



Abstract

The Western culture and its established paradigms lead the world economy and structure the global market. The backbone of this culture roots in a technocratic vision of the world, based on the principle of causality. This understanding of the economic and societal reality has shown great success with continuous achievements. Nevertheless, today our society is facing big problems. More specifically, the globalization of markets has substantially complicated the process of making the right decisions. A different approach to problem solving may help design a better solution. This approach has to overstep the too obvious true-false logic and offer a holistic frame for a new way of analyzing the economic and social realms.

Looking back at the ancient Chinese philosophers, they had developed an astonishing methodology called the Yijing, which was used to support government officials in making the right decisions. This article attempts to link the PDCA Deming cycle to some special elements of this framework.

UPDATING ANTIQUE CHINESE KNOWLEDGE

Antique Chinese Wisdom Reflects Modern Business Methods More Consciously

This article takes you on a very special journey to consider a new paradigm for the decision-making process. This new paradigm unifies a many-centuries-old Chinese philosophical system and the well-known PDCA Deming cycle.

by Gabriel Felley

Business transformations must rely on well-thought-out enterprise strategies. These strategies, to be successful, are not strictly based on rational facts. Rationality left alone may be an excellent, fast computing machine, but it will never produce market-fitting novelties. The added value that a strategy may deliver resides in the creative potential it encompasses. This potential is largely controlled by the manager's ability to incite and to accept his proper intuition and to translate this "less-structured" information into a convincing business language.

Cultures Meeting Across Time

In order to guide process transformation, Western business people have conceptualized various methods. One of these, the PDCA Deming cycle, has become very popular because it is highly pragmatic and universal. The PDCA cycle is made up of four phases, which include planning for new business initiatives, putting them into action, smartly managing resources and monitoring risks, and checking to what extent the planned

goals are achieved to reduce the identified gap or to become better. The PDCA cycle enables companies to be more competitive through inventing and designing the right business transformation. The obvious necessity of change as an inherent characteristic of all kinds of processes has also been observed and recognized by the antique Chinese scholars. They analyzed and collected a large amount of facts concerning the dynamic of change. This 3000-year-old knowledge had been compiled into a book called the "Book of Changes" or I Ching or in modern wording, Yijing.

The Yijing, with its 64 geometrical figures and corresponding texts, which had been accumulated and consolidated since the 10th century BC of ancient Chinese culture, is one of the oldest written documents of the ancient Chinese philosophy. In the imperial period, it was used as the basic principle to manage the daily as well as the strategic governmental business. This article proposes not to scrutinize the validity of this statement, but to illustrate how sophisticated its underlying

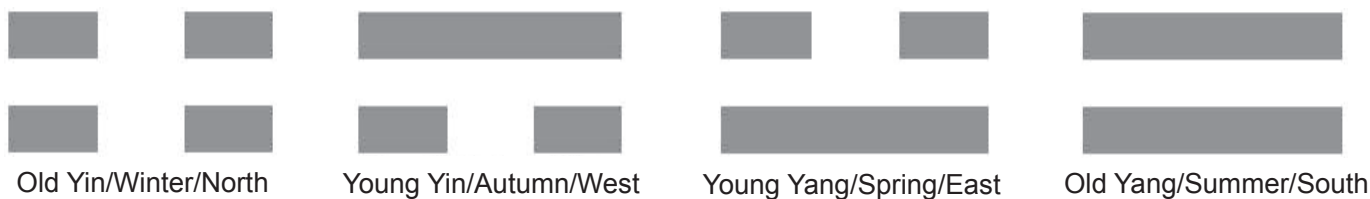


Fig. 1: The four basic elements (also called bigrams)

logic is, by establishing astonishing links between the mentioned PDCA cycle and the 64 hexagrams.

There is a significant amount of literature on the Yijing, and its practice is gaining more and more importance in the Asian countries. Especially in China and Vietnam, where serious attempts are made to develop a new lecture and an understanding of this ancient management method to make it a suitable tool for supporting decision-making processes.

This article illustrates how the PDCA concepts are surprisingly close to the ones that were developed about 3000 years ago by the ancient Chinese philosophers.

A Brief Introduction to the Yijing

The genesis of the Yijing is rather complex and subject to different interpretations, which are not further considered here (Javary, 1997, 2003; Schilling, 2009; Schlumberger, 2009; Smith, 2012). Within this article we consider the Yijing as a set of 64 elements, called hexagrams. A hexagram is a geometrical figure composed of six lines (broken and unbroken, see below).



The unbroken lines are Yang lines and the broken ones are Yin lines. The six lines of a hexagram deliver a “Yin-Yang snapshot” of the considered situation. Yin and Yang being the two basic principles of the old Chinese philosophy, their endless transformation in each other displays the universal Yin-Yang polarity orchestrating the changes in the world.

Moreover, each hexagram and each line of a hexagram has a text or commentary, and

each holds a specific meaning (see glossary). A hexagram is derived from the combinations of three out of four basic elements: old and young Yin and old and young Yang (Felley, 2013, see figure 1).

There are 64 (=4 x 4 x 4) possible combinations of picking three of these bigrams out of four, allowing repetition, hence 64 hexagrams.

