managers to improve performance. Re-structuring (outsource half of the IT workforce) was necessary to establish a new culture in an environment where the status quo ruled but with big challenges in the form of digitalisation in a financial difficult situation. At one point the unions got to know about the intentions to outsource and sent out a letter to all directors as well as the board of administrators and the responsible minister but not to the CIO; he got to hear from one of his colleagues about the content which was one long complaint about how the IT department was managed.

Shortly after this he got an invitation for a meeting with the CEO, HR director and the unions to discuss about his functioning.

**Me:** Before I heard about the letter, I felt supported by the CEO but not being made aware, made me feel lonely. When the project was leaked to the unions, the pressure from my team, the unions, the perceived lack of support by most of my colleagues and the lack of feedback from my CEO made me wonder if I was going to be supported in this project.

**CEO:** When asking the CEO about this incident, the CEO did not know what incident the observer was talking about. After clarification, the CEO explains that something similar happened to him recently and that this is a way of the unions to show themselves if they feel under pressure. He also explains that they sometimes ask for a meeting, which he assumed is what happened.

**Observer:** Before the meeting, the CEO, CIO and HR director met shortly in the CEO’s office. The CEO instructed to just listen to the unions and not to reply. When coming in the meeting room, the unions, represented by three persons, were already there. They started talking about how badly the department was managed. At certain points the CIO wanted to reply but he was cut short several times by the CEO. The CEO just said, “let them talk”, or “do not reply”. The
CEO and HR director also did not say much. The union representatives went on for about 2 hours. The meeting was concluded by the HR director agreeing with the unions to do an assessment of the functioning of the IT department and setting up an organisational coaching. He then asked the CIO if he was ok with that, the CIO accepted.

After the meeting the CEO left immediately, the HR director left quickly after having explained shortly that he would setup a call with a coach.

Me: I received the invitation for the meeting from my CEO without any further information. I was worried about the viewpoint of my boss. The CEO explained just before, that in the meeting he was going to listen to the unions and asked me and the HR director to do the same.

There was no time to align or for me to explain my side of things which made me feel nervous and frustrated. I felt treated as a child.

CEO: The CEO was not aware that I didn’t know the process and he assumed that the HR director would have informed me. The CEO explained that he wanted to avoid any emotions by just listening to the unions and by not replying to them otherwise it might be difficult to come back to a fact-based discussion.

Me: By the end of the meeting the CEO and the HR director proposed to do an assessment of the IT organisation. As coaching was used as a corrective action and not a supportive action within the company, this felt like I had been sanctioned without having had the chance to reply. Next to frustration, I also felt not supported and started to feel not trusted for my capabilities to lead my department.

Both CEO and HR director left quickly after the meeting.

I was scared to lose my job and I needed to hear the CEO to ensure myself that there was no trust issue, I wanted to explain him my side of the story before getting judged on my competence to lead and I wanted to feel his support for my project.

CEO: The CEO explains that to avoid conflict and emotions, he took a neutral stand and listened to see if they would come up with any facts or evidence. He cannot recall them coming up with anything, but the fact that they had come to his office means, to him, that there must be something, on whatever side it may be. He said not to be there to defend anybody, he wanted to listen and if he needed a more objective analysis, he would do it afterwards, what happened in this case. The CEO made the following comparison: “It’s like when you have two kids and they come to you when they are fighting, blaming each other. You cannot say you’re right and
you are wrong. You just say no, I’m sorry, I will listen to you and please don’t come back, except if you have facts, otherwise, solve the issue between yourselves. What I can do, is maybe try to find a process to help them solve the issue between them and this is what I tried to do without taking any side or showing any bias towards one or the other.” A bit further the CEO rephrased it as follows: “It’s the same thing for a the father: the parent can never say you are right or you are wrong, he needs to keep his distance and say, ok, I will try to understand better what happened if it is significant, if it is not significant then go back.”

Me: I tried several times that evening to call the CEO before I reached him. I explained him that I was not feeling well about the meeting. The CEO was quite short and explained that this is how these things go. I did not ask more and did not explain my side of the story nor did I mention how I felt about the coaching. I understood a bit more about the process, but it was not enough for me to get back to feeling secure and supported.

