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Discussions in which entrenched positions are adopted are a familiar feature in business (both public and private) and politics. Debates, consultations and what are allegedly dialogues soon have us standing on opposite sides. Politicians who cry havoc but then won't release the dogs of war. Society and the business environment seem to have hardened. I haven't researched this – I did look for answers, but haven't found any – but that's the impression I get. We quickly make up our minds, and are even quicker to take offence or get annoyed, or we switch off. It's no longer all about the facts, but instead about managing perceptions. I get the impression that there are more and more people who give vent to all kinds of opinions, and others who back down and avoid confrontation. The middle road seems to be taken less and less often, genuine dialogues are rarer and people are often spoiling for a fight. Do people think this serves their own interests, or is it an expression of impotence, anger and irritation? Indeed, it seems as if we only know two strategies: fight or flight.

We often find it difficult to start up a good dialogue – taking time to think about the reply, not responding for a moment and

looking to see what the best solution is. The trick is to resolve a difference of opinion or a conflict using words, and keep the dialogue moving constructively.

**A constructive way of negotiating is needed now more than ever**

How can you create a dialogue in a VUCA environment when you are under pressure? When organisations become flatter, how can you make good decisions together? How can you reach long-term solutions in collaborative relationships that are continually changing? Are you able to hold a discussion, even when the pressure increases, in which you handle the differences, the disparate opinions, ideas and philosophies, without triggering a fight-or-flight mode? Can you get along with other people who have different positions, interests and alternatives, or with people whose behaviour is different and who come from other cultures? Do you therefore know the right steps to take, at the right moment and with the right people? These are all negotiation challenges.

**NEGOTIATION IS A JOURNEY**

You set off on a journey. You've come from somewhere, you've got your personal stuff with you in a rucksack, and you're going somewhere. There are times when that luggage prevents you from walking easily, making you uncomfortable. With hindsight, you perhaps realise that taking all that baggage with you wasn't so smart. Sometimes you travel alone, at other times you may gather a group around you, and other occasions will see you as a member of a group. You will come across new people on your journey. You like some of them more than others. Perhaps your expectations of the journey are very different from theirs. There may possibly be different ideas about the final destination, the route or the mode of transport. So how do you reach a decision then? Does one person impose their opinion on the rest, or do you reach a solution together? There will be setbacks along the way, of course. Sometimes the wind will be at your back and at other times in your face. You may find a route blocked, or have to tackle a steep climb. You need a plan, a route, a map, a compass, sturdy shoes, food and water. The rucksack can't be too heavy, or else it will become a major burden. You don't want too much food and

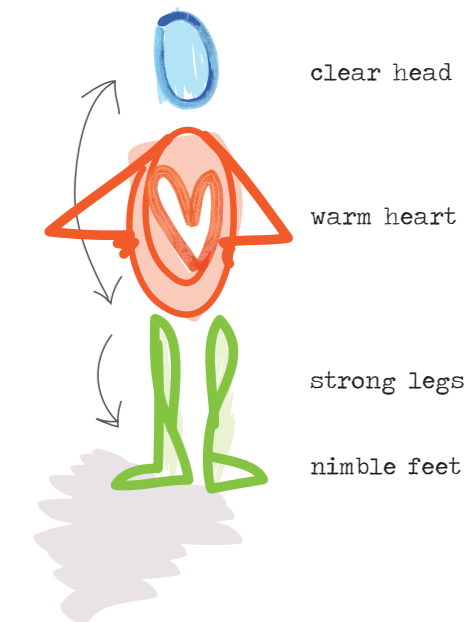
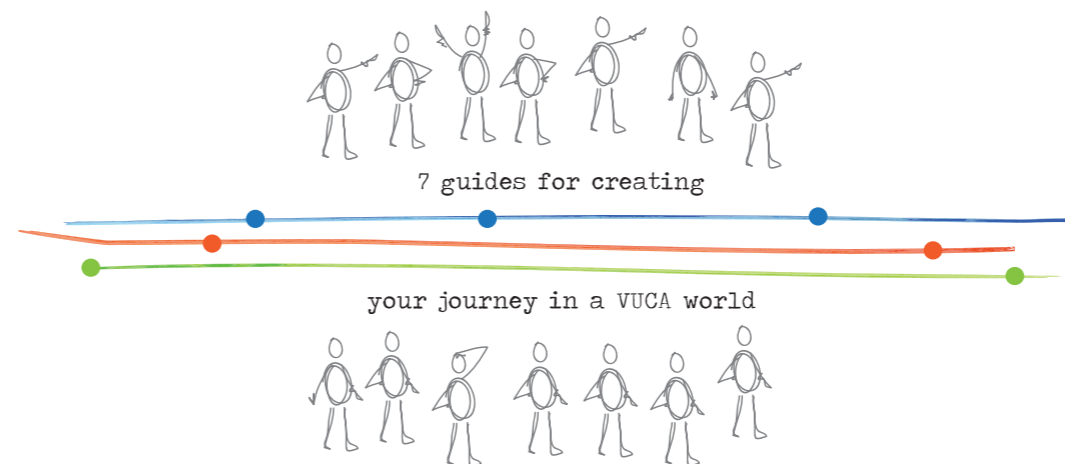
drink either: just enough. And you know that you need to eat and drink even if you're not hungry or thirsty yet. Otherwise it may be too late, particularly when major efforts are demanded. And yes, you can get in your own way. Aren't there times when you yourself are the biggest obstacle on your own path?

