



Now we've given them every freedom and they still
don't do what we want ...

– A cheat-sheet for all kinds of modern leaders, agilists or architects alike –

Michael Mahlberg – Software Architecture Gathering 2025

The slides are
already online by
the way



<https://bit.ly/sag25-mm-g>

The Labyrinth - A Simulation



An aerial photograph of a large, intricate hedge maze. The maze is composed of tall green hedges forming a complex pattern of paths and dead ends. It is situated in a park-like environment with lush green grass, scattered trees, and a few small structures. The maze has a central circular area with some trees and a small path leading into it. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with shadows cast by the hedges and trees.

Runde one of
three

Please enter the labyrinth
For now it is not allowed to leave the
marked area

Das Labyrinth - Eine Simulation



Join at
slido.com
#3667 426

Active poll

13

Welche Emotionen hat die erste Runde (Runde 0) im Vergleich zu letzten Runde hervorgerufen?



Debrief round one of three

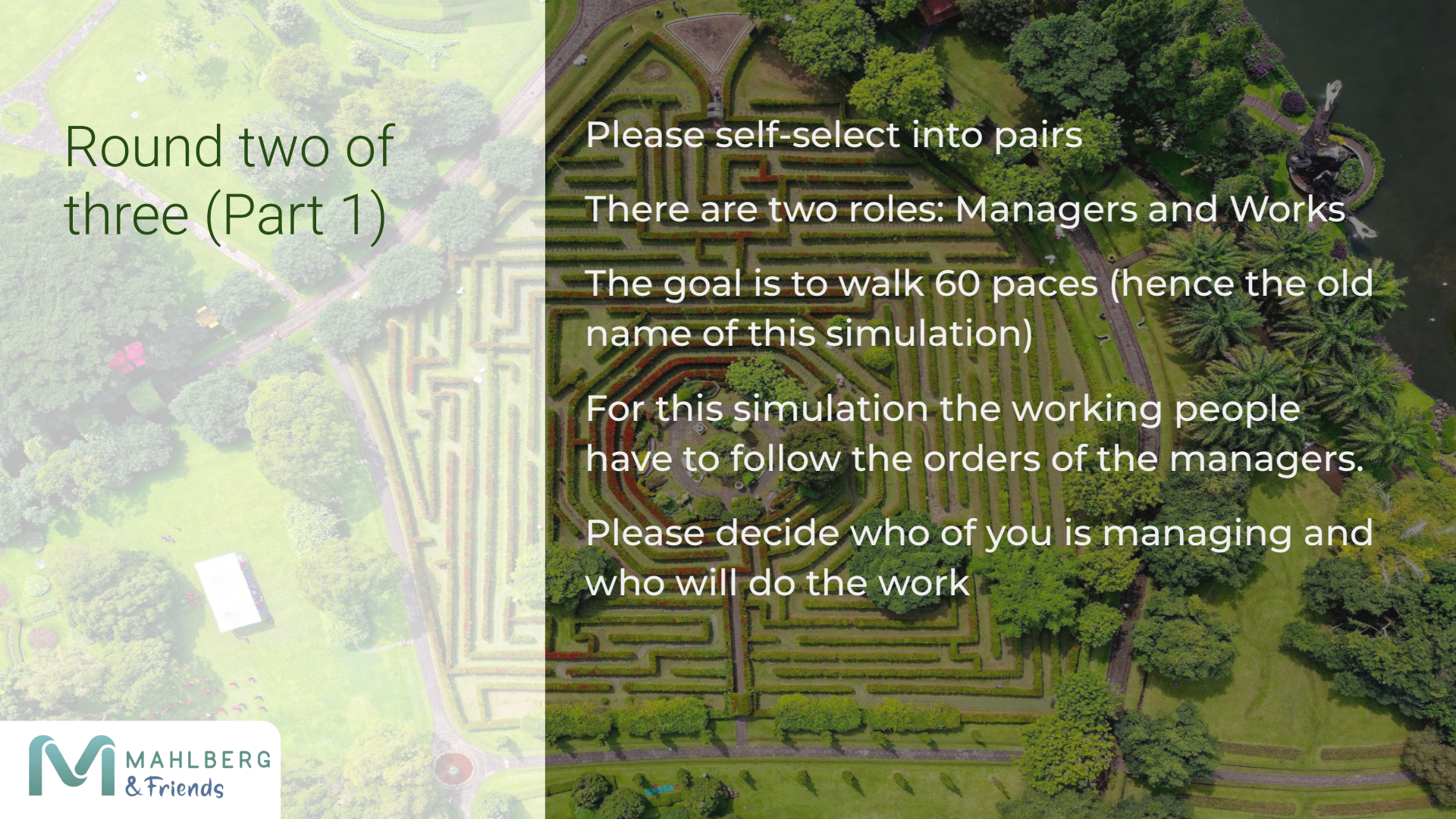
How many paces did you do?

...

