

# Extraordinary organizations

We need organizations and managers who take a stand on the world and time we live in. That's what Roxana Kia believes. She is a theatrical director and "chaos pilot," and she makes her living creating presences and meaningful relationships in companies and organizations. She believes we create what we see, and that is therefore a good idea to choose what we want to see. She has chosen to see the extraordinary in people and organizations. Meet her in this interview.

By Gitte Larsen

Because companies and organizations influence the world around them so much, they have a great responsibility for the future of all living things – from climate to mankind. Roxana Kia believes we have a great need for leaders and organizations that take a stand on the challenges the world and companies face. In the end, their survival depends on it.

How do we do this in practice?

Imagine arriving at (yet another) training course. You sit in rows before the instructor, who is to lead training in better personal communication.

The instructor gives you and others a task: arrange the room to make equal communication possible.

At the course I attended, we quickly arranged ourselves in a circle. Roxana Kia, our instructor, told us people always do that. But, if she had not given us the choice – if she had arranged the chairs in a circle beforehand – some of us would have been put off: not another course, sitting in a circle, *navel gazing*.

That's one of the many practical exercises Roxana uses when she works with people and organizations. Many of them involve giving people a free choice and, from that, letting them take responsibility for, and being present in, the "now," so each person can creatively contribute what they have to offer to the whole. With her practical exercises, she shows how we can exploit the potential that lies in the relation between people and systems. She shows that a group's collective intelligence is greater than the sum of the intelligences of its members – yet promotes the individual's uniqueness as contribution to the whole.

Roxana knows her craft. I have rarely met a person who is so present, and who is so phenomenally good at living her vision in practice. She is herself extraordinary, and sees and brings forth the extraordinary in others. So, while she would rather practice her work than talk about it – because she likes to see her contribution have real effect – she agreed to share with FO/futureorientation some the motives and thoughts behind what she can and does.

**I know the organization of the future is an important topic for you. Yet, you don't talk about it much. Why?**

Organizations are important, because I consider everything to be an organization. Everything is organized, and I am passionate about discovering what creates life-giving organizations. I am often at companies, and can see and feel when the organization works. And it's rather interesting that many continue to stick with practices that haven't worked for a long time. It is about being brave enough to let go of what you know and try something new.

Often, it takes little very little to change a mindset.

**Can you give us an example?**

An organization traditionally consists of a manager, employees, a vision, some ambitions, some frameworks, etc. The organization is almost static. But when I look at life behind the leader, the employee or the frameworks, a pattern often

appears. Some patterns contribute to the visions; others work against it. Everybody actually has a unique contribution to make. But they are often stuck in some fixed patterns with the surrounding world, in the form of conventions, time pressure, demands, low self-esteem, conflicts and bad communication, all of which keep them from contributing their full potential. But when they, together, get a new language or a new perspective that makes sense, they can look at the relationship or the situation in a new way. I find that people embrace their authority instead of giving it to someone else – that they find their free choice in the circumstances. A huge strength lies here. If you take hold of something that isn't so major, some everyday thing, and feel that it works to do it in a new way, you can do other things differently, too – and then it really starts to roll. I concentrate on taking small steps to start with. The small step may be the largest.

**How do you make people see the possibility in a new way of thinking and acting? How do you work with it?**

I give them the possibility. If you have never seen something, you do not know what you are supposed to see. If you haven't seen a plate before, you do not know how to imagine a plate. I start with the person from where the person is, and use exercises tailored to the individual or the organization's challenges, because the individual should be able to see his/her own contribution to growth, and see and experience that they make a real difference in the organization.

If a person is frustrated or in a crisis, well, that is where the person is, and that's real enough. The most important thing is to be present in that which happens to be, and then ask: *What is it you want? Is it here you want to be?* I ask about desires, dreams and will and the things that motivate them. I have never known someone to be unable answer those questions. Never. But first I have to see them. I have to meet them, before they can or want to answer my questions. The answers are there. Wisdom lies in everyone, but not everyone is asked.

Today, a gap looms between power and wisdom. Everybody has wisdom and power. A lot of power is used today, but not so much wisdom. It's so fantastic to reach people's wisdom, passion and strength. My starting point is that you can give and receive from that surplus – be from a surplus.

**What is wisdom?**

Wisdom is being able to draw on all the resources that are in and around me in a way that takes me to a higher level. Wisdom is knowing who I am here, and what I must do here. Wisdom is being able to activate all the intelligences I possess, and give precisely what is required in a situation. To work with the life-giving.