Travelling together. I'd like to accompany you on that journey and I hope that I can help you get on the right path and stay on it, with a clear head, a warm heart and while remaining resolute and flexible – the 'strong legs and nimble feet' in the draw-

ing. First of all, I'd like to give you a grounding in the basics; you'll only get the extra baggage later on when things get tougher and more complex.

**Before you read any further**

I've used the masculine form 'he' when referring to individuals. I've also tried to avoid constantly referring to discussions, planning meetings, consultations and so forth. There is always a negotiation dynamic in these various conversations and gatherings, so for the sake of readability, I've simply referred to them all as 'negotiation'. I have chosen not to pres-



**“IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST,  
GO ALONE.  
IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR,  
GO TOGETHER”**

AFRICAN PROVERB

physical metaphor for negotiation. Going on a journey, shoulder to shoulder rather than opposite each other towards a common goal.

I took part in an international family business congress, where I experienced once again the significant added value of thinking like a steward. Stewardship – a forgotten word, even if it is described in the Bible. Now it is also being used by family shareholders in family businesses, to indicate that they do not so much own the company or assets themselves as manage it so that it can be passed on to the next generation. This involves some important long-term thinking: attention is paid to the short-term interests that always play a role in the business operations, while at the same time keeping an eye on the continuity and the longer timeframe. That approach and set of values certainly colours your thoughts and actions! Durability and sustainability with an underlying intrinsic motive. I saw families who had sold their companies and earned money by doing so, but had lost their sense of identity at the same time. It just shows you that money doesn't necessarily make you happy. What a difference there is between the longer-term focus of family companies and the short-term

orientation so common in companies listed on the stock exchange! In that context, I came across a familiar quote that many of you will know: “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.” To me, this inspirational African proverb summarises the whole idea of constructive negotiation. Try to go together and focus on the short and longer term.