Runde 0

Dauer (Sekunden)	60		
Schritte gesamt	71		
Anzahl arbeitende Einheiten	12	Menschen pro Einheit	1
Schritte pro Sekunde (Gesamtsystem)	1.183333333		
Schritte pro Sekunde (Mensch)	0.09861111111		

Team #	Schritte		
1	7		
2	12		
3	3		
4	5		
5	2		
6	4		
7	8		
8	6		
9	10		
10	1		
11	5		
12	8		
13			



Round two of three (Part 1)

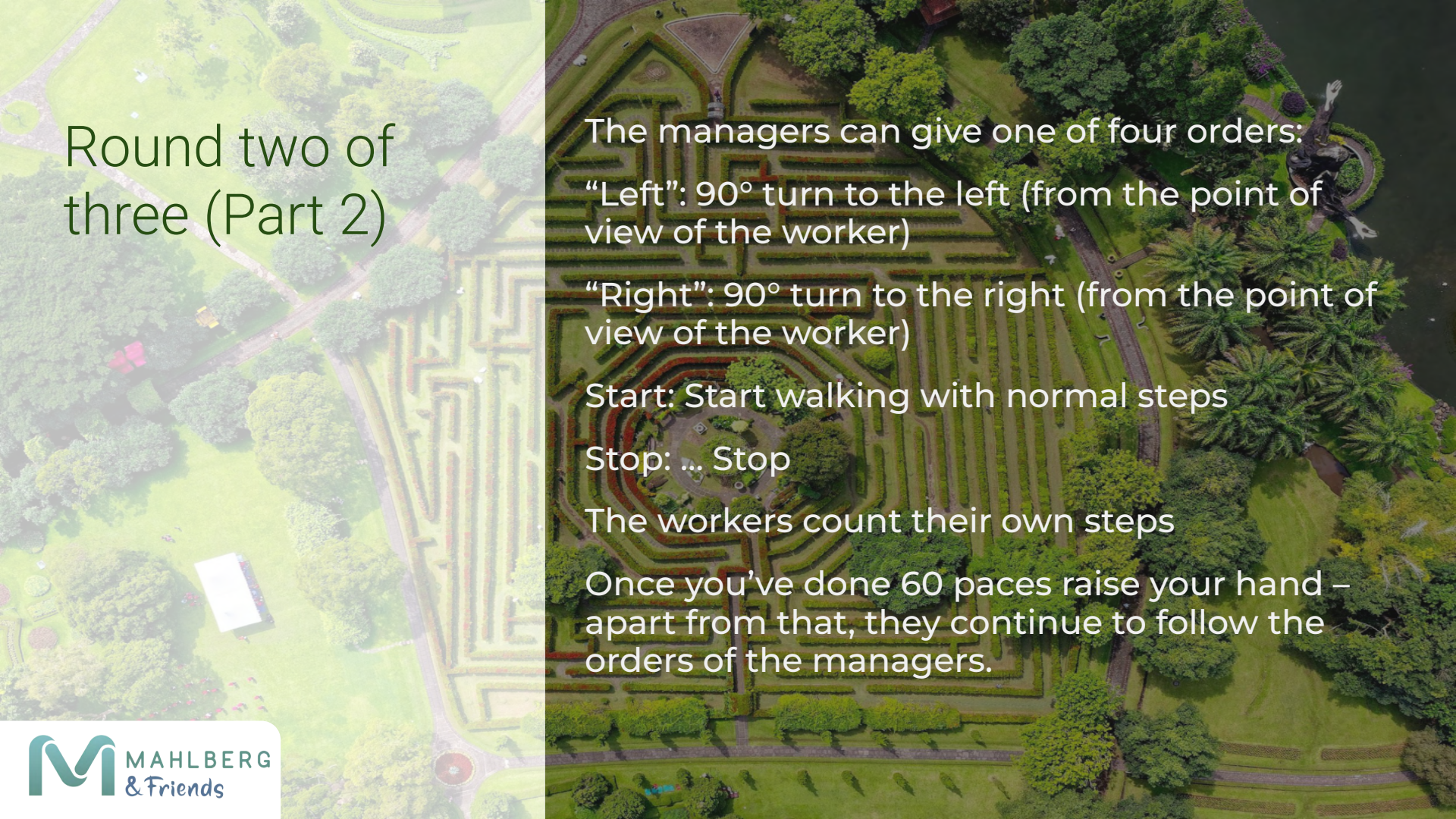
Please self-select into pairs

There are two roles: Managers and Works

The goal is to walk 60 paces (hence the old name of this simulation)

For this simulation the working people have to follow the orders of the managers.

Please decide who of you is managing and who will do the work



Round two of three (Part 2)

The managers can give one of four orders:

“Left”: 90° turn to the left (from the point of view of the worker)

“Right”: 90° turn to the right (from the point of view of the worker)

Start: Start walking with normal steps

Stop: ... Stop

The workers count their own steps

Once you’ve done 60 paces raise your hand – apart from that, they continue to follow the orders of the managers.

Das Labyrinth - Eine Simulation



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Active poll

13

Wie fühle sich die mittlere Runde (im Vergleich zu Runde null) an?



Debrief round two of three

- How many paces did you actually do?
- Speed

Runde 1

Dauer (Sekunden)	60		
Schritte gesamt	192		
Anzahl arbeitende Einheiten	9	Menschen pro Einheit	2
Schritte pro Sekunde (Gesamtsystem)	3.2		
Schritte pro Sekunde (Mensch)	0.1777777778		

Team #	Schritte		
1	46		
2	23		
3	23		
4	16		
5	25		
6	20		
7	17		
8	2		
9	20		
10			
11			

Final round

Leaving the markings is not permitted

There are no longer any explicit managers. Everyone has four options for action (but decides for themselves)

“Left”: Turn 90° to the left (from the worker's perspective)

“Right”: Turn 90° to the right (from the worker's perspective)

Start: Start taking normal-sized steps

Stop: ... Stop

The workers count the steps themselves

When 60 steps have been reached, please raise your hand - apart from that, do what you think makes the most sense.

Das Labyrinth - Eine Simulation



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Active poll

14

Wie würdet Ihr die letzte Runde bezeichnen?



Debrief final round

When did everybody raise their hands?