For each decision that needs to be made, there is a hexagram focusing on a specific “Yin-Yang” situation. Usually, the hexagram that is selected, called the situation hexagram, has changing lines; this means Yin-lines become Yang-lines and reversed, leading to a second hexagram, called the perspective hexagram. This helps to better understand the change depicted by the situation hexagram. The commentaries added to the pictures of these two hexagrams holistically describe the situation to be analyzed and contribute to deepen the understanding of the different dimensions involved and their interdependencies, thus, enabling a better decision.

To better understand the Yijing, an analogy can be made between the structure of the Yijing and the DNA. DNA codons are composed of a combination of three out of four nucleobases, which can be Thymine, Guanine, Adenine, and Cytosine (Schönberger, 1992). It is tempting to map the four bigrams to the four nucleobases and to establish a symbolic correspondence between the 64 hexagrams of the Yijing and the 64 DNA-codons. These DNA-codons deliver enough diversity to build up all that lives on earth. The 64 hexagrams may also be combined in such sophisticated ways to display all the observed and hidden changes.

Linking the 64 Hexagrams

Between the 64 hexagrams there are dif-

ferent relations, which link them together. Four of these relations will be discussed. The first one is called the opposite hexagram. Two hexagrams are opposite when the Yin-lines are replaced by Yang-lines (see below).



The second relation is called the reversed hexagram. Here, two hexagrams are called reversed when they are relatively upside down (see below).



Next, there are the FuXi families, or pre-heaven hexagrams. To understand how these families are structured, it is necessary to consider the upper and lower trigrams of a hexagram. A trigram is a figure made up of three Yin or Yang lines. The upper trigram corresponds to the lines 4-5-6 of a given hexagram and the lower trigram corresponds to the lines 1-2-3. It is important to note that the lines are counted from bottom to top (to understand the logic of constructing the FuXi families, see further readings).

Box 1: Nuclear Hexagrams and Families

There are 16 distinct nuclear hexagrams and families. The four inner lines of a nuclear hexagram are identical for the four members of the family. Each of these four lines can be a Yin or Yang line, therefore there are 16 different nuclear fam-

The FuXi family is based on a trigram-based algorithm (see figure 2). Each trigram in the right circle corresponds to the left-circle trigram in the same location, for example, the Qian (Heaven) trigram corresponds to the Gen (Mountain) trigram and the Kan (Water) to Kun (Earth) trigram. To give a specific example of how the FuXi hexagram is built, you take the lower trigram of a hexagram such as Dui (Lake-Mist) from the right, and match it to the corresponding trigram on the left. Thus, the new lower trigram would be Kan (Water). Then you take the upper trigram, such as Li (Lightening) from the right, and again match it to the corresponding trigram on the left, which would be Qian (Heaven). Therefore, the new FuXi hexagram of the example would have an upper trigram of Qian (heaven), and a lower trigram of Kan (Water). The four members of a FuXi family are arranged in a well-defined cyclic sequence and each one has a predecessor and a successor. The successor inherits some prerequisites from its predecessor. In a business language, the