CEO: When asking the CEO what he would change now he has heard this, he replies that he would ensure it is clear we need to avoid conflict and agree on the plan for the next steps. “If we can do this in a way where everyone has the feeling that things become better by actions like a coaching, the better.” The CEO explains that this sort of reactions by the unions is happening very often in state-owned very unionised companies which are on top of that very closely connected with the political world.

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Vignette #2: Critical incident on reference visit

Observer: At around the same time the CIO was working on a Project Lifecycle Management (PLM) project. Even though this challenging, business critical project was regarded a success by the CIO, it was not recognised by everyone as successful.

Me: The CEO asked me to look at the PLM project before I started in my function. I made some recommendations which the CEO implemented. This made me feel supported. Although I was proud about the result, the interest for this big project by the other directors was minimal and sometimes negative.

Observer: When the project was finished, the CIO and Design director were asked to present their project at the biggest European event concerning PLM. The CIO and Design director
were contacted by a representative of the software supplier they did the project with and the main client of their company. They were surprised by the interest of their client who asked if a reference visit would be possible, which they did not refuse. The following week, the CEO explained that he did not think the visit would really take place and asked preparations to be stopped.

**Me:** When I was invited to speak on a major PLM event, I felt honoured, and being asked for a reference visit, made me feel recognized for a project where I was proud of. When our CEO was back on site, he stopped all preparations, because he did not believe our main client would come for this project. This made me feel frustrated. In my opinion, my boss refused to recognise the success of the project.

**CEO:** The CEO explained in the interview that he was mostly scared, as he knows the CEO of the client well and he thought that the software supplier must have “tricked” them into this, as we do not have much to show.

**Observer:** A few days later, the CEO stressed once again before the complete board, that he did not believe that they would come for this project. The CIO asked the software supplier to confirm from their side the visit to the CEO. In the meantime, the CEO double checked himself. The visit was confirmed, both the CEO and CTO of the main client were coming for a complete day. The CIO and Design director were asked to explain their PLM project to the CEO and why the client could be interested.

**Me:** I felt frustrated as the CEO kept mentioning that this was not going to happen, it came to a confrontation in front of the other directors. When explaining the project to the CEO, he looked confused, he asked some questions but not a lot.

**CEO:** The CEO explained that he was trying to find out what the client was looking for. He was not interested in what message we should pass at that moment, but much more what the client is looking for.

**Observer:** The CIO was asked to make a presentation on the PLM project and why it is an important part in the industry 4.0 story, but the CEO did not think it would be of interest to the CEO of the client. The CIO adapted his presentation leaving the big lines intact. Other topics from other departments were added to the visit agenda.
**Me:** This was when the CEO changed and concentrated on what to present. I prepared a presentation and once again there was a discussion where I felt not recognised nor trusted for the knowledge I have in my field.

**CEO:** In the interview the CEO explained that he had learned to adapt a presentation to the audience, to make sure you tell them what they want to hear.

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Vignette #3: Critical Incident on being too conceptual

**Observer:** The CIO acknowledged an issue in the business for which he found an IT solution. He was able to recognise this through supplier information, industry fairs, networking with other companies, see what others do and understand how this could help the company dealing with certain problems and challenges. As there is no operational strategy or shared vision, the CIO wants to explain the industry trends and his vision about bringing solutions to the company’s challenges to the CEO, in order to align.

**Me:** When I started to work outside my department, I was looking to improve transversal processes through technology. Before starting to work on something more tangible, I want to align with the company. In the past I have done this by coupling back to the vision and strategy or check with process owners. In this case this was not possible and after having tried to get feedback from several other departments, I had to conclude that the status quo is reigning and that if I wanted to improve processes through technology, I would have to convince the person at the top. Therefore, I set up regular alignment meetings with my boss.

**CEO:** “IT is basically a service provider. IT is there to show what kind of technology could be used, what it costs and what it brings and then to make sure it happens afterwards. I’m expecting, the organisation and not only IT, but IT & Operations, or IT & Supply Chain, or IT & Commercial, to come together and say: we looked at this and we see the potential impact of this technology in this domain: would you invest x and get a return in y years? For me this digital evolution is a continuum. It is the link between concept and project proposal which is missing. It’s not a question of good concept or not, it can look like a lack of consistency, but it is simply opportunistic in some cases. It is a frustrating for me, because I think we could do
more to support overall operations, we could be more specific, we could be faster, and we are not… but is it a big problem? No.”