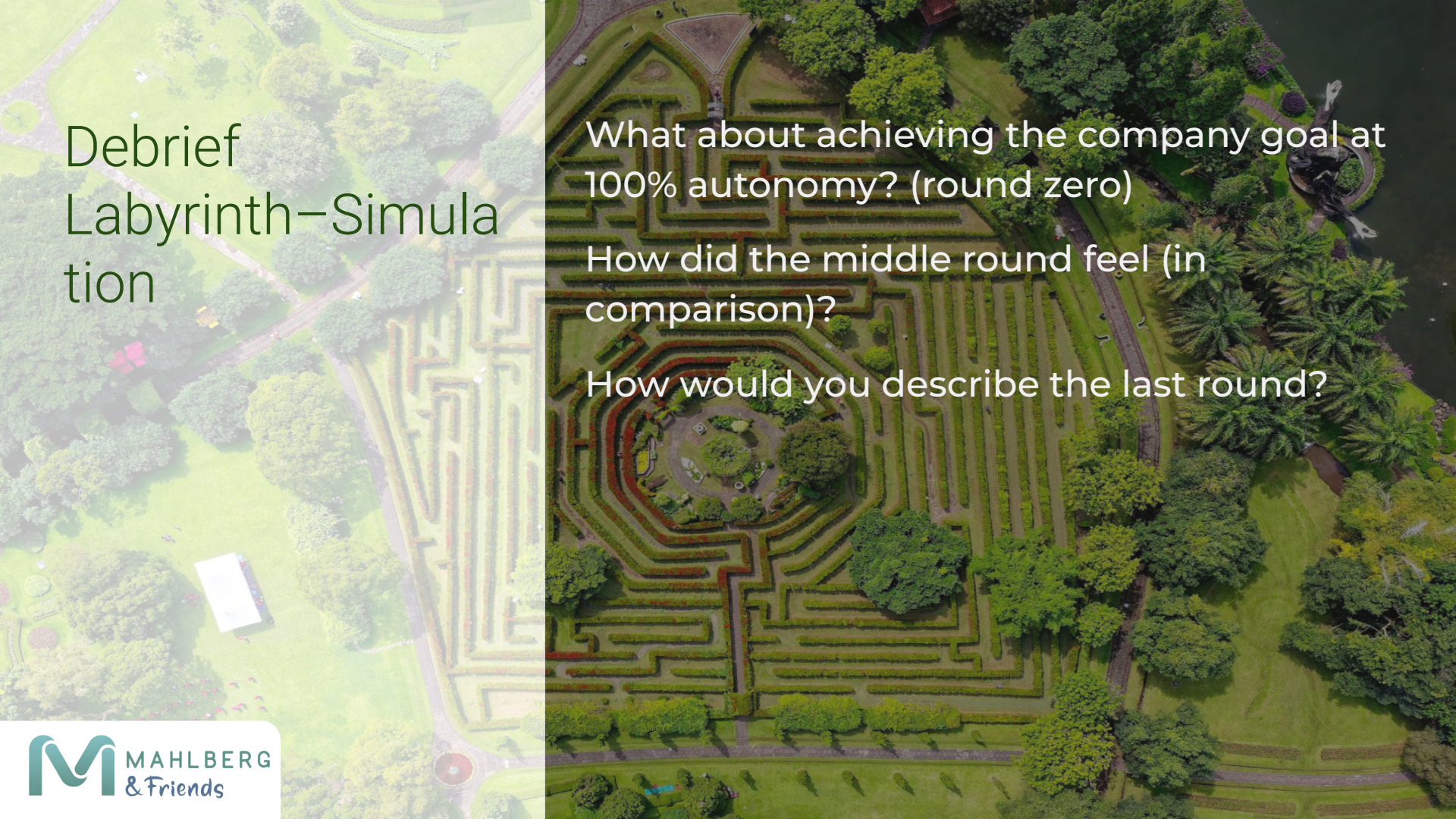
Runde 2

Dauer (Sekunden)	60			
Schritte gesamt	768			
Anzahl arbeitende Einheiten	15	Menschen pro Einheit	1	
Schritte pro Sekunde (Gesamtsystem)	12.8			
Schritte pro Sekunde (Mensch)	0.8533333333			
Freies Potential	543.5733333			
Team #	Schritte	Zeit	Rest	Potential
1	40		60	51.2
2	50		60	51.2
3	46		60	51.2
4	55		60	51.2
5	45		60	51.2
6	35		60	51.2
7	53		60	51.2
8	56		60	51.2
9	46		60	51.2
10	42		60	51.2
11	60		45	15
12	60		58	2
13	60		55	5
14	60		45	15
15	60		60	0

Debrief final round

Let's look at the whole thing

		Faktor;	x 6.83
Schritte im Labyrinth	71	192	1311.573333
Schritte gesamt	71	192	768
Anzahl arbeitende Einheiten	12	9	15
Schritte pro Sekunde (Gesamtsystem)	1.183333333	3.2	12.8
Schritte pro Sekunde (Mensch)	0.0986111111	0.1777777778	0.8533333333
Freies Potential im System	0	0	543.5733333



Debrief Labyrinth–Simula tion

What about achieving the company goal at 100% autonomy? (round zero)

How did the middle round feel (in comparison)?

How would you describe the last round?