Fig. 2: The FuXi (left) and Wen (right) trigrams' arrangements

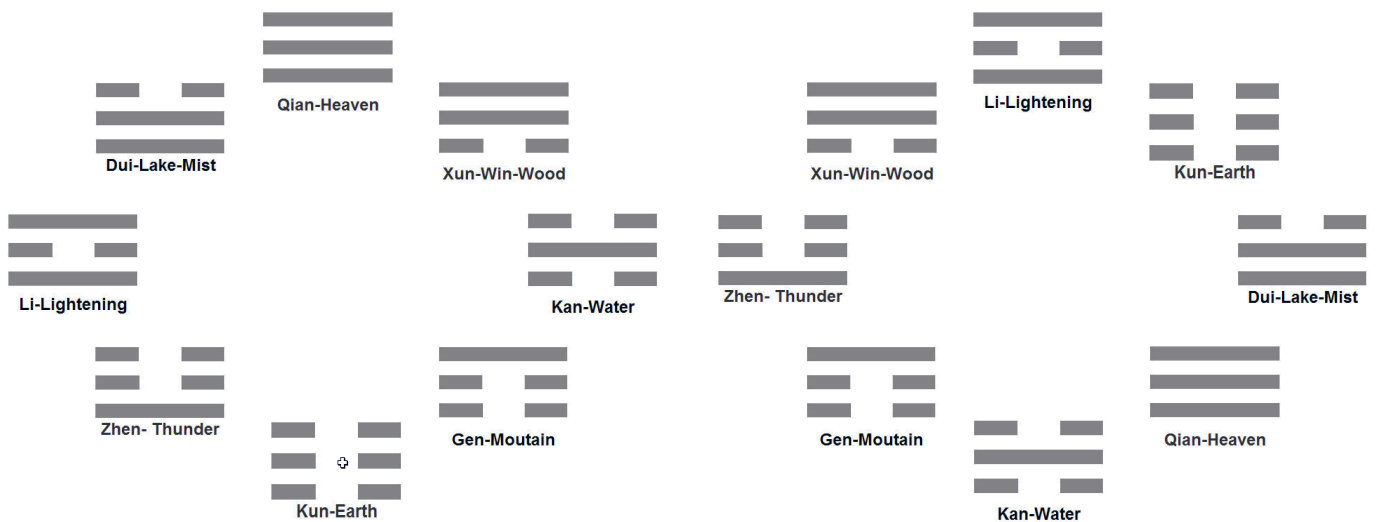


Fig. 3: An example of one FuXi family



predecessor’s situation may “represent” the critical success factors that the successor must have in order to be able to face the problems its condition implies. Figure 3 illustrates an example of a family whereby hexagram 1 “The Creative” symbolizes the creative power and the pure Yang-force. Subsequently, this energy flows into hexagram 30, “The Clinging, the Fire”, which causes inspiration and awareness. This awareness acts as the Thunder, the name of hexagram 51, and is like a rude awakening. The produced shock has to be absorbed by the solid quietness of hexagram 52 “The Mountain”, which keeps still and enables the creativity of hexagram 1.

There are 16 FuXi families, and each of these owns its specific internal logic. This article aims to show the sophistication of the Yijing’s logical system and how close it fits to the PDCA cycle through the algorithms used iteratively to generate the FuXi and nuclear families (see definition below). It will dem-

onstrate how meaningful the derived hexagram series are, although the way applied to structure these series may appear arbitrary. The results are so convincing, that one has to accept the idea of a subtle logic beyond.

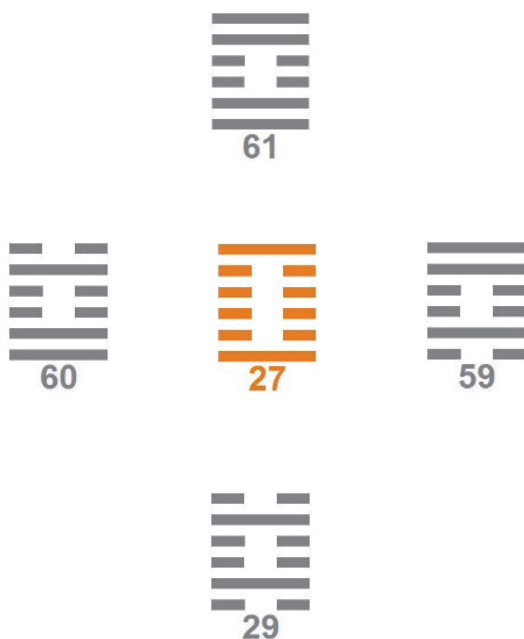
There is also a second category of families called the nuclear families, which are formed with hexagrams having identical 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th lines. Each family has a kind of representative called the nuclear hexagram. Its lines, numbered from one to six correspond to the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 3rd, 4th and 5th lines of each hexagram belonging to the same family. The construction of the nuclear hexagrams and families is based on a line-based algorithm (see box 1 on previous page). To clarify how the nuclear hexagram is built, let us take hexagram 60 as an example (see figure 4). In order to build hexagram 27, you take (counting from bottom to top) lines two, three, and four, which form the lower trigram. Then you take lines three, four, and five to form the upper trigram.

The four hexagrams, which belong to the same family, share certain characteristics made more explicit in the corresponding nuclear hexagram. For understanding the article, it is sufficient to know how the nuclear families are built.

The Calendar Hexagrams

Among the 64 hexagrams, there are 12 special ones called calendar hexagrams (see figure 5). They differentiate from one another through the structure of their Yin and Yang lines forming blocks. This means that there is never a Yin or a Yang line between two Yang or Yin lines. For clear reasons, there are 12 such hexagrams. According to the ancient Chinese tradition, hexagram 2, “The Receptive”, is associated to the North and Winter;

Fig. 4: Nuclear family of the hexagram 27, “The Nourishment”



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hexagram 11, “Peace” or “Prosperity”, corresponds to the East or Springtime; hexagram 1, “The Creative”, corresponds to the South or Summer; hexagram 12, “The Stagnation”, corresponds to the West or Autumn. The eight remaining calendar hexagrams organize themselves between these four “cardinal” hexagrams according to their Yin/Yang ratio.

These 12 hexagrams describe a repetitive cycle, conveying values and corresponding activities along an imaginary time axis. Within this special case the pragmatic image of the four seasons is coupled with the cardinal directions (see glossary). Combining these calendar hexagrams with the four steps of the PDCA cycle delivers an insight into the sophisticated Yijing’s logical system using the concepts of nuclear and FuXi families. The established correspondences are strong enough to seriously consider the system of 64 hexagrams as a rationally coherent system, composed of single elements (the hexa-

grams) and rules linking them together (rules for building nuclear and pre-heaven hexagrams), giving an identified added value to the set of hexagrams.

Refreshing the PDCA Deming Cycle

The PDCA cycle (plan–do–check–act or plan–do–check–adjust) represents an iterative four-step management method, which is used in business for the control and continuous improvement of processes.

Plan: Defining the expected results and the corresponding methodologies to manage the allocated resources and identified risks.

Do: Implementation, running, and monitoring the designed processes.

Check: Analyzing the measured outcomes and comparing them with the fixed targets.