He explains that the frustration comes from the difficulty to quickly go into actions, projects... “Let’s do things, let’s decide on doing things and go. Maybe in three months we discover that it is not perfect, then we will change it. My frustration is the effort spent in analysing, discussing, meeting, making reports, making presentations and then taking actions. The balance between acting and taking risk, and not acting is not always right. I used to be a little bit in this (IT) business, but not as much as you are, but I would take a little more risk. And if you have some doubts, we can discuss. I would prefer this discussion which is more specific, shorter and then take the decision together, to take the risk on that, than to have a discussion which is too much conceptual and leading to no action in a short term. My most important regret is not having taken some decisions quicker.”

Observer: Let’s take in this case the example of an Advanced Planning System (APS). When the CIO explained why he believes this solution could work, the CEO quickly replied: “This is too conceptual”, which closed the conversation. When the CIO then prepared something more detailed, pragmatic, the CEO then replied: “You are too technical”. In the APS case, 1,5 year later after the first discussion, the business went together with the CIO to the CEO with a proposal for a POC (prove of concept), but were sent back several times, with the request for more details. Another half year later, on an employee meeting, the CEO spoke with a technical IT team member (advanced planning specialist), after which he decided that the POC could go ahead.

Me: Since starting those one-to-one meetings about 4 years ago, this occurred many times on different subjects. The pattern is very similar every time: the CEO listens, does not seem very interested and sometimes even takes his phone, this frustrates me and makes me even try harder to make my point. Then he tells me that I am too conceptual. He is right, it is a concept, but what I am looking for is alignment.

Observer: This is a recurring issue. Examples are APS, QMS, MES, IoT, big data, Industry 4.0, communication & collaboration, predictive maintenance, OEE, (SAP project US, SAP project Romenia, SAP project Brazil).

Me: I did not get very close to my boss and I have been stubbornly trying repeatedly, reflecting each time, why I got the same answer again and adapted the next time. Over time I became less secure. I was convinced I did something wrong and questioned myself more and more. I started
to be nervous to present to him, becoming afraid to hear the same thing again. At a certain point I became anxious and doubted if I would be able to keep my job. I started being afraid that I would not be able to provide for my family anymore. This seems all exaggerated when I write it like this, but it was my reality.

**CEO:** “The only bias I have is based on my experience in many different contexts, where large projects in IT were not enough focused, not enough phased, had unclear objectives and were not supported by the business. We need to be more specific and focused in IT than in any other topic, because the risk of failing is bigger, as an IT system is much more complex. I think that the risk in the IT projects are overall much higher than in any other investment project. That’s why we need to be much more professional in the way we approach it, if we want to succeed. But for the rest, nothing against the organisation, the person or the IT overall.”

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At the end of the first interview, we had a small chat and I explained him that I need trust to be able to function well. Saying that, I had the feeling that this “touched” him somehow.

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In the next vignettes I have used ORA/TEF to discover each individual’s view on how they see the context, their organisation in the mind, as well as their ideal leader prototype as their ideal follower prototype (role). I add a small analysis at the end of every vignette.

Figure 1: TEF (Long, 2016)
Vignette #4: Viewpoints on context

Me: Our industry: One of the reasons I work in IT is the fact that it is constantly changing. This keeps me occupied, interested and motivated. In recent years the role of IT has been changing from a pure service provider to a business partner. In recent years, there has been the digitalisation of industry, often called industry 4.0, because of the acceleration these new technologies can potentially cause or bring for incumbent industries. At the same time, it’s a risk for those who do not see the potential.

I believe new technologies will make it possible to reduce costs and to keep industry in central Europe. I also believe we will have to adapt our delivery model and become a supply chain business instead of a production business. I see two main gains: efficiency with reduced costs as a result and a better integration with the customer’s supply chain, sharing logistic and quality data and thus creating a stronger partnership. I believe, a strategy to challenge the status quo as well as building roadmaps for success, is needed. We will have to work with HR and other departments, to get people adapted to working differently and learning new skills. All in all, I believe that we cannot deny the influence of digital on any aspect of our lives. I believe we need to learn to understand the potential, find the gains, understand and manage the risks and above all, learn to evolve.