The gist - so far

- ☐ Directionless self-organization doesn't feel good for everyone
- ☐ The granularity of the direction is relevant

Enabling Constraints



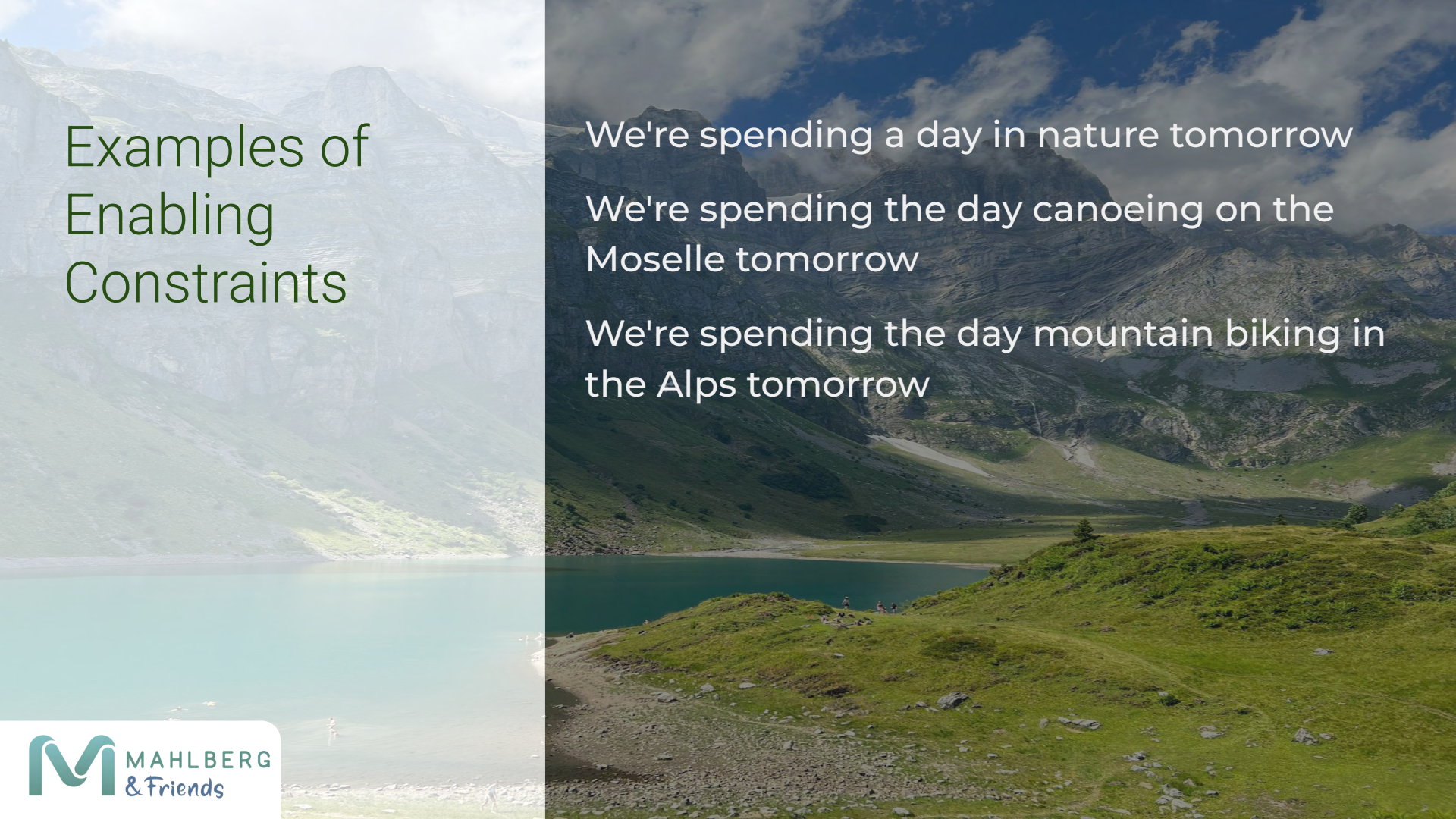
Shoutouts

Can you imagine things that constrain you
and make (new) things possible precisely
because of this constraint?

Examples of Enabling Constraints

Timeboxing





Examples of Enabling Constraints

We're spending a day in nature tomorrow

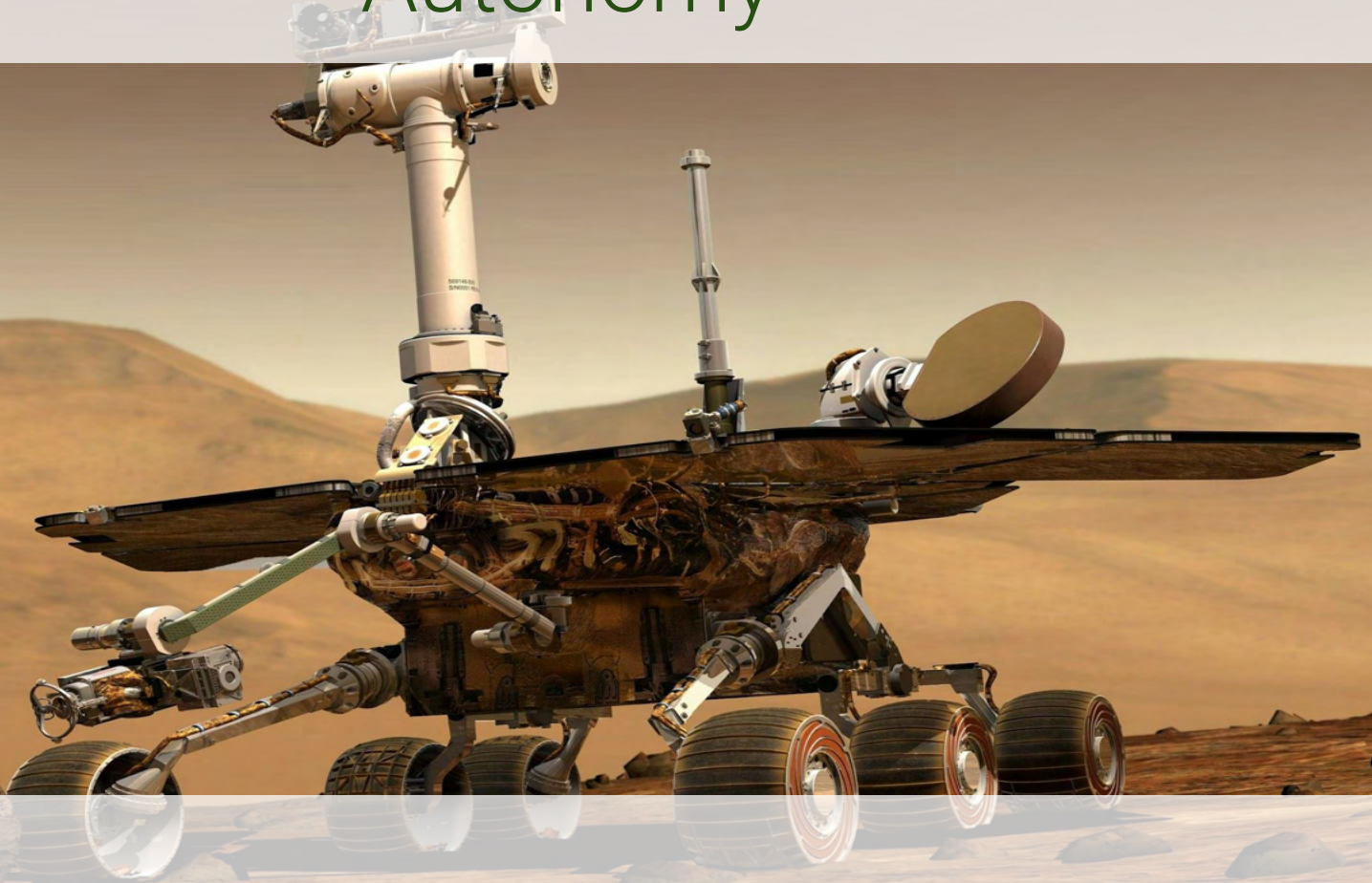
We're spending the day canoeing on the
Moselle tomorrow