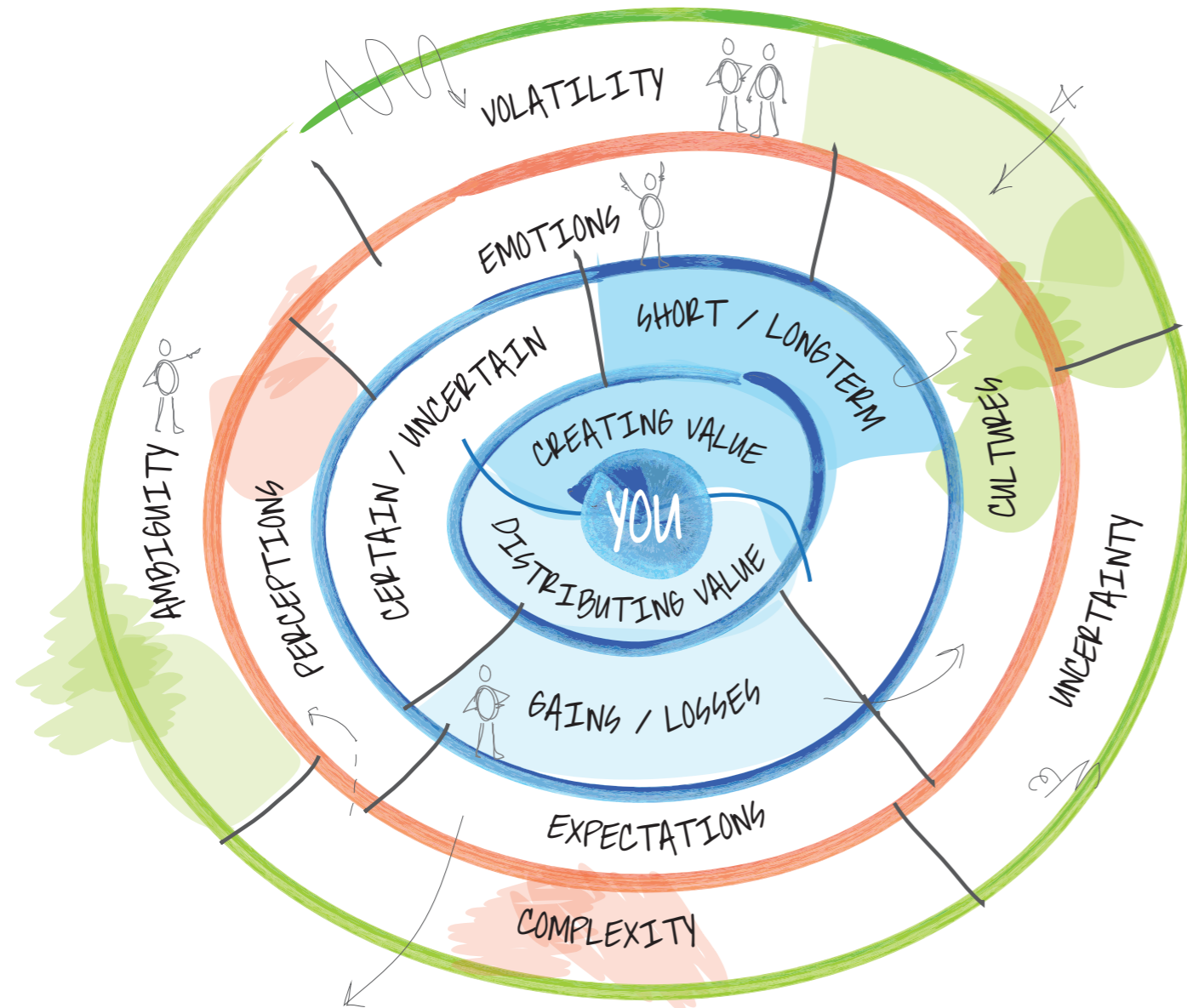
I thought back to my role as the eldest in a family of five children. How that moulds you and how it fills your rucksack with memories, both cherished and less so. Or to my medical training and my interest in people and the systems in which they function. I've never lost my fascination for the psychological and psychiatric aspects. I thought back to my career in the private sector. To the good bosses and the poor ones, to when it clicked and when it didn't. To major projects that went squirly, or others that went fantastically. To my switch twenty years ago to the all-encompassing field of 'negotiation'. To the many people I have had on courses, both in groups and one on one. To the challenges that they faced and the patterns I began to see. The shape and substance of the book that I wanted to write started to develop. Linking

together experience, research, everyday practice, new insights, didactics and layout. A journey with lots of fellow-travelers, a map, various images. Negotiation as an art and a skill. The various elements became connected.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

I've kept a list of the questions that course participants have asked me most often over the years. They're quite diverse in nature, and there's an immediate sense of recognition when they turn up. They often involve a number of issues all at the same time rather than one single question. It then often becomes complex and course students see it as a black hole: a complicated tangle that is awkward to unravel. What should I do now, how do I handle this, and when and where should I actually begin? A few examples of frequently asked questions and comments (see next page).