CEO: “I think in our industry, it’s not about big strategy or big concepts. It's about realising cost savings in all domains with immediate impact: improvement of processes, automation. It
means we buy a machine which is a proven technology, we install it, it works immediately. We can spend time hesitating, testing things and spending money for months before it has impact. You cannot differentiate from competition with technology, but you can with your price or you differentiate negatively if you cannot execute and deliver on time. First, I think that the digitalization in the industry started 40 years ago, it is simply continuing, maybe faster. Everything related to digital and robots, IT penetration in the industry, steel industry, telecom industry, postal services, aviation industry, automotive industry, I went through all of them. I can tell you, it started more than 40 years ago, maybe 50 years ago. It's slowly improving. Depending on the industry it's really changing the game, but as far as I understand, in our industry it's not a game changer, for many reasons. We need to take advantage of digitalization and automation, but we also know that there are other levers that we need to use like low cost country production, human productivity, organization of work etc. Honestly in our industry, I see digitalization as a one of the means to improve efficiency and cost. I can only gradually see some ways to improve the relationship with customers and suppliers, it's clearly something that will take time. But again, not a game changer. Our industry is about cost management and execution. So not only am I convinced that digitalization is not a game changer, but I am also convinced that it could be a huge risk for us if we don't do that well, if we don't execute well.”

**Analysis:**

We clearly see the context differently. I believe that the context has changed through digitalisation, whereas my boss thinks it has not really, it is more a continuation of an evolution. Digitalisation to me will have an important influence on any business, for my boss it is not a game changer. But we both think that it is one of the ways to improve efficiency and costs. I see more the potential, my boss the risks.

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Vignette #5: Viewpoints on organisation (system)

**Me:** In my organisation in the mind I see myself as part of a team, which aligns with the CEO on the vision of the company in order to work out an operational strategy. From the different strategic streams, roadmaps are created which are aligned between them as well as with the different departments, before deriving objectives per department aligned to the financial objectives. The executive board is a team, with a safe space (Edmondson, 1999), to discuss any
subject and where decisions are taken. As CIO, I play my part in the operational strategy. I believe in an IT organization which is very close to the business, understanding their goals and informing them on new technologies as well as being the preferred partner for their projects. IT supports the business to reach its goals and monitors performance through KPI’s.

**CEO:** “I’m not trying to create one group centrally managed from Belgium. I don’t want to daily manage subsidiaries. You need to build on the leadership skills and the knowledge of different individuals, so you need to create the conditions for people to work together. We need to have a good team in place and transversal processes, IT included, where we have full transparency, understanding and cognition on the key decisions.

You will have very specific goals for each subsidiary and a separate set of goals for engineering and development, having different activities. For the first ones, the concept of the Toyota production system: production is key, is very good. You need to execute in a way which is extremely efficient, first time right in terms of quality. Now, production is king, and all the other departments are supporting production. They are there to make sure that production will reach its objectives. I think this is the way you will get an operational plan, starting with and based on a financial target, but you will have different plans for different entities. The financial goals are clear so are the operational goals. Maybe we don’t agree on the way to reach them. I think we need at some point in time, to clarify – and this is my world, it’s the world of the executive committee – who is accountable for what. But the financial goals, you can hardly be more precise than we are in the strategic plan. But that can be wrong, maybe it’s not ambitious enough at some points, maybe we are not taking the right direction, we can discuss that. But at least we have something where everybody in each department knows what is expected from them. I think that most of the discussions are already happening between the departments.”

**Analysis:**

If I look at how we each see our organisation in the mind, there are differences. I am looking for vision, operational strategy alignment, a safe space, a team. My boss’s model is based on the setting of clear financial objectives for departments as well as for subsidiaries, and counts on individuals to look for the necessary support, solutions and measures to deliver on the set objectives. The big difference is where we start from: I start from vision, company strategy, roadmaps aligned to set yearly financial goals, whereas my boss starts from financial goals.

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Vignette #6: Viewpoints on ILT

**Me:** When I think about my ideal leader prototype, I think about someone with a vision who can explain, share, discuss and adapt to the circumstances. I think about someone who wants to create a team and with that team creates an operational strategy, in order to deliver on the yearly objectives, all aligned with the before mentioned vision. I believe in a leader who supports, gives the necessary feedback, builds and gives trust, creates a safe space for his team, promotes transparency, a good and clear communicator, who is open about his strengths and weaknesses and dares to be vulnerable and promotes learning.