We're spending the day mountain biking in
the Alps tomorrow

The gist - so far

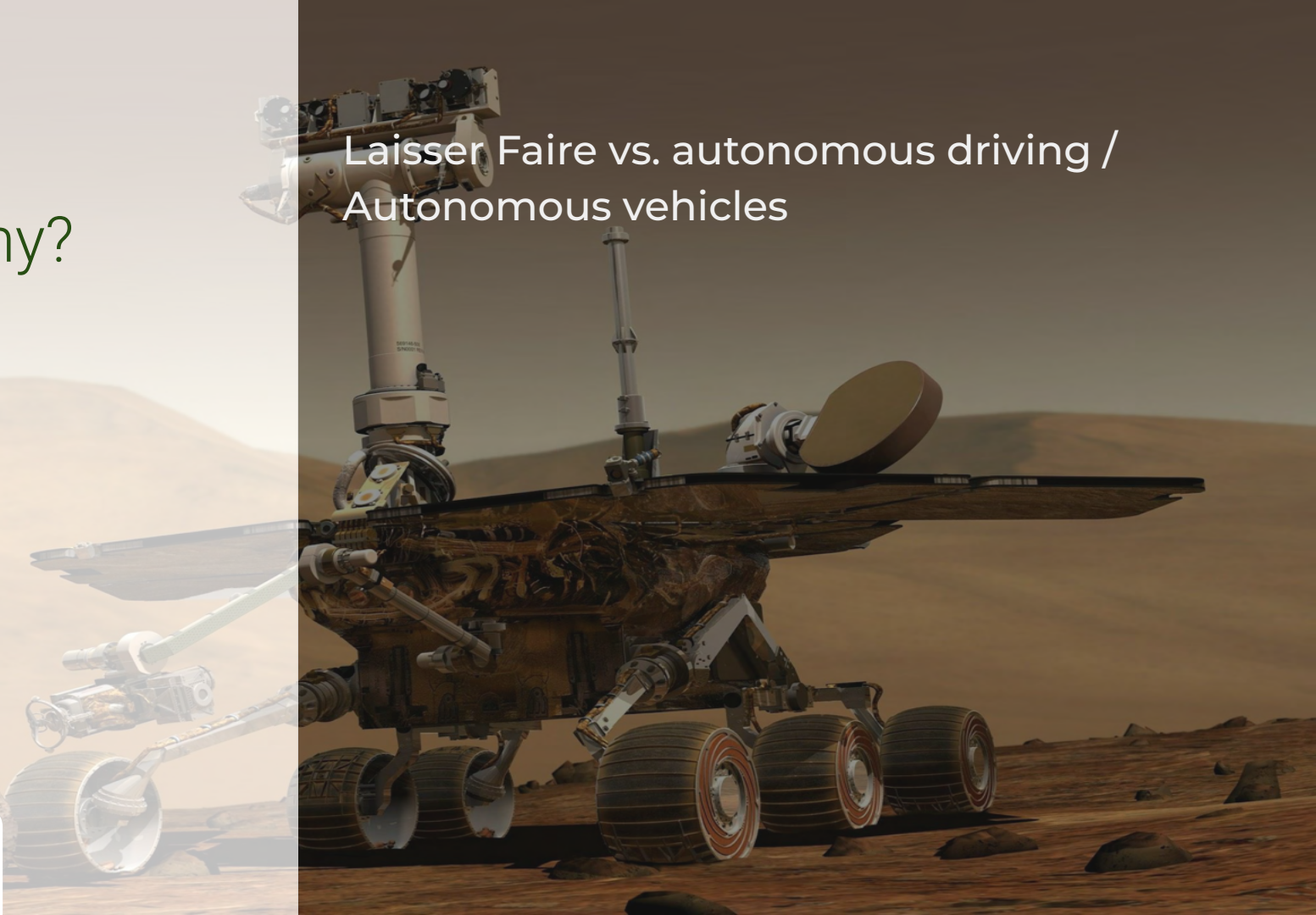
- ☐ Directionless self-organization doesn't feel good for everyone
- ☐ The granularity of the direction is relevant
- ☐ Without constraints we don't know what to bring to the party

Autonomy



What is
Autonomy?