Act: Defining actions to improve the achieved results.

Plan: Re-examining the strategy by adjusting new goals.

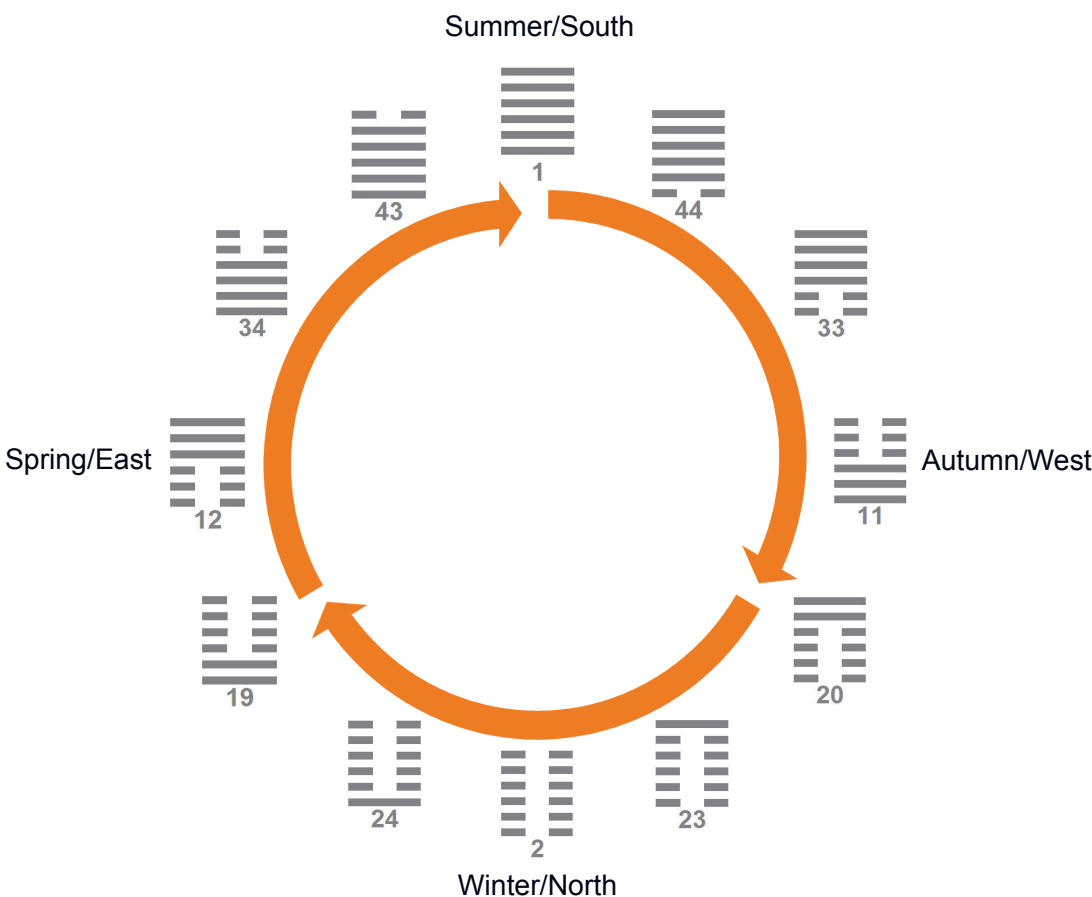


Fig. 5: The calendar hexagrams

Originally, the four phases are equally treated because there is a sequence of activities, which has to be executed according to a given order. However, in real time, for a productive business process, the four phases are deployed on a time axis, then the order remains the same but the size of the allocated time slot may be phase-specific. This is called the real-time or productive PDCA (PPDCA) cycle. Figure 6 shows a possible time configuration of these phases.

The time slot (Plan) needed for planning and designing a process should be shorter than the time requested to execute it. The time used to record (Check) the critical measurements and to define the corresponding improvements (Act) are both also smaller than the time the process has been productive. According to the new expected performances, a revised Plan has to be defined, and the cycle begins again.

Mapping the 12 Calendar Hexagrams to the PPDCA

The next step links the 12 calendar hexagrams to the time configuration associated to the four phases of the PPDCA (see figure 7).

The Plan's phase belongs to the North and winter. This is the time when activities slow down, a time to organize and think about what has and will be done. In wintertime, the tree roots continue to

grow, preparing for the next coming season. This corresponds well to the meaning of the hexagram 2 (The Receptive) and 24 (Return, Turning Point, see box 2).

Following the planning, the decided activities are launched and followed up with (hexagram 19, The Approach). These activities open a period of wealthy growth (hexagram 11, Peace and Prosperity). Hexagram 34 (Power of the Great) and hexagram 43 (The Resolution) steer the production process, giving it maximum power, until the climax is reached, which is represented by hexagram 1 (The Creative).