**CEO:** “My role is to align energies, that means that people will come with projects, ideas, proposals, actions, system processes and I will make sure that it's aligned with the rest of the activities and priorities. This is my role. Now I think that the model that I tried to put in place is a model where people are rewarded for results and could be sanctioned for not reaching the targets. You can have problems, but you cannot have many years in a row bad results without being sanctioned. I think it's normal. As long as I am clear with that, people have a natural interest in reaching the targets. They will have the ambition and try to reach the targets; therefore, they will accept any support that will help them reach them. I think it's a natural reaction to say: if you can help me, please do. They will do that if they feel that the support you bring is real, specific, significant, quick and impactful.”

**Analysis:**

My ILT attributes: vision, explain, share, discuss, adapt, inspiring, learning, team, feedback, trust, safe space, transparency.

My CEO’s ILT attributes: aligning, objective based, rewarding, sanctioning.

Listing the attributes which we used to describe our ILT show clearly the difference.

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Vignette #7: Viewpoints on IFT

**Me:** My ideal follower prototype is someone open, transparent, that understands his domain of expertise, takes responsibility, asks questions (is critical), is flexible, but also accepts decisions, aligns with peers and his boss in order to optimise outcomes. It is someone who communicates well horizontally as well as vertically, who can explain to any person how he wants to deliver on a plan and objectives, why this will bring value to the company, through alignment with the strategy and who works always towards the vision. He works well within teams and can form teams with people with different profiles and skill sets. He is not afraid of challenges, taking risks, learning or change and efficiently deals with recurring tasks. He is open about his strengths and weaknesses and is constantly looking into ways to improve himself, he accepts feedback and works with it. It is someone who also can take a step back and look at things from a distance.

**CEO:** “I think that what we need is people, who can have an impact, which are needed on some very key priorities on a short-term basis. That means taking quick decisions, taking a lot of quick actions. They should be able to look back and say, okay, yes, it's working, it's improving, it’s going in the right direction. I'm looking for people who can influence, can work on a short-term basis in a small team and make sure that we take the right decisions and at the end of the day we get the results. Timing is extremely important. If you take a decision, you must be ready to change your mind in case you were wrong. But each functional activity needs a very specific approach. For IT I think it’s technical, it's a very complex matter. You need very professional people. In some cases you can use authority and say: I'm the boss. In many cases you can also influence without being the boss, simply because you are more professional, more mature, much more prepared. It doesn't matter how it’s influenced.”

**Analysis:**

My IFT attributes: open, transparent, matter expert, responsible, flexible, efficient, learning, risktaker, team player.

My CEO’s IFT attributes: impactful, short-term, quick, action, decisions, timing, specific, professional, influence, mature.

Also, here the attributes show the differences clearly.

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CCRT and hypothesis

I have had some difficulties during the EMCCC getting to understand my CCRT. In the end I believe I had a blind spot. I had to recognize, acknowledge and accept my CCRT, which is:

- W: I want to be listened to
- RO: not listening, showing no interest
- RS: frustration and not feeling recognized and eventually trying harder

During the 2nd interview, I tried to do a CCRT exercise with my boss. This was very difficult, however the interviews gave me enough material (Res) to build a hypothesis of his CCRT, which is:

- W: to have impact
- RO: coming with a concept, not with clear, short-term objectives/ gains/ impact
- RS: frustration, you are too conceptual

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Attachment styles questionnaire, results & hypothesis

In the second interview, I did the Collins questionnaire (Revised Adult Attachment Style, RAAS – Collins, 1996) with my CEO in order to find out differences in attachment style between us.
Table 1. Results Attachment Style on a 3-scale score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment style – 3-scale score</th>
<th>ME</th>
<th>CEO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLOSE - the extent to which a person is comfortable with closeness and intimacy = ability or willingness to go in close partnership relations in business</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPEND - measures the extent to which a person feels he/she can depend on others to be available when needed = trust: do I feel I can rely on my network, colleagues, versus “you walk alone” in business</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANXIETY - measures the extent to which a person is worried about being rejected = worried about being abandoned…</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Results Attachment Style on a 2-scale alternative score:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment style – 2-scale alternative score</th>
<th>ME</th>
<th>CEO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outcome of the Collins questionnaire on attachment styles does not show significant differences between our attachment styles. On the 3-scale score, I score slightly higher on closeness, dependence and a little lower on anxiety. On the 2-scale score, we have the same low rating on anxiety and I am slightly lower on avoidance.

Although from the Collins questionnaire results, I need to conclude that our relationship should be consistent positive, yet the incidents as well as my feelings indicate something different.