Laisssez Faire vs. autonomous driving /
Autonomous vehicles



The gist - so far

- ❑ Directionless self-organization doesn't feel good for everyone
- ❑ The granularity of the direction is relevant
- ❑ Without constraints we don't know what to bring to the party
- ❑ Autonomy as in autonomous car?

On Motivation



On Motivation

Currently widespread view:

Extrinsic motivation (I get something I want when I do “X”) is seen as ‘bad’ (it just doesn’t work)

Intrinsic motivation (I do something that gives me pleasure in itself) is seen as “good” (it works)

On Motivation

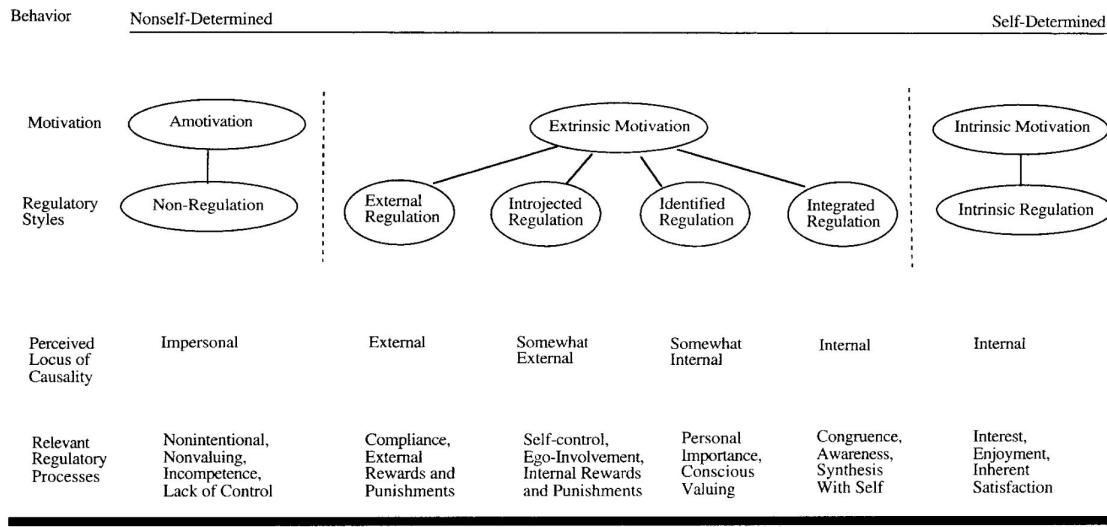
Can that be true?

Can you think of any counter-examples to “only intrinsic motivation (the activity itself is fun) works”?

On Motivation

Figure 1

The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation With Their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality, and Corresponding Processes



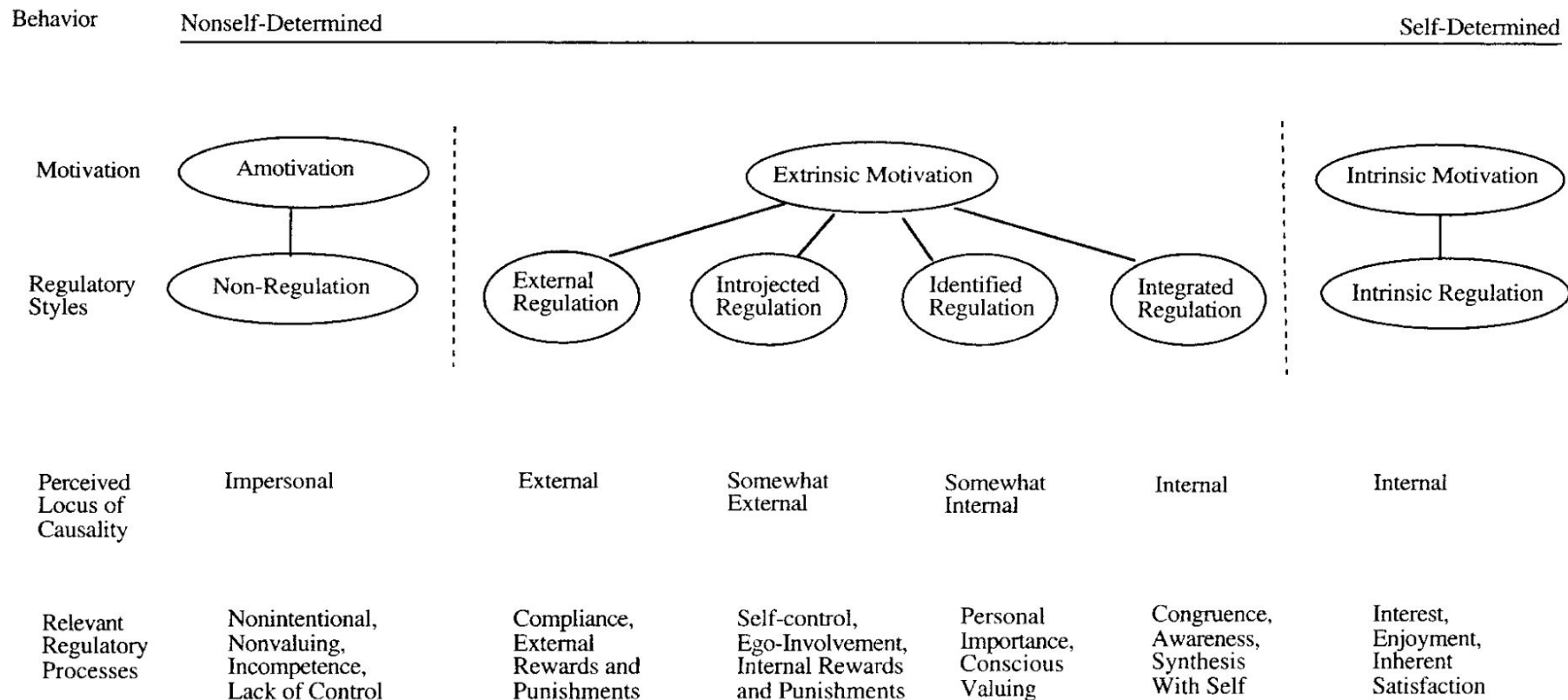
Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci
1985, 2000, 2008

