

‘Not born to compete’
Individual and organisational reluctance to compete
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Personal, cultural and generational experiences have always made me feel uneasy with open and upfront competition.

My consultancy and teaching practice, predominantly in the public and voluntary sector, has contributed to a limited exposure to ‘competition’ as a positive and straight value.

More recent experience of tutoring MBA students in a business school has opened new perspectives on the understanding and the practice of competition in different worlds and contexts.

Through a number of examples drawn from my consultancy and teaching experience I intend to explore:

- The psychodynamic and cultural processes behind the reluctance to compete in individuals and in organisations, even when faced by major challenges and crises.
- The sense of paralysis or hatred evoked by a competitive environment and the passive and ambivalent reactions when individuals, teams and organisations are confronted by internal and external rivalries.

I also intend to discuss the question:

- ‘Does competition mean the demise of cooperation?’
 - . Is it possible to maintain significant degrees of internal and external cooperation when faced by intense competition?
 - . Could individuals and organisations that have developed with strong cooperative values manage the challenge of a

highly competitive world without giving up their capacity to be collaborative?

This paper will conclude exploring ways to address the 'reluctance' to compete in organisations who are struggling to acknowledge the reality of a competitive world and market and who are fearful to engage with competitive dynamics inside and outside their system.

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