The Collins questionnaire is seen as a good tool exploring/finding attachment styles but the score reliability of self-assessment is still questionable (Reese, Kieffer & Briggs, 2002). In this case it is important to highlight the lack of frame, as part of an interview, over the phone, where I read the questions and my boss answered. It could be that we answered what we wanted to be or what we wanted the other to hear, hence it is biased. However, the questionnaire served as an entry point to develop further hypothesis about attachment styles influencing the dyad.

To start building the hypothesis, I want to start with the table below and concentrate on which dynamics have most potential to influence the relationship.
Table 3. Possible interactions of leader and follower attachment styles (Keller, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follower attachment style</th>
<th>Leader attachment style</th>
<th>Secure</th>
<th>Anxious-ambivalent</th>
<th>Avoidant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Leader clings to follower and fosters dependence; follower doubts own ability</td>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Anxious-ambivalent</td>
<td>Avoidant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious-ambivalent</td>
<td>Leader seeks distance from follower's clinging; follower intensifies clinging</td>
<td>Anxious-ambivalent</td>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Avoidant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>Leader distressed by inability to build relationship with follower; follower resents leader's intrusions</td>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Avoidant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I believe the two axes that could have the potential to influence the dyad are:

- A substantially higher anxiety level on my side in comparison with my CEO (so bigger than as per Collins questionnaire results)
- A significant higher score on avoidance by my CEO against myself (so more important than per Collins questionnaire)

Let’s look at the first hypothesis, where I would be more anxious than per questionnaire and my CEO is secure. This would mean that I would be looking for more confirmation, attention, … than my CEO is able and willing to give. As my higher need for closeness is not answered, I would make even more effort. This hypothesis is recognizable from my side, at least the last 4 years, as well as in the search for a relation, as in doing extra effort when the need is not fulfilled.

The second hypothesis is that my CEO would be more avoidant, and I am more secure then per questionnaire. This would mean that I am looking for a relation with a normal level of emotional support which is not being given by my CEO. Also this hypothesis is rather recognizable, especially in the beginning of our relationship. I was able to rely on myself.

The third hypothesis is the combination of both: I could be more anxious and my CEO could be more avoidant than per questionnaire. In this case, the effects would be enforced. My boss would be pushing me back when I look for closeness, I would be blaming myself for not getting closer. This could explain a decline in health as well as life balance, which resonates with me.

A fourth and last hypothesis could be the following: If I would be more secure and my CEO would be more avoidant, I would have been ok and especially relying on myself the first 2 years, wishing a better relationship but not necessarily needing it. After 2 years in the position,
when I started looking out of my own department, is also when the first incidents started to occur and when I started perceiving a lack of support and trust. One way of thinking could be that I glided from a secure attachment style to a an anxious one, because of mounting stress levels as well as a perceived lack of support and no safe space as no real executive team is in place. This would also explain my declining life balance. Although this hypothesis is plausible, only little research has been done on shifting followers’ attachment styles - from secure towards anxious in combination with avoidant leaders - in stressful situations over longer periods and in a military context (Davidovitz, Mikulincer, Shaver, Izsak & Popper, 2007).

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Deconstruct of the critical incidents

Deconstructing the critical incidents, I see some patterns. In all 3 incidents, I found my CEO mitigating risk: risk for escalation issue with unions, risk for bad reference visit versus limited gain for the company, risk for big IT projects. I see in all 3 incidents that I miss the fair process (Van der Heyden & Limberg, 2007) and the safe space to discuss with my CEO or colleagues. What I felt also shows a pattern: I felt a lack of trust, being lonely or abandoned, frustration of not being heard. My values of honesty, openness and transparency are touched, hence my feeling of betrayal by the unions. I also felt small, treated wrongly in all 3 incidents: treated like a child or not being believed/trusted or insecure when presenting in front of my boss. I also found our conflicting CCRTs as a pattern: me wanting to be listened to, be acknowledged for my achievements; my boss wanting to have immediate impact. This links to transference: me wanting to be acknowledged for my achievements internally, by my boss. Our hypothetical attachment styles also show up as a pattern: me wanting to get closer, seeking approval or confirmation the trust is still there; my boss’s more avoidant attachments style leading to push me away. I like Schopenhauer’s parable of The Hedgehog Effect as a metaphor for the challenges of human intimacy (Kets de Vries, 2012).

Exploring further, I look at the field between us. In the field it seems it is mostly transference that plays, transference as in a parent-child relationship, in which the child is looking for a safe space which is not offered by the parent to the extent the child needs. This is like a magnet: trying to get closer, one is more pushed away. The parent is clamped between the dynamic of the child wanting to come closer and him not being able to offer this to the needed level. For
the child it gives the feeling that his fundamentals are getting looser, leading to further sliding down instead of climbing up. Coupling back to the field in between myself and my boss, it feels that the closer I try to come, looking for trust, the more uncomfortable or annoying it feels for my boss (The hedgehog effect - Kets de Vries, 2012).

8. Findings & Discussion

I come to the conclusion that we both have a completely different view on the context, impact of digitalisation, organisational approach and our roles. In fact, this should not be a problem. However within a change context forming a relationship becomes more important. My boss and I could not establish this relationship or safe space, we could not have these discussions to understand each other’s viewpoint before creating a common view/path forward, which is essential for performance on the task.

Assuming that when I am more anxious or he more avoidant or both, leads to the same: me trying harder to explain and him pushing me away. Due to conflicting CCRTs, I kept getting the push back. Transference plays in the fact that I looked for the reason of this dysfunction with myself: I thought I was not explaining it well to him. This repetitive push back, spiked with transference/countertransference, in this change context, provoked the downward spiral.

9. Limitations

I have written an autoethnography, which is my personal description of how I lived a period. Bias is inherent to an autoethnography. As I describe my feelings and thoughts, I make myself vulnerable. Unconsciously I might have set my limits on how deep I would go for this. Critical incidents are my view on 3 incidents, in which I was envolved and also took the role of the observer. In neutralising the different incidents, I have tried to take out bias, but I am very much aware of my own limitations in doing so and therefore I cannot guarantee it’s unbiased. Some or all of these incidents might have gotten influenced by time as I have written them from memory (Serrat, 2010).
I used the Collins questionnaire because of its feasibility. I understand such questionnaire has its limits (See § Attachment styles questionnaire, results & hypothesis).

The impact of language cannot not be underestimated. The interviews are done in English, which is for none of us our mother tongue. Our business language is French, which is my boss’s mother tongue. This could be a limitation for me to interpret or express.

10. Future Research

Following from my thesis, the influence of leaders’ and followers’ attachment styles on the dyad in business should be studied more extensively. More data should be gathered, and further analysis is to be done about gliding from a secure to an anxious attachment style in stress situations when there is a lack of safe space and trust.

I would follow Davidovitz et al (2007), that in future research, the possible amplifying feedback loop between leaders’ and followers’ dysfunctional behaviour should be further examined. My thesis is an attempt to shed light on this topic, but more research should be done.

Research should be further exploring the possible link between leadership styles and attachment styles. Investigating the influence of different leadership styles (transactional, transformational or adaptive) on the dyad, could also be an interesting angle to further explore the dyad.

Most research has been focussed on leadership as there are no leaders without followers, the role of the follower should be studied more.

11. Conclusion

Change can be causing a difference in viewpoints, which does not have to be a problem, but together with a specific combination of attachment styles, this can cause a lack of safe space thus potentially preventing communication and as such the definition of a common task. Within the dyad, this difference in viewpoints and the issue of not being able to create a common task, causes that each part of the dyad defines his organisation in the mind, as well as his ILT/IFT differently. This means there is a lack of expectation/role alignment between the individuals in the dyad. It is this difference that activates CCRT, leading to conflicts.
Transference/countertransference can potentially amplify the effect of CCRT, especially with recurring conflicts, and this can lead to a decline in life balance of the follower.

I learned that ORA/TEF is a very good tool to understand how context, organisation influence the dyad through ILT/IFT. Through exploring (using ORA) I got a better understanding of our different views.

I also realise there is no right nor wrong. If I re-read now the 3 critical incidents, but from the view point of my boss and thus understanding how he sees the context, his organisation in the minds and his ILT/IFT, I now completely understand how he acted and why. It is logic.

At a certain point in the journey I understood that the problem lays not with me or my boss, but lays between us, and I believe that the hypothesis I made on attachment styles, show there is a lot of potential in there. Next to that, during EMCC I discovered CCRT, which I regarded as a blind spot, but it took me even more time to accept transference. While those 2 blind spots lay at the basis of the decline in my life balance.

The autoetnography has forced me to reflect, to accept ambiguity and to let emerge the subject. The critical incidents have helped me to highlight the patterns in the dynamics within the dyad. And they helped me to create a distance to my own behaviour and feelings.

Towards my boss I need to ensure to be aware of transference. I need to be clear, direct and not be afraid to ask the necessary questions and clarifications. Understanding his viewpoint will be essential to avoid activating our CCRT.

I will keep working on containment, do reality checking and be in the moment, using a diary: describing incidents in the 3rd person is an excellent tool to create the necessary distance to achieve this, it also helps to look from different perspectives, using different lenses.

Essential, will be to find a safe space. I will look for that with a coach or another group of people, but also an organisational coaching with the leadership team could be a way to achieve this.

I would also like to further learn about our leadership styles. He seems more transactional, whereas I am more transformational or maybe even an adaptive leader. Better understanding how these different styles could work together, might benefit our relation as well as the company.
I realise that my ideal leadership prototype might not be the same as the one of my followers, which is a learning and a point for further reflection. I will also be more attentive of transference and countertransference within my team.

On personal level, I feel stronger than before. I do realise the exercise is not finished and will never be. The exercise helped me to go from recognising to acknowledging and towards managing, which helps me to better understand why I feel how I feel.

I believe I have become a better-balanced father, partner, leader and follower.

12. **Annexes or appendices**

**Revised Adult Attachment Scale (Collins, 1996) - Close Relationships Version**

The following questions concern how you **generally** feel in *important close relationships in your life*. Think about your past and present relationships with people who have been especially important to you, such as family members, romantic partners, and close friends. Respond to each statement in terms of how you **generally** feel in these relationships.

Please use the scale below by placing a number between 1 and 5 in the space provided to the right of each statement.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5

Not at all  | Very
characteristic  | characteristic
of me  | of me

**Me**

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to people. __4__
2. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others. __1___ *5
3. I often worry that other people don't really love me. __3___
4. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. __2___
5. I am comfortable depending on others. __4___
6. I don't worry about people getting too close to me. __4___
7. I find that people are never there when you need them. __1___ *5
8. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. __1___ *5
9. I often worry that other people won't want to stay with me. __2___
10. When I show my feelings for others, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me. __1___
11. I often wonder whether other people really care about me. __3___
12. I am comfortable developing close relationships with others. __4___
13. I am uncomfortable when anyone gets too emotionally close to me. ___2____ *4
14. I know that people will be there when I need them. ____3____
15. I want to get close to people, but I worry about being hurt. ____2____
16. I find it difficult to trust others completely. ____1____ *5
17. People often want me to be emotionally closer than I feel comfortable being. ____1____ *5
18. I am not sure that I can always depend on people to be there when I need them. ____2____ *4

CEO

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to people. ____3___
2. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others. ___2____ *4
3. I often worry that other people don’t really love me. ___1___
4. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. ___3___
5. I am comfortable depending on others. ____4____
6. I don’t worry about people getting too close to me. ____4____
7. I find that people are never there when you need them. ___2____ *4
8. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. ___2____ *4
9. I often worry that other people won’t want to stay with me. ____2___
10. When I show my feelings for others, I’m afraid they will not feel the same about me. ___3___
11. I often wonder whether other people really care about me. ___1___
12. I am comfortable developing close relationships with others. ____4____
13. I am uncomfortable when anyone gets too emotionally close to me. ____3____ *3
14. I know that people will be there when I need them. ____4____
15. I want to get close to people, but I worry about being hurt. ____3___
16. I find it difficult to trust others completely. ____2____ *4
17. People often want me to be emotionally closer than I feel comfortable being. ____4____ *2
18. I am not sure that I can always depend on people to be there when I need them. ____2____ *4

Add #s: 1, 6, 8, 12, 13, 17 = CLOSE the extent to which a person is comfortable with closeness and intimacy = ability or willingness to go in close partnership relations in business

Add #s: 2, 5, 7, 14, 16, 18 = DEPEND measures the extent to which a person feels he/she can depend on others to be available when needed = trust: do I feel I can rely on my network, colleagues, versus “you walk alone” in business

Add #s: 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 15 = ANXIETY measures the extent to which a person is worried about being rejected or unloved = worried about being alone...

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<th>CEO</th>
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<td>1+3+2+3+1+3/5=2.6</td>
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13. Bibliography