Photo by RUN 4 FFWPU:

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/boy-running-on-pathway-2539281/>

Figure 1

The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation With Their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality, and Corresponding Processes



On Motivation

What does this imply for motivation in the working environment?

The gist - so far

- ❑ Directionless self-organization doesn't feel good for everyone
- ❑ The granularity of the direction is relevant
- ❑ Without constraints we don't know what to bring to the party
- ❑ Autonomy as in autonomous car?
- ❑ Motivation is a spectrum
- ❑ Everyone has their own reason to love what they do

„Acts of Leadership“



Acts of leadership



Popcorn / shoutouts



Signalling



Directing



Lead by Example



Lead by Inspiration



Photo by CHUTTERSNAP on Unsplash

At least four types

Signalling

Directing

Example

Inspiration

The gist - so far

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The gist - so far

- ❑ Directionless self-organization doesn't feel good for everyone
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❑ Motivation is a spectrum

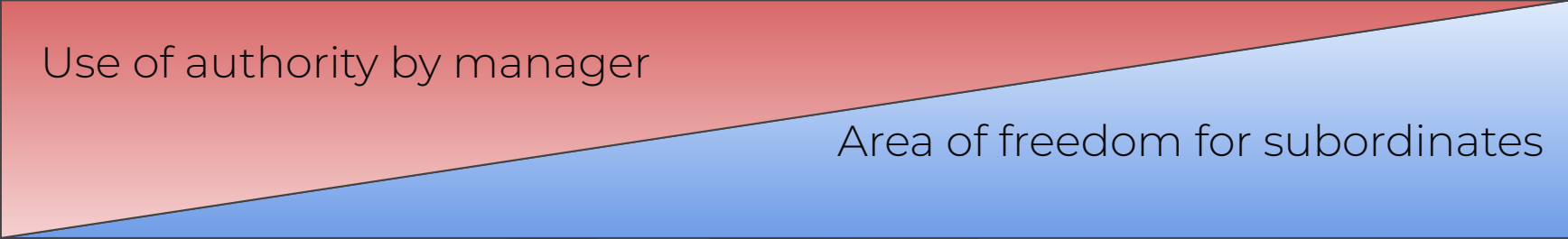
❑ Everyone has their own reason to love what they do

- ❑ Leadership types can be situational
- ❑ Every act of leadership has to fit the Situation and the leader

Delegation



Continuum of Leadership Behaviour (Tannenbaum and Schmidt 1958)



Use of authority by manager

The diagram is a horizontal rectangle divided diagonally from the bottom-left to the top-right. The upper-left portion is red and contains the text 'Use of authority by manager'. The lower-right portion is blue and contains the text 'Area of freedom for subordinates'. The background of the slide shows two hands holding a wooden staff against a bright sky.

Area of freedom for subordinates

Continuum of Leadership Behaviour (Tannenbaum and Schmidt 1958)

Use of authority by manager

Area of freedom for subordinates

Manager makes decision and announces it

Manager 'sells' decision

Manager presents ideas and invites questions

Manager presents tentative decision, subject to change

Manager presents problem, gets suggestions, makes decision

Manager defines limits, asks group to make decision

Manager permits subordinates to function within limits defined by superior

Delegation

A hand holding a wooden staff, with another hand visible on the left side of the frame. The background is split into a light blue left half and a dark blue right half.

Do not delegate anything that you have not been delegated yourself (or that is in your area of control by other means – for example via hierarchy or law)

Do not delegate further than you are prepared to accept the result

The gist - so far

- ❑ Directionless self-organization doesn't feel good for everyone
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- ❑ Motivation is a spectrum
 - ❑ Everyone has their own reason to love what they do

- ❑ Leadership types can be situational
- ❑ Every act of leadership has to fit the Situation and the leader
- ❑ Delegation implies hierarchy and defined responsibilities
- ❑ Delegation modes used to be part of the leadership-style

Delegation

One more modern model: Delegation Levels according to Mgt3.0



Delegation

Tip:

Do **not** use the numbers, but build concrete sentences for the respective delegation levels per question

Tell



Tell

When it comes to “topic”, “person or role” will decide and communicate the decision to “persons or roles”.

Example:

When it comes to *new locations*, the *management* will decide and inform all *employees*.

Sell

£6.20 a bunch

Last few weeks of the best
Asparagus around...
£6.20 a bunch

Asparagus
250g
2 for £5!!!

2 for £10!!!

Sell

When it comes to “topic”, “person or role” will decide and discuss and explain the decision with “persons or roles”.

Example:

When it comes to *new locations*, the *management* will decide and explain to the *employees* why these locations were chosen and how the decision was made.

Consult



Consult

When it comes to “topic”, “person or role” will first ask those affected and involved and then decide.

Example:

When it comes to *room design*, the *management* will first ask *the employees* and then decide.

Agree



Agree

When it comes to “topic”, “persons or roles” will discuss the topic together with “persons or roles” and find a common (veto-free?) opinion.

Example:

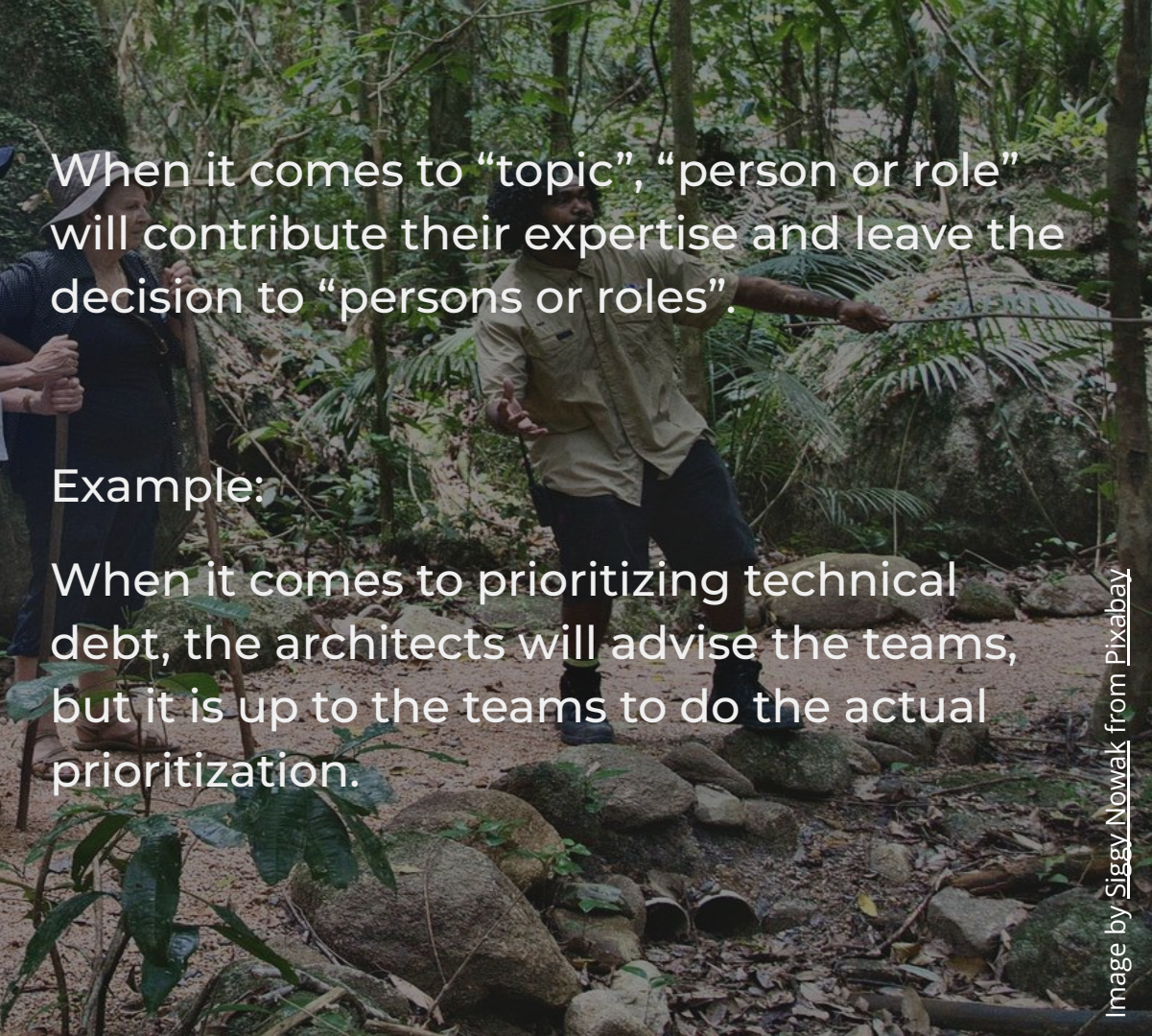
When it comes to room designs, the department management will develop and decide together with the entire department what should happen.

Advise





Advise



When it comes to “topic”, “person or role” will contribute their expertise and leave the decision to “persons or roles”.

Example:

When it comes to prioritizing technical debt, the architects will advise the teams, but it is up to the teams to do the actual prioritization.

Inquire



ASK

Inquire

When it comes to “topic”, “person or role” will actively inquire with “persons or roles” what the status is if there is a need for information.

Example:

When it comes to vacation planning, the employees are free to plan by themselves and management will actively inquire with the teams if necessary

Delegate



Delegate

When it comes to “topic”, “persons or roles” can decide and act as they wish.

Example:

When it comes to organizing the lunch break, individual employees can do this completely independently.

Final words



How do we put it all together?

My pattern

Your patterns?



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- ❑ Leadership types can be situational
- ❑ Every act of leadership has to fit the Situation and the leader
- ❑ Delegation implies hierarchy and defined responsibilities
- ❑ Delegation modes used to be part of the leadership-style
- ❑ Do not delegate on abstract concepts, use explicit examples and words
- ❑ Make delegation agreements explicit and visible (too as many people as feasible)

About Michael

About the brand

- For questions just send me a mail:
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- The German blog is rather out of date, though
<http://shu-ho-ri.michaelmahlberg.de>
- My homepage can be found at
<http://www.michaelmahlberg.de>
- And you can find the company at
<https://www.consulting-guild.de>



<https://mahlberg-and-friends.com>

Slides



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