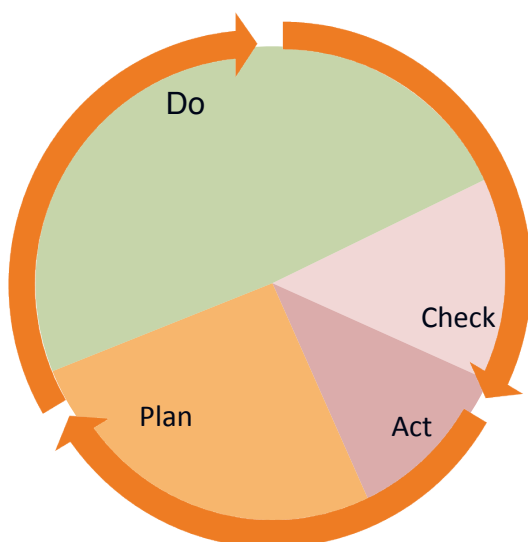
After the full deployment of power, hexagram 44 (Coming to meet) and hexagram 33 (Retreat) manage to slow down the production process correctly. This leads to the closing of the production process and to the validation of the delivered process outcomes (initializing the Check Phase: hexagram 12, The Stagnation and hexagram 20, Contemplation). Following the analysis of the results, hexagram 23 (The Exhaustion) and hexagram 2 (The Receptive) decide on the necessary measures required to optimize the obtained results. Once again, the cycle begins with new goals and process guidelines.

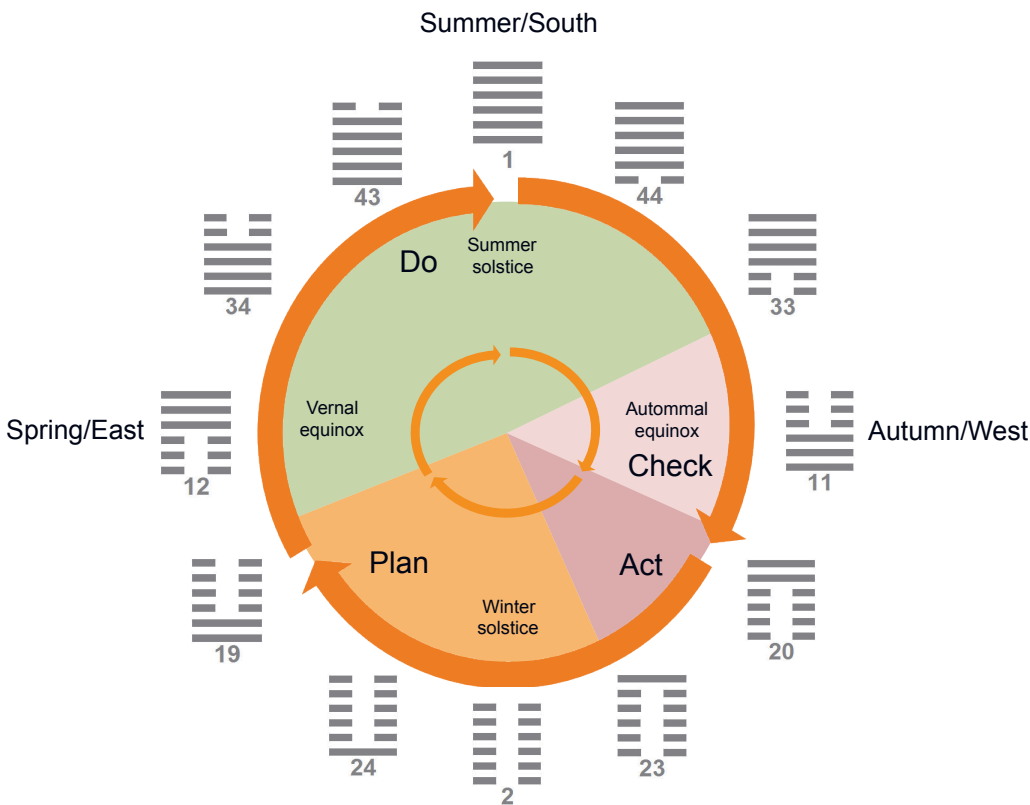
The Logic Behind the Calendar Hexagrams and their Linked Hexagrams

This section will link the 12 calendar hexagrams to the corresponding FuXi and nuclear hexagrams. To do this, the rules for generating the FuXi and nuclear hexagrams are used. These two procedures, explained earlier, lead to surprising symmetries, which reveal how sophisticated the Yijing logic may be. While this article is too short to explore which detailed business implications could be derived from this astonishing mapping between the calendar hexagrams and the PPDCA cycle, it does prompt for further investigations.

To begin, we rearrange the distribution of the calendar hexagrams, as shown in fig-

Fig. 6: The PDCA cycle





ure 8 on following page. Then we apply the rules described earlier to construct the FuXi (green) and nuclear (orange) hexagrams, as illustrated in figure 9 on following page.

Looking to the left of hexagram 1 and 2, where the “summer solstice” and the “winter solstice” lines are, there are consecutive FuXi hexagrams, which are followed by two nuclear hexagrams. To the right, there is a FuXi hexagon followed by a nuclear hexagram. Next, the left column of figure 9 illustrates the calendar hexagram followed by the FuXi and nuclear hexagram. Finally, the right column illustrates the calendar hexagram followed by two consecutive FuXi hexagrams and a nuclear hexagram.