# NEGOTIATION IN A VUCA WORLD



## INTERESTS ALWAYS PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE

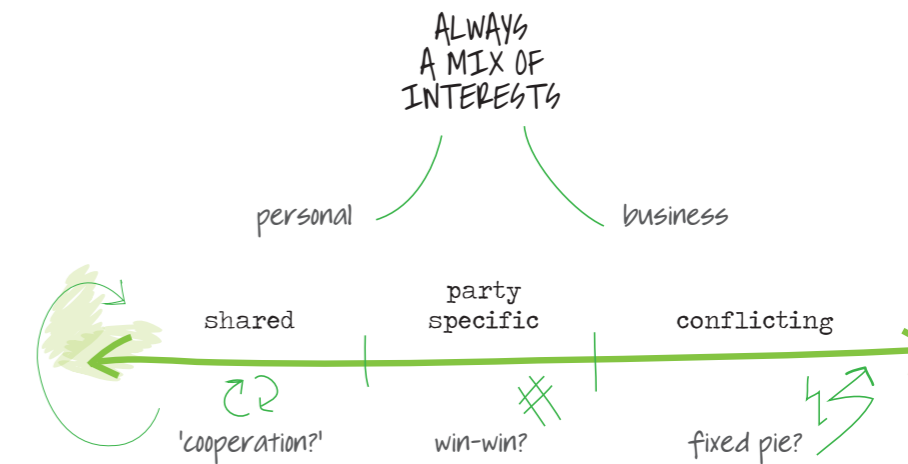
Interests play a key role in negotiation jargon. What do we understand by that? Personal and business interests are always involved. Personal interests are also referred to as motivators or core interests, what it's essentially all about and the reason why you're doing it. A couple of examples:

### Personal interests

Aspects such as ambition, image, status, performance, wanting more and career-building can all be intrinsic motivators. Personal interests can also be of a different nature, such as personal financial gain, keeping your job or personal development.

### Business interests

These are the interests that are often related to your task or your responsibility: generating revenue, increasing volume, optimising profit, strengthening cooperation, accelerating innovation, solving problems, raising customer satisfaction and keeping the relationship going. There is a hierarchy of interests and some are worth more than others.



There are three categories of interests that you can approach differently and that will play a role in a negotiation situation to a greater or lesser extent:

### Shared interests

Also referred to as 'joint interests' or 'common interests', these are interests that both parties value similarly. You may for instance want to deliver an assignment together on time, reduce the costs and continue the relationship. There will be a large number of shared interests in genuine partnerships. The parties feel the usefulness and the necessity of resolving a

conflict and both attach equal value to this. You can also expect numerous 'shared interests' to play a part in private contexts as well. People often talk about commonality without actually fitting the actions to the words.

### Party-specific interests

These are interests that are important and weigh heavily for one party, but do not harm or affect the other. They can be personal or business interests. One party may place a high value on developing its image further, whereas the other may not care either way. A procurement officer may



# 3

## THE JOURNEY: VALUES AND GUIDES FOR YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

In order to be able to tackle the negotiation properly, I'd like to start by taking a moment to look at a number of values that can help you find an effective method. What set of values do you want to be the baseline for approaching the other party and how will you then deal with the seven dilemmas that always play a part in negotiation challenges? The seven guides can be seen as answers to that question of how to deal with the seven dilemmas. I will be discussing the seven guides as a leitmotif for your actions and I will then offer a number of insights and angles for more in-depth exploration. We'll take it step by step.

### **OPENNESS, RESPECT AND FAIRNESS**

Is it every man for himself, or cooperation? Do you primarily look at negotiation as questions of distribution, or can the pie be expanded first? As discussed earlier, that mindset can colour the wheeling and dealing to quite an extent, determining how you act. In addition, you can

## WIN-WIN COMMUNICATION:

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

face-to-face contact is not permitted, such as tendering procedures. That's a *fait accompli* that can't be influenced; I'm referring here to contact moments when you do have a choice.