**So it's about being present?**

Yes, and then understanding that we are so closely connected with everything around us. It's an illusion if I try to isolate myself and say *Now, it's just me*. We are always in relationship with ourselves and with everything around us, including nature. When we think, say or do something, it doesn't just affect human relations. It influences everything.

**You have also said that we waste huge resources when we are not "present" at work – that the organization is a huge waste of resources when it doesn't work?**

We evolve all the time, but it has very often been that the person is used. We are used as resources to create results. More focus is being made on stimulating people in their growth - into a being and to growth - so that they can help produce good results. But the growth must be there, and the being must be there. Those demands come now, because it revolves around relations between people. When we don't focus on growth and being, we waste resources. For me, resources are life, and it's about seeing what is life-giving instead of just consuming it. In our consumerist society, we often just use resources and throw them away when we no longer need them. But nature and people can't sustain that. I think many are waking up and realizing we must take a different approach. And that it doesn't require a struggle. It's just as much an opportunity, a potential, a cooperation with life. Those companies and organizations who lead - the ones that take a stand and do something for the good of more than themselves – also find it more meaningful. When we have meaningful relations, we create lots of ideas and good results. When we give and contribute from the most unique and authentic place in ourselves, we also give the most valuable thing into a community. It's there we really start to understand who we are, and what our being and work really are. If we can contribute in that way, we gain a collective intelligence that means we start to work consciously, and then it'll be effective, creative and result-oriented.

**Completely concrete: A group in a company must develop ideas for new products. How do you create the meaningful relation, and what must exist for people and organizations to contribute with their uniqueness?**

I can activate them in different ways through questions or exercises. I try to activate that which is the most burning theme for them in relation to whatever they must create. The most important thing is to activate their free choice as creative people. I put them in situations in which they can experience and feel their uniqueness, and therefore see their concrete, specific contribution to the goal. I ask what is important to them, what they burn for, what drives them. Afterwards, I put them in situations where they can live it. I must reach their own voice, and I do that by activating all four fundamental intelligences: the spiritual, physical, emotional and thoughtful. When all intelligences are activated, we work holistically, and the meaningful relationships cre-

ate themselves. Good ideas come when we want something – not when sit down and think now I must be innovative. Of course, we must create results, but we must first activate that which is in us. It's like a campfire. We must start it before it gives light and heat. We must have the spark. And you can feel it is there, when you walk into a room and feel people's passion for what they do.

**I attended your course in personal communication and learned that you are quite good at seeing the individual's potential. How do you spot it?**

I look for it. I am very focused on looking for the extraordinary in people and organizations. Three years ago, I worked on potentials, with the acknowledgement-giving, with creativity and thinking forward and creating meaningfulness. And then I decided to see the extraordinary. In any meeting, the chance exists the change the world, if we want to. I have developed sensitivity, or a presence, about it, so I can ask the questions and give the training needed. Is a provocative presence needed, or a caring presence? Is peace of mind required, or fairytales, sense of direction or *whatever*. It's about feeling what sort of energy will support this person's essence. I've gained experience with creating what I see. When I catch sight of the extraordinary in people, I go into an interplay with them in which we bring it forth. In that way we actually jump several hurdles in change and development processes, because we work with the kernel of that which wants to be expressed, whether its about personal communication, ideas, visions, management style or organization structure.

I find that much more is possible when a loving atmosphere pervades a room. When we take away criticism, people's small geniuses are able to flower, and it is all much more fun and fruitful. Criticism is sometimes good, but when we must develop, or bring something out from within, it's natural to defend ourselves if someone criticizes us. It's about acknowledging and accepting what is there. My aim is not to go in and change just anything in someone – I want to go in and see what's simmering, and make it boil. When you can find that, it makes a difference. If we work from the premise that our resources are something creative - life to be unfolded – and so appreciate that resource as something indispensable, we become wholes in a whole. If I am indispensable to an organization, if my contribution is indispensable, it is fantastic. To reach the point where I cannot avoid contributing, because I am so engaged and motivated. I do not talk about individualism, but about being important individually in a community. I talk about using one's talents both to create more for the bottom line and to protect that which is life-giving. Meaningful relations are life-giving. When we work collectively intelligently, it doesn't mean everyone is "on" and contributing all the time – it is also a conscious contribution to step back and let other people or a group contribute to the shared kernel. All natural cycles in life have different phases of rest, growth, unfolding and production.

**What about the relation to shareholders? Companies must make money for their shareholders. The law says the goal of a company is profit, and it's very narrow. You said in the start that we needed companies and organizations, so what is their potential?**

Organizations and people will play a greater role. Companies and organizations that work for more than just profit have chosen that, and I believe people will prefer them. We must be ethical and take a stand on how we use resources – we have no choice if we don't want to wipe ourselves out. There will be value in using resources with wisdom. It's a new way to make money. I believe we will see organizations as a meeting place around something shared and meaningful. We have been "human doers" so much, and human beings so little. We really must take seriously just *being* and being available with our talents, skills and passion. When there is use for me, I step forward. I think that is the new leadership. A leader is no longer someone with all the answers and control – instead, it's about which competences are needed now for something shared. It's no longer about motivating others to do something, but giving them space and presence to unfold their unique contribution to the community.

I am developing a new organization model, where it's about protecting the source – protecting where things come from. Where it's about rewarding creativity, rewarding being - a presence. That someone just sits and listens – maybe that is a skill in itself that ensures we manage to create something new. How do we pay someone who isn't a psychologist to just sit and listen? How do we acknowledge such a competence, such a presence? There are incredibly many different forms of presence that we do not recognize, but that have huge value. Today, we acknowledge only when we see the result. We must acknowledge not only the producers and sellers – we must acknowledge the process, too.

**If several people, several departments, had the same vision – for example, that Earth is to continue to be here or whatever - if everybody was aware of it and could see it, then they could also create that world – as you said earlier?**

Or not create it, I think. The Earth is here already. We don't need to create it. The most important thing is that we are able to be with that which is, and have a profound respect for it. I think that every time I take something, I also contribute with something. I believe that *I am a whole in a whole*. We must move away from the mindset that says I am a part of a whole. We are all wholes with relations to many other wholes. It's another way of thinking. Resources aren't infinite, but they are there. Instead of training leaders in lots of new things, I think, we are approaching a time when we are filled up with knowledge. We know so much. We have enough. It will be more about using what we have and know. That is the wisdom. The source of development and innovation is the *presence*. We must be close to our own presence, and so grow and *become* from it.

**Become... what do you mean?**

I believe we must first *be* before we can *become*, instead of *becoming* and then trying to find our way back to our *presence*. That makes for a lot of confusion. It's just like with music. If you play with a band or an orchestra, and your instrument isn't tuned, it'll give false notes, and that is what you hear. We are also instruments. So, when we meet other people, it's good to be aware of whether we are tuned or not. If you try to contribute to something important, and are out of tune, others must adjust to that. If someone talking on the radio is "out of tune," I turn it off because I can't stand hearing it. But how often do we sit and listen to people speaking out of tune? If you focus on what is true in you - and it'll be different from person to person – you will find what beauty art and music are. We have so much to learn from the art world. It's so beautiful to see people unfold in that which is them, I think, instead of what they think they ought to be. From this, the person has a natural motivation, desire, surplus and creativity to contribute. That gives effective and enterprising labor. Everybody has their own authority, and I believe our schools should train us in our own authority and uniqueness. Maybe it is not so much about what we do as managers, but who we are when we manage. Which part of me is it that I speak from: the part of me that is extraordinary, that offers the extraordinary and sees the extraordinary? Or is it the part of me that is a victim or confused, or something else? We need to train our authority. We give others a lot of authority. Even I do it sometimes, and I train myself to take my strength back for myself again.

**What do you mean we give authority to others?**

That there are others who decide or who have points of view we embrace as truths. When I am with clients, people say "we must do this" and "we can't do that" – that stresses me out and I cannot stand it. Who has the authority? In our authority, we find our own integrity, vitality and strength. To keep our authority is just like being captain of our own ship. As

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#### ROXANA KIA

Roxana Kia an actress, director, "chaos pilot" and process manager. She has many years experience in education, process management, management development and giving lectures to the public and private sectors. Her vision is to contribute to an evolutionary growth in organizations and individuals based on their unique potential. Kia is most interested in working with practice in the form of self-identification, experience and performance. Some of her working principles are:

- When we see the extraordinary and the greatest potential in someone else, the person will naturally begin to live up to that potential.
- When we act on the basis of the most unique and authentic place in ourselves, we also contribute to the most valuable in a group.
- When we meet challenges, resistance and conflicts, we also always meet a chance for strong growth and development.
- When we work with leadership instead of management, we release a holistic and life-giving power in organizations.

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captain, I know where I must go, and how I need to navigate and use my resources. I manage the crew. I write the story of my life – not other people, unless I let them. How often do we let others write our history?

In our organizations, I think we can cooperate more on the life-giving. To take our hearts to work as powerful driving forces in development, communication, action, decision-making and leadership. If we each can contribute our uniqueness, and at the same time make decisions based on many different perspectives, we start to work collectively intelligently together. And we can create extraordinary results.

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