In the last column to the left, hexagram 64 “Before Completion” appears predominantly (see box 3 on following page). This hexagram closes the Yijing and underlines the natural necessity for a new beginning. It is also remarkable that the two left hexagrams of the “winter solstice” line are identical to the two hexagrams (64 and 37) initializing the left column. The same happens with the left

side of the “summer solstice” line and the two hexagrams (hexagrams 64 and 39) on the top of that column. This indicates a slow motion from the Plan-phase to the Do-phase, with the same configuration. Hexagram 37, “The Clan”, describes the way an idea is turned into a long-lasting realization by sharing the same visions with all the people acting in the same organization. Hexagram 37 as a nuclear hexagram indicates the mindset necessary to achieve the strategic goals. Moreover, hexagram 37 is the FuXi hexagram of hexagram 24, which symbolizes the launch of a new cycle among the 12 calendar hexagrams. It indicates the dynamic of an organization.

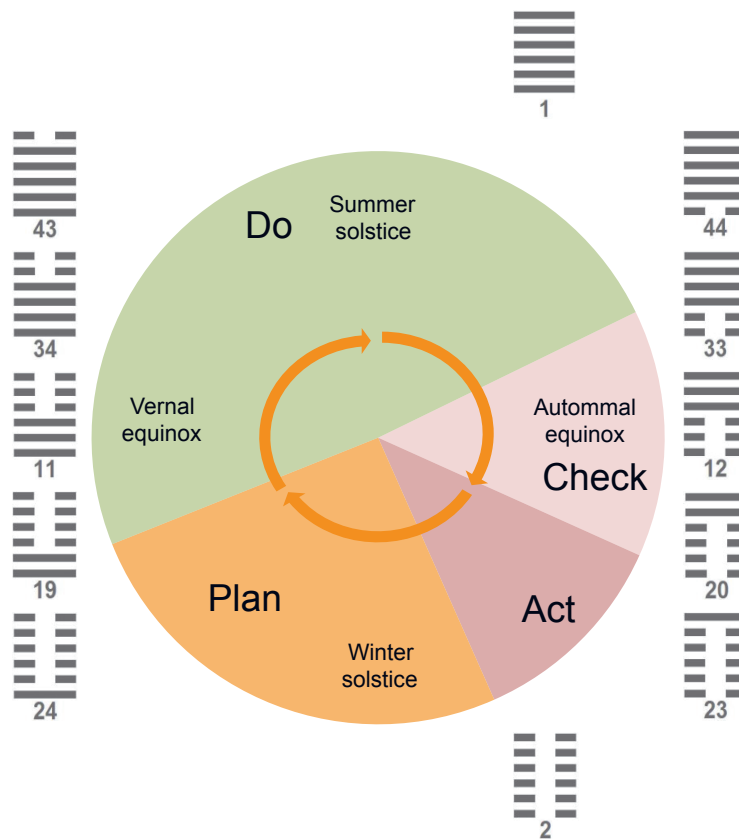
In the first column to the right, hexagram 63 “After Completion” appears predominantly (see box 3 on following page). The symmetry existing between the left side,

Fig. 7: The 12 calendar hexagrams deployed together with the PDCA

Box 2: Hexagrams 2 and 24

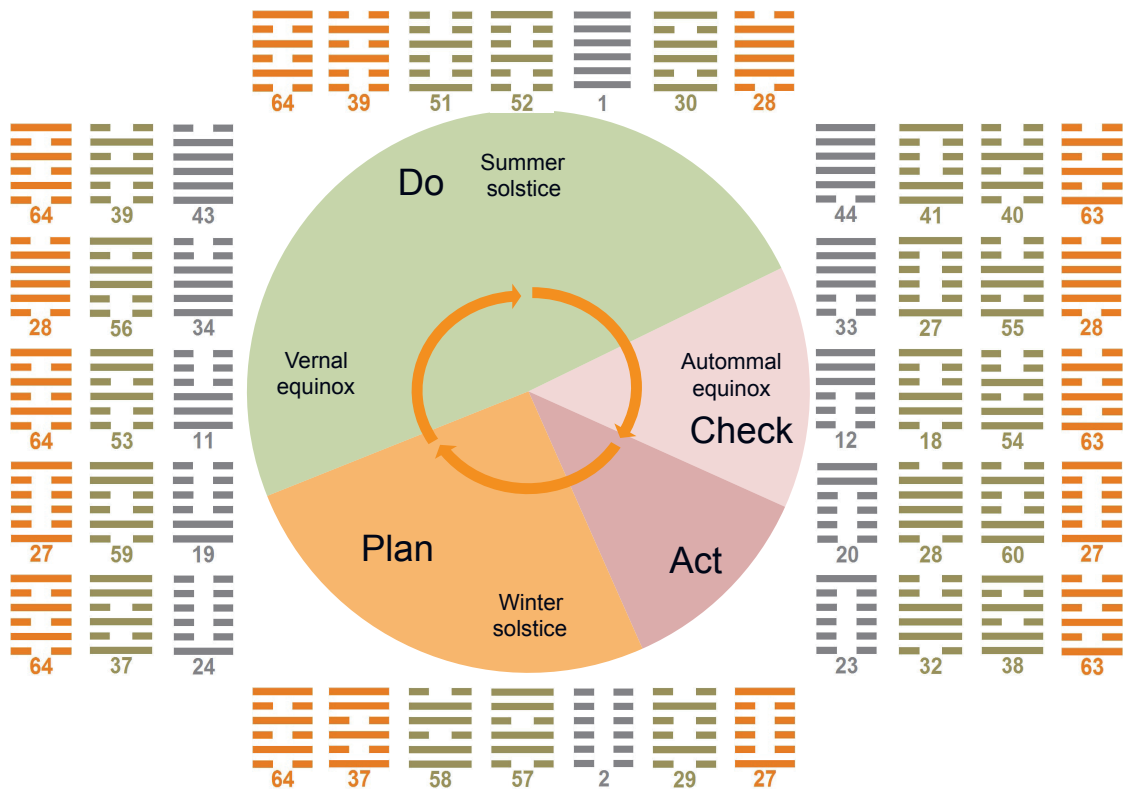
Hexagram 2 symbolizes the pure Yin principle, which includes long lasting achievement, slow and soft, and patient tenacity. Hexagram 24 is starting over a new cycle.