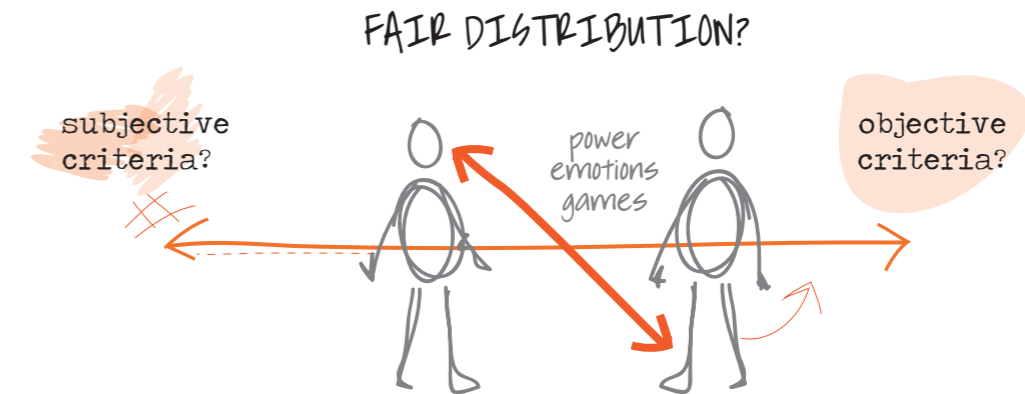
### SHARING AND FAIRNESS

Every option you select and everything that you do for or with another has consequences in terms of time, money, quality, activities, revenues, losses, and so forth. So how do you share out the gains and the losses? Guide 5 helps you deal with these distribution issues. Sharing things

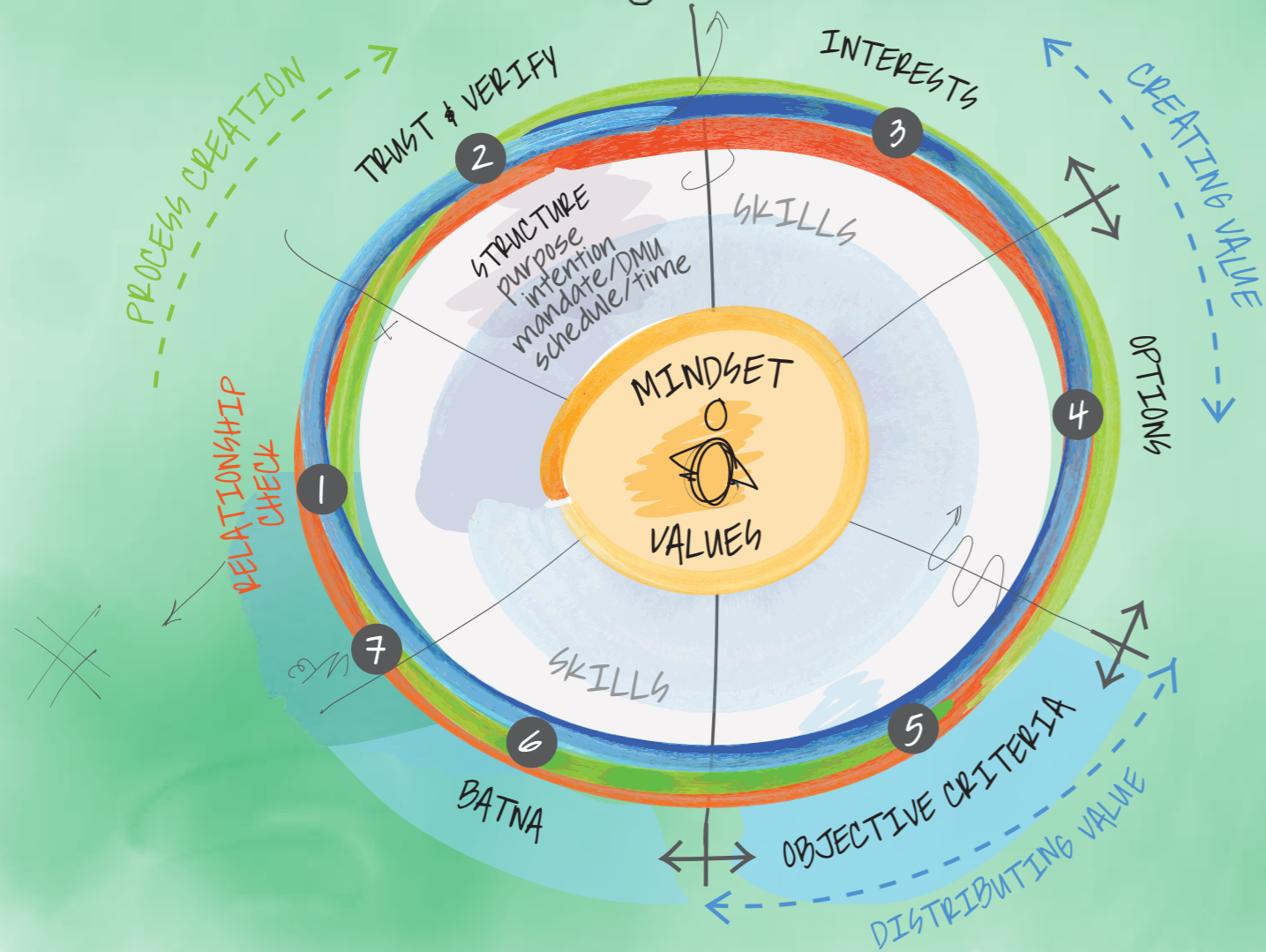
out can be a tricky process and it's also often where the game-playing takes off. Is the share-out based on power, strength, emotions or random chance? It is a major challenge to define conditions that are fair in your eyes too, given the effort and the potential solutions. You want to serve your own interests and be duly rewarded for your contribution and your added value.

