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Editorial

Ana-Laura Lemke

Half a year ago we, the hummingbirds, were at a small strategic retreat, gathering what books we could find about inspiration, methods, cases on listening and especially Storylistening and were surprised to find: nothing. While the topic has gained presence and popularity, there is still little to be found on it besides rather academic approaches or very anecdotal testimonials. So, we decided to publish nothing more or less than THE BOOK on Storylistening.

We believe strongly that the knowledge and experience cannot lie just in a small circle of people and our work is fostered and nourished by the idea of community and co-creation. That's why we contacted who we consider to be leading and inspiring practitioners in the field of Storylistening and invited them to write this book together. This book became so much richer by the dialogues and exchanges we had over the last few months, exploring the dimensions of listening and Storylistening, than we could have ever anticipated.

The result is truly worth of its title. The Book spans from reflections about the nature, art, and attitude of listening to practical cases about using Storylistening in a variety of business and social areas, to explor-

ing the further possibilities of Storylistening in an everchanging world. It contains creative essays, hands on exercises, tools, methods and parts for self-reflection and deep dives into the topic. The baseline that guided us throughout the book is, how we can ask new questions that lead to meeting the world with open curiosity and enable new ways of thinking, perceiving and shaping our world(s).

Otto Scharmer states that listening is the most underrated leadership skill of the future. Imagine if it was not just underrated, but indeed, in danger of extinction. What would happen if we put it on the list for endangered species and would join efforts in reassuring its survival? **Birger's** essay "**Listening — in danger of extinction**" explores this metaphor and its benefits. An urgent cry for action.

If listening is an art, an attitude — how can we tune into it? And what part of us is it, that listens — and to what? How do we perceive it and how do we convey it? **Jacques** illustrates how listening is by far more than just hearing with our ears in his essay "**Listening Bodies**". In "**Mundo Rebi**" both **Els and Marianne** follow the notion of listening being something beyond words, a state of mind, of embodiment and deep resonance with each other. Finally, in "**Listening for Story**", I build the bridge from listening to storywork, exploring the idea of which possibilities arise when we intentionally invite the sharing of moments and experiences through story.

"Tell me a story" can be an intimidating invitation and tends to take us towards the construction of stories, calling to our more cognitive, rational part. It is more intuitive to work with memories, lived moments that we can connect to and that evoke specific situations and contexts. How to work with moments is the topic of **Jacques'** article "**From Moments**

to Story". In their article "Listening for the bigger picture", Nele and Steff take this idea one step further and explore how to make sense of these micro-stories, leaving the sensemaking to the storytellers themselves. Astrid shares with us the experience of using this approach in a case of team development at an Intensive Care Unit in her article: "Inner transitions and sparkling moments".

Between Storytelling and Storylistening lies a liminal space created out of resonance, a space that is a subtle dance, a rhythm, an encounter. Barbara shares how she learned to step over the liminal phase and discovered listening after a lifetime of storytelling: "Confessions of a Storyteller". Wolfgang's essay is also a dance between elements, between senses and genres, he explores how listening widens our perception of the world and he takes us into the realm of "Mov(i)es". Another form of double layered listening is that between cultures, when it is not only about words but the whole cultural systems that they are grounded on and that constitute what stories are possible and which aren't. Alma takes us to this question in her text "Transcultural Storylistening". Finally, translation takes part when we move between modalities, from a sound to an image to the story told. Explore this with Werner's "Soundjoker" exercise, a reminder that what we hear, see and interpret is never simply a given.

In a variety of different practical cases five authors share their experiences when working with Storylistening, the various fields where it can be applied, the learnings they themselves and their clients took away and curious surprises they encountered. Karin shares her favorite tool the "Narrative Curve" which has a wide range of uses, and is simple and yet efficient to use. Petra experiences in her own company the power and possibilities of making a shift to working with stories and

shows us how Storylistening is "A new way of strategic thinking". Ruben and Phil explore the same case from two different perspectives, inviting us also to see that there is never one single narrative about events. In "Transrational" Part I and II they take us into a complex case of Employer Branding through Storylistening, sharing their learnings and outcomes. Diving into yet another field is Lutz with his case on "Listening Medicine" — an urgent plea for a change in doctor-patient care, a shift towards taking this extra moment for the patient to be heard and hence improving health care.

If listening is a place of resonance, something that needs at least an interaction of two, what kind of role will AI play in it? Is it even possible that a code could listen to us? Or make us feel listened to? Motoki explored this in a "Dialogue with AI". To balance this notion, the "Kiosk of Disorder" opens the contrary idea: a space of personal encounter, of unpredictability, of happenstance, of inviting creativity and spontaneity into the world once more. It is a project, a performance, an idea to connect people and open new possibilities through experiencing a shared story.

We invite you to truly work with this book: keep it in your pocket, stain it with marks of your coffee cup, underline your favorite passages, scribble into it, double the corners of your favorite pages, tear out a page you don't like, read it on a train or in your office, keep it on the nightstand, share it, carry it along with you as an inspiration or pocket guide. And most importantly: let us know what you think of it. We would love to listen to your experiences. Enjoy!

Ana-Laura Lemke
Il Monte, Tuscany, 26. April 2023