Fig. 8: The calendar hexagram in a new arrangement



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Fig. 9: The calendar hexagrams together with their corresponding nuclear and FuXi hexagrams



illustrating a new start, and the right side, indicating the termination of the process, is reflected in hexagrams 64 and 63. However, it goes further than that. In the second columns on the right and left side, the hexagrams are respectively opposite, when they are compared respectively in a top-bottom and bottom-top order. Hexagrams 39, 56, 53, 59, 37 are respectively opposite to the hexagrams 38, 60, 54, 55, 40. This is matched to the different approaches applied to support a new beginning or to finalize a cycle.

Also, each of the hexagrams that are on the top and bottom of the “summer solstice”, and the “winter solstice” have corresponding opposites. There is an exception with the pairs of hexagrams 64,37, and 64, 39. For those pairs, the opposite hexagrams are respectively at the top and at the bottom of the right column, where hexagram 63 is leading.

Conclusion

This article has shown that applying the strange building procedures for the nuclear and FuXi hexagrams leads to results that reflect a coherent logic and a sophisticated intelligence focused on the dynamic deployment of a cyclic process. It offers a deeper insight into the mecha-

Box 3: Hexagrams 63 and 64

Hexagram 63 “After Completion”: Everything has been completed. The perfect order has been reached. Because everything has to permanently change, this state of perfection has to decay until the maximum disorder reigns. Hexagram 63 controls this process of disintegration.

Hexagram 64 “Before Completion”: The last hexagram in the book. A cycle has been terminated and hexagram 64 launches a new one. All counter have been reset. Everything has to be reshaped.

nisms of changes occurring along a full PPDCA cycle and gives useful information about how to follow and anticipate the different process phases. To exploit all this information, further considerations concerning the meaning of the different hexagrams and their relationships would be necessary. This would exceed the scope of this introductory article, which should be considered as a “mise en bouche” for an extended application of the Yijing system to managerial decision processes.

A new lecture is currently being developed about this extremely valuable methodology in order to make it available for supporting or enabling optimal solutions to the problems that a management team

Key Learnings

- ▷ The Yijing is one of the oldest philosophical systems that the human culture has created and it serves to understand the dynamic of change based on the Yin-Yang polarity.
- ▷ Like the DNA is based on 64 basic codons, the methodology of the Yijing is based on 64 geometric figures, called hexagrams. All these figures have six lines, broken (Yin-line) or unbroken (Yang-line). For each hexagram and each line, there is a commentary explaining the specific Yin-Yang configuration of the considered change.
- ▷ The PDCA Deming cycle, a basic management tool, has been extended to the productive PDCA (PPDCA) by deploying the four phases along a time axis representing the four seasons.
- ▷ Special hexagrams, the calendar hexagrams, have been mapped to the different phases of the PP-DCA, linking each of the calendar hexagrams to specific phases of the PPDCA.
- ▷ Using the abstract procedures to construct the FuXi and nuclear hexagrams, enlightens the sophisticated logic linking the 64 hexagrams together and to the corresponding PPDCA phases. The hexagrams appear as nodes of a meaningful network transporting information. This information is encoded in the line-structure of the hexagrams. Moreover, the never-ending Yin-Yang balance is reflected in the semantic variety of the hexagrams.

has to face and solve in today's world. It is like the old story about a man searching for his lost keys under the light of a street lamp, an accidental promenade asked him, why does he believe that he lost his keys in this small area? He replied that this is the only enlightened region! The Yijing's method massively en-

larges the region where to look for new solutions, it enables the discovery of new domains impermeable to the causally restricted connections. It also facilitates the generation of creative, rational solutions overstepping the tight boundaries of the usual causality. ▲

Service

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Prof. Dr. Gabriel Felley studied theoretical physics at the Swiss Institute of Technology, with a focus in systems theory. For many years, he has worked as an SAP consultant with a focus on Service and Delivery, Material Management, and Advanced Business Application Programming modules. Since 2005, he has been lecturer for IT Management and Security at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW). For the past 40 years, he has been exploring and discovering the Yijing philosophy and methodology. He has been giving seminars in Vietnam (Hanoi School of Business) and China (Zhengzhou University, Jinan University, Qingdao University). In August 2014, he was invited to present this article at the "International Congress for I Ching Studies" held in Shenyang. He is currently building a network between European and Asian universities to develop a modern reading of the Yijing and to promote it as a high-value tool for supporting the managerial decision making processes.
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Glossary

Hexagram Nr.	Short Explanation
1	The Creative. Symbolizes the pure Yang principle. Impulse to action, upward striving, beginning of growth.
2	The Receptive. Symbolizes the pure Yin principle. Long lasting achievement. The blueprint is turned into a tangible product, implementing plans.
11	Prospering, Peace. Establishing solid bases for future growth, the work comes to fruition, the field of action is gradually opening up.
12	Stagnation, Stillstand. The natural order that fosters all things is disunited, lines of communication are down. Be aware to avoid the coming up confusion and hold to your inner confidence.
19	Approach, Advance. Carefully guiding a growth process. Excellent conditions to follow up on new projects and ideas.
20	Contemplating, Panoramic View. Analyzing what has been done, taking in the whole picture, clarifying key reference point.
23	Deterioration, Splitting Apart. Reflecting the lessons learned to accept, to withdraw, and to start over later under new conditions.
24	Returning, Turning Point or Transition. The beginning of a new cycle or phase of work after a period of rest.
27	Nourishment. Considering the interdependent structures of the different cycles in the world. What are the correct resources used for specific tasks, which quality and quantity. Material resources as well as intellectual (skills, know-how)
28	Preponderance of the Great, Critical Mass. Time of high pressure. Important decisions have to be taken, the ponderous affairs are pushing into the foreground. The situation is excessive and may reach critical mass soon.
29	The Deep Waters, Danger. An attitude of apprehension has to be overcome. Taking the plunge, not procrastinating, will bring success even in difficult projects.
30	The Clinging, Synergy. A time of ideas: inspiration needs awareness and discipline to avoid euphoria.
32	Duration, Continuing. The ability to sustain regularity and constancy even in a stormy environment to achieve long-standing objectives.
33	Retreat, Strategically Withdraw. Initializes an ordered retreat to escape from momentary threats to a position of safety.

Hexagram Nr.	Short Explanation
34	The Power of Great. Deliberately using present advantages to achieve things. Be sure to avoid pigheadedness and keep agile.
37	The Clan. The way to transform an idea into a long-lasting realization by sharing the same visions with others acting in the same organization. Every collaborator knows his respective place and is satisfied within that framework of responsibility (RACI table).
38	The Opposition. Different opinions seem to diverge. Use the existing polarity to develop a farsighted, comprehensive, new understanding of the given situation, generating an added-value.
39	Obstacles. Meeting obstacles, which have to be overcome. A clear understanding of their real nature is mandatory in order to find the right way to go ahead.
40	Liberation. Eliminate the non-essentials to focus with more energy on the real goals you have fixed.
41	Decline, Decrease. Concentration to the fundamental resources, avoiding ornaments.
43	Breakthrough, Determination. Ability to manage and control the growth. Malpractices are not tolerated, no resting on the laurels, completing the changes resolutely towards perfection.
44	Coming to Meet, Temptation. The necessity to consider and to accept the coming up of new elements, forms of power.
51	The Arousing, Shock, Thunder. Awakening like a thunderbolt. New insights about the real nature of things lead to a deeper understanding of the processes. A heightened experience of the forces acting on your business, will lead to better sharpen the strategy.
52	Stabilization, Keeping Still. Quietness, relaxation before action. Consolidating and realigning the planned activities.
53	Gradually Developing. Suggest to develop the business in a slow, organic unfolding of events in the regard to the goals derived from the strategy. There are no shortcuts in the journey ahead.
54	Subordinate. Facing wholly inequitable forces, the business success depend on reasons you cannot directly influence or control.
55	Abundance. Success and prosperity are imminent in business matters as potentials are fulfilled, goals are realized and objectives reached. In order to continue growing business, it is necessary to select among the diversity and if necessary to reform or eradicate some obsolete or excessive elements.
56	Traveling. The conventional references no longer hold. To discover new environments, demands one to be cautious and to accept the established local rules.

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Hexagram Nr.	Short Explanation
57	Penetrating Influence. To influence the environment effectively, the goals are to be clearly maintained over a long period of time. The efforts to maintain these should be inconspicuous as possible.
58	Encouraging. Business goals can come to fruition in an atmosphere of gentleness and goodwill toward the other stakeholders.
59	Reuniting. It is time to break up the division because isolation brings discord and blocks creative energy. Develop a “process-based” business model to be able use synergies.
60	Limitations. Optimizing the use of the enterprise’s resources. Defining rules controls that are not too robust.
63	After Completion. Everything has been completed. The perfect order has been reached. Because everything has to permanently change, this state of perfection has to decay. Hexagram 63 controls this process of disintegration.
64	Before Completion. The last Hexagram in the book. A cycle has been terminated and Hexagram 64 launches a new one. The counter has been reset. Everything has to be reshaped. Order is arising out of the chaos.