A negotiator in a dominant position often turns negotiations into a distribution issue as quickly as possible. "I want X and I'm ready to pay Y." I recently heard a nice anecdote from Brian Mandell, a Harvard professor. It was about Rambo and Bambi

going out for a meal together, an anecdote that juxtaposes a positional negotiator with an evasive and lenient opponent. I quote freely, "Imagine the following situation, which turns up a lot in practice: Rambo and Bambi go out for a meal together. Rambo eats his own food, followed by everything on Bambi's plate, and then gives the bill to Bambi." They take the benefits, including yours, and leave you with the consequences. It's something you should want to avoid in real life. To retain your focus when the share-out is being determined and to improve the chance that you'll be able to avoid positional games, it's useful to have the Guide 5 at your fingertips at all times.



Everything comes together at the  
Negotiating Table

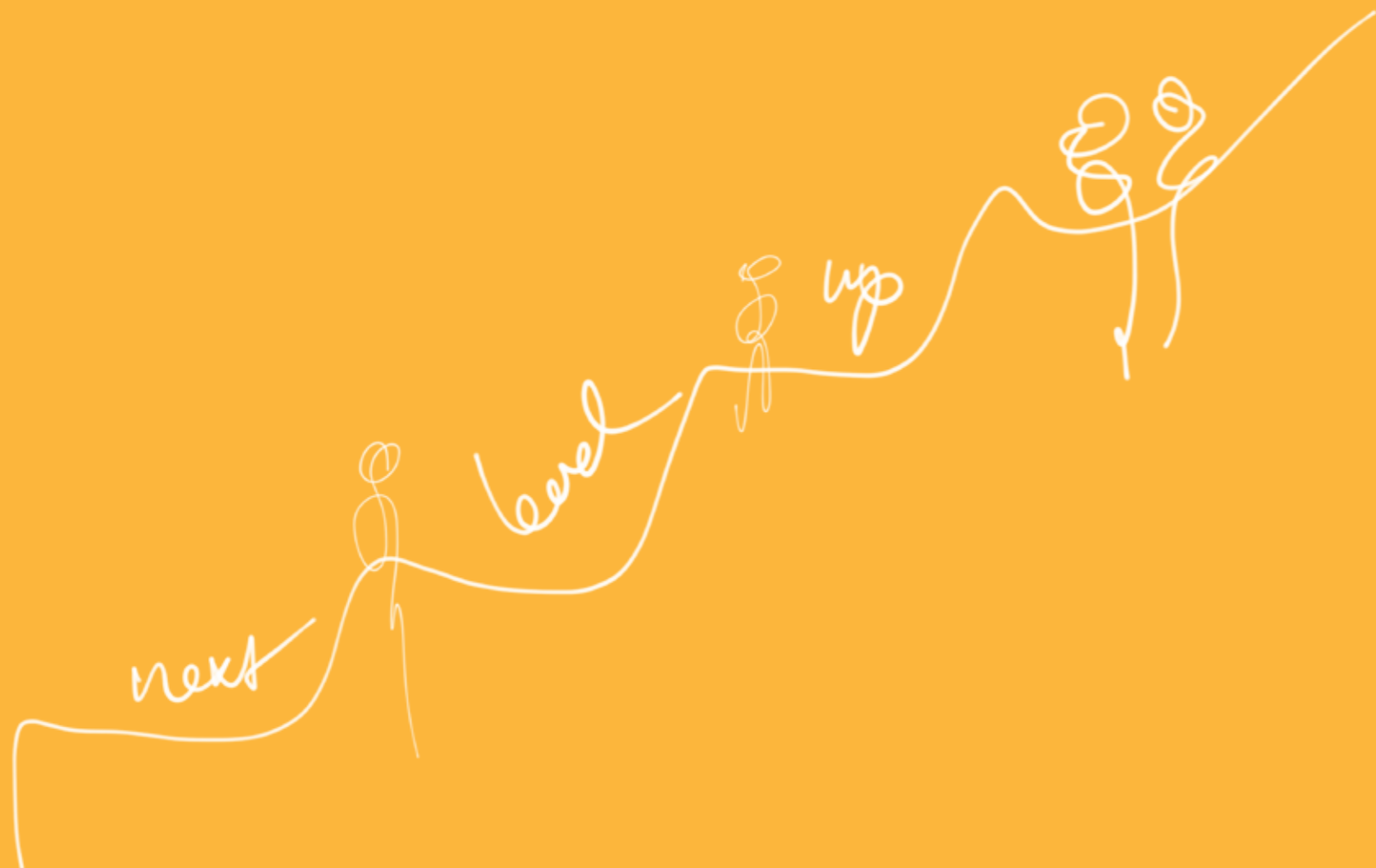


# 4

## EVERYTHING COMES TOGETHER AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE

The guides will help you in the preparations. If you put them in a specific order, they form a guideline that will also give you something to hold on to during the negotiation. The process can be visualised as a circle. A negotiating table – preferably one without sharp corners and edges – that you will be sitting at, together with others. A round table, as a symbol for togetherness, at which you're all on the same side (the one and only side!) even if it doesn't always feel that way. The circular shape also represents the fact that the end of one discussion is often the starting point for the next.

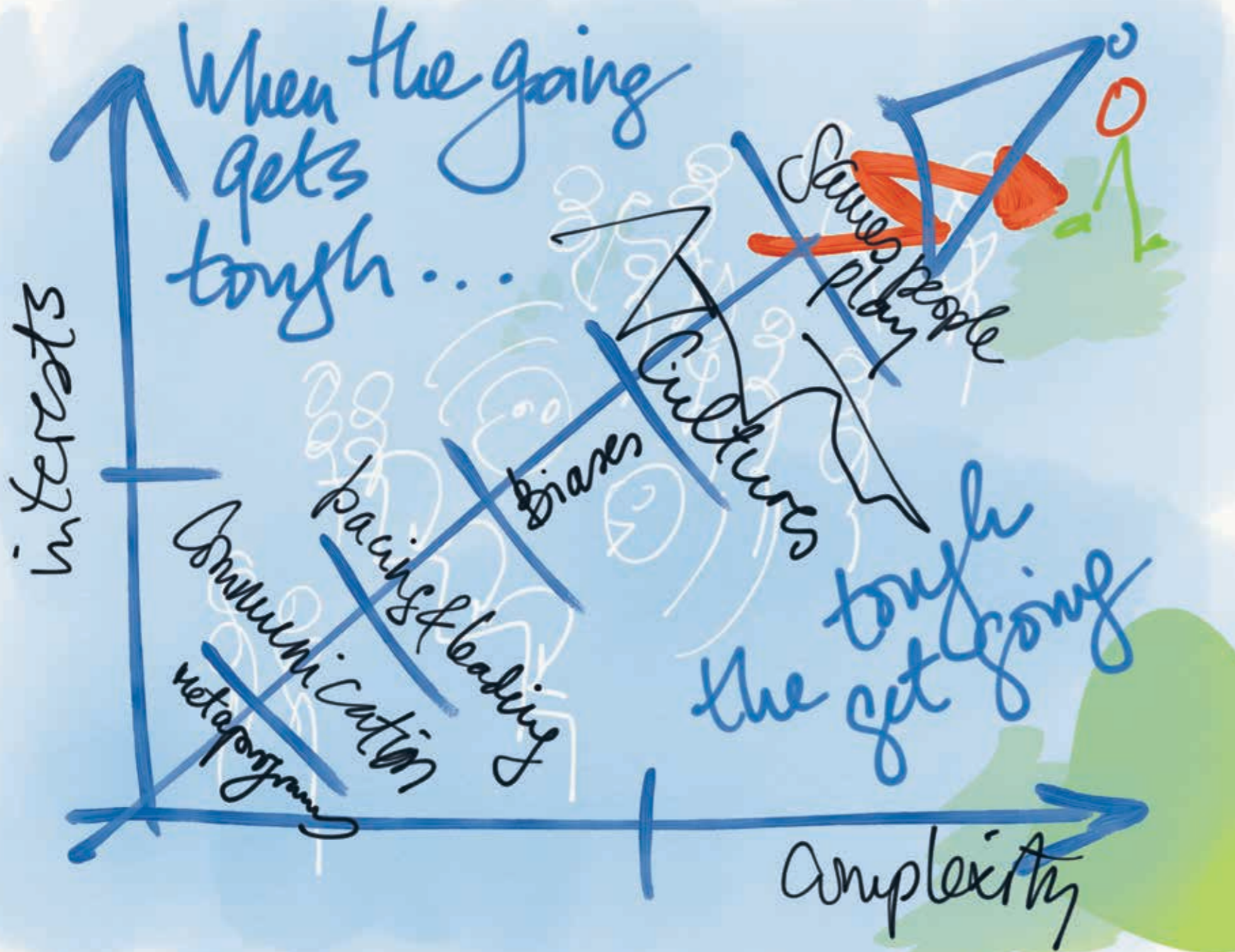
The guides as discussed so far can help steer your preparations. You are aiming to achieve cooperation, decisions or deals that are better than your BATNA. And you have thought about what you want to achieve, what is important for you and for them, who you are going to negotiate with and what the interpersonal relationships are. And about the potential solutions you can already see, where your limits are, what alternatives everyone has, and whether there are specific no-go areas. You have considered whether there are relational aspects that you want to pay attention to specifically. Are there sensitive issues for you or for them that you want to address before the talking starts? This helps you get a picture of exactly what's on the table and who you are dealing with. Does this trigger any particular emotions in you that



# NEXT LEVEL UP: MASTERING THE ART

Getting a good deal in a VUCA world is a challenge. It can get even more awkward when multiple parties are involved: the process becomes more complex, games may be played and the pressure increases. I've given you the basic elements. Are you ready to take a step further yourself now? Maybe you're already familiar with what I've said so far and need more. In this section, I want to give you some concepts and tools that can be applied immediately, plus a few aspects to think about carefully. I'll start off with improving and/or speeding up the negotiation process, letting you increase your circle of influence. After that I'll give you some insights and tools to help you stay agile and alert in terms of both the relationships and the content. This will add more substance to the idea of standing firmly and nimbly on your own two feet, with a clear head and a warm heart.





# 6

## IMPROVING AGILITY AND CLARITY

We have paid attention to helping you increase your influence over the process; your next step could be to deepen and improve the quality of your communication skills. This should make it easier for you to manage the relationship dynamics. I also want to give you the insights and the tools for staying as sharp as you need to be in terms of the content. Communication insights will help you approach the aspect of a 'clear mind, warm heart and nimble legs' from the relational and content-related sides. The complexity is gradually increasing and insights are starting to pile up, so you will hopefully be increasingly capable of responding appropriately to what you come up against when the going gets tougher.

The following subjects will be addressed:

