

Out of the box

MiL Partner Program
in New York City

Lars Cederholm
Thomas Sewerin

MiL Concepts

MiL Concepts publishes articles and reports about the MiL way of working with change and development – theories and models as well as empirically based experiences. It will always be in a 16 page format, to keep it short and succinct.

Lennart Rohlin, dean and president of MiL Institute, is the editor of MiL Concepts. Gudrun Nilsson, network assistant at MiL, is in charge of all administrative matters.

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Foreword

MiL International Partner Program 9 made its fourth seminar as a five days visit in New York City in March 1996. This account is a splendid and concrete illustration of the learning philosophy of MiL – Action Reflection Learning. It demonstrates that these principles not only guides that half of a total MiL program which consist of work on real strategic projects, but also the program seminars spread out over a period of eight months.

To design seminars in unknown territory is an old tradition in MiL: to design a "mind trip in which we are part of the picture and not hiding behind the lens... accomodating new experience that will support a healthy redrafting of the road map within", as the authors put it.

The two authors, Lars Cederholm and Thomas Sewerin, the directors of the specific week and the total program respectively, have been pioneers in MiL in actually performing such weeks. They are now also making a more conscious and teachable Let's-take-a-journey theory. Anybody about to take a trip, and who wishes to learn from it, can probably benefit from reading this story.

Thomas is in charge of the newly formed MiL Learning Coach Academy and published this year his book "En plats i stolen". Lars received, together with Ernie Turner, this years Sven Åke Nilsson International Management Development Award.

Here is a story about the importance of:

- Having a safe haven for reflection.
- Clarifying expectations and making agreements about norms.
- Cleaning up unfinished business.
- Understanding cultural differences (in this case between Swedish and US managers).
- Exploring places and organisations guided by questions.
- Encountering the unknown with curiosity and an open mind.
- Debriefing experiences every now and then to integrate learning.
- Meetings with people from other fields of endeavor such as artists, and of unusual presence, such as an Tibetan lama.
- Just In Time Learning – JITL, the best learning takes place when involved in solving a problem or taking advantage of an opportunity.
- Timing and schedule.
- The leaders as models of the messages.

Lars and Thomas, long time staff members of MiL, really lives their messages. This account of five days mirrors the whole 40 days program, as well as the principles of ARL. In the final evaluation of the MiPP 9 program its participants gave this week a total 4.9 on a 5-grade scale.

Lennart Rohlin
MiL

The Gramercy Park – bridgehead and haven

”Nine dots, three plus three plus three, make up a square, and you are supposed to connect them with one line without lifting the pen.” A good old riddle and exercise that illustrates a basic principle of creativity: the importance of leaving preconceived notions behind when confronted with new problems. Lars is drawing on a flip chart. One of the group members responds smiling: ”You need to step out of the box!”

Often times a group is characterized by its use of language. Puns, sayings, play on words help create a group’s sense of itself. Words are used as an invocation, a ritual by which members of a group connect and create the feel of ”being a unit.” ”We must question our basic assumptions, look at the frames that we and our society have put upon us”, or in short ”Out of the box!” is the principle to which this group returns, over and over again, throughout the week. The words, and the meaning behind them, function as a vessel that takes the group from point to point on its path of learning.

The group consists of 14 executives from the public and private sector in Sweden: directors of hospitals, division heads of large enterprises, bank directors, CFO for County Government of Stockholm, and others. All are participants in MiL International Partner Program no. 9. It is the program’s fourth week long seminar and this seminar is run by Lars and Thomas. We are in New York City.

Our headquarters is a conference room on the second floor of the Gramercy Park Hotel only blocks from midtown Manhattan and surrounded by one of the city’s more subtle neighborhoods. The room has just been redecorated and you can still smell the fresh paint. One wall is all mirrors, the rest all covered with still damp white flowery wallpaper. Sixteen chairs in a circle, an overhead projector and a flip chart. This room is to become a highly important place for the group. A haven for reflection, individual and collective; an oasis when stressed by all

city impressions; a place of safety before or after an adventurous trip in the urban landscape.

This seminar has been named ”Den besjälade organisationen”, in English it would be ”The organization with soul”. Both Thomas and Lars are fascinated by the notion of taking a trip. Not a trip with a camera, running from one site to the other and dreaming how the pictures will look in the album. No, the mind trip in which we are part of the picture and not hiding behind the lens. We will explore feelings, thoughts, and perceptions, and then reflect alone and with others about our conclusions. In this way we can enlarge understanding and get to know more about the limitations we set on ourselves. The seminar week will be an exercise in accommodating new experience, that will support a healthy redrafting of the road map within.

Thomas has made many trips to European centers where the European mind was formed through the emergence of new philosophies, new forms of government and new directions in art. The purpose of these trips, to Vienna, Florence, Prague, Flanders and elsewhere, has been to begin to see how meaning is constructed in culture-dependent ways, how the mind has been formed and shaped by forces in our common history. Lars has been working with a different model in places like New York, Singapore, Moscow, Berlin and former East Germany, with a more explicit, experiential, psychodynamic model for reflection and change.

This is our first real attempt to work together, to try to understand how we can benefit from each others’ experience. We want to expand our knowledge into a more conscious and teachable Let’s-take-a-journey theory. These insights can be used and applied by human resource people and by executives who want to develop systematic thinking and greater personal awareness and teamwork in their organizations. Anybody about to take a trip can probably benefit from reading this story. So, let us take you along and reflect on the week and what we brought with us from the experience!

Setting the stage, coming to agreements

All the participants have a history with each other and feel relatively comfortable both with Thomas, the Program Director, and with each other. Lars has no previous history with the group, other than sending a welcoming letter to them six weeks ahead of

time with some of his hopes and expectations. Lars' initial uphill is to become accepted as a guide and leader in an ambiguous and perhaps somewhat uncomfortable environment. He is a guest in this group and the group is a guest in the city he calls home. Here's the welcoming letter that Lars sent to the participants:

New York 12.20.95

Dear Participant in MiPP 9

Thomas Sewerin has asked me to lend my support to him as you continue to develop and grow your skills and perspectives together with him and his staff. We have chosen my home town New York as another vantage point from which we can look at ourselves, reflect and learn together. Many of you have been here before, in business, visiting friends or simply been introduced to the city through literature, movies and TV. I do know that New York gives some people a sense of lurking danger. Let me assure you that you will be safe. I know the city very well and I will certainly not put you in places where you would be in harms way. The Gramercy Park Hotel will be our base. It is modest, homey and has an excellent down town location for our purposes. I will mail you a hotel brochure for details.

I have lived in this city for many years now. I believe it is, and I continue to marvel at the complexity and the richness that is to be found here. This time we will make a new journey into New York and use this experience to look at our own values, stereotypes and set ways. Thomas and I have started to talk about what we would like for you to be involved in that has some reference to both your own personal life as well as your professional life as a leader and manager.

We will invite guests to come and see us at the hotel and we will visit artists, poets, and some other interesting people in their homes and studios. Being with them will help us look at creativity, perseverance and leadership as an art and not a profession. We will also have some jobs to do that will hopefully provide a different experience than the job you are used to do. We might visit some friends of mine at Columbia University who are doing research in management and the new emerging organizational forms that require new attitudes and approaches. We will talk and dialogue, argue and discuss. I see these days as a vehicle to reflect, look at some frames in personal terms and gain some new insights into who you are and how you show up in this world. I am looking forward to this opportunity to be with you as Thomas and I will be your inner and outer guides for the week.

Sincerely,

Lars Cederholm

Ps. My word processor speaks no Swedish but I do.

The first evening we spend quite a bit of time setting the stage and making agreements. Lars and Thomas contract the leadership issue for the week and openly discuss the type of relationship they would like to have between them. We proceed to clarify expectations and making agreements between participants and between them and us. Here are the questions that we used to prepare for the dialogue concerning expectations and norms for the seminar week:

1. What is it that Lars and Thomas must do to make this week into a useful experience for us?
2. What could Lars and Thomas possibly do that would block or hinder our participation this week?
3. What are the already existing values and norms in MiPP 9 that we need to keep alive to make the best of this week?
4. Have we developed some habits or specific behavior in this program that we should get rid of so that we can maximize our learning experience?
5. We (or some of us) have started to develop an informal organization where we talk about what we really feel about things that have happened so far. What should our leaders know about the nature of this informal organization to understand how we are coming into this week?
6. What must we as participants contribute to get full value out of this week?
7. Individually and collectively – we need to give support to so that we can maximize opportunities for learning and growing.
8. We are not all in the same place coming to this learning experience. (Age, professional background, motivation, curiosity, willingness to experiment, past experience with similar events etc.) What is it that we must observe to support all of us to get the maximum benefit from this week?

9. Here are some feelings we have now that are important to acknowledge as we embark on this trip into a world we may not understand or know too much about!

Talking through these questions we manage to make our intentions for the week fairly transparent to each other. The participants let us know that they are willing to demonstrate courage, an open minded approach, sharing and listening. They make explicit that they want to stay open even in situations where fear and insecurity would push people to close up the minds and run back to what is familiar and comfortable. They ask us to be sensitive to pacing and not go so fast that reflection and learning will suffer. They want a foot on the brake available to all and everybody. Fair enough. At this point we both feel right there with them and ready to go. This will work! Thomas at this point generously starts to relax, lean back and let the participants into this different world with Lars in the driver's seat. Thomas takes the role of facilitator, reflector and conceptualizer. Lars is the host and director of the different steps leading ahead.

Clean up before going further

When people meet again they often bring left overs from past experiences with each other. It might be hope for another high, or it might be premonitions of another low, or resentment connected to unfinished business from the previous meeting. It seems almost impossible to start afresh with a team that has a history together. In this group it was important to bring the issues of last time to the group's attention, in order to enable all of us to be here and now.

In the group some issues remain from the last seminar that have left some questions and unpleasant memories for some. We ask the participants if there is anything in the informal MiPP organization (issues from the corridors) that we should know about in order to understand where they are at the moment. The dialogue that comes out is balanced. It is focused on learning and understanding rather than blaming and holding

the Program Director or the designers of the last seminar responsible for an unsatisfactory day during which the purpose and learning points failed to be really useful for the participants .

This kind of responsible approach confirmed that we are in a team of learners. Where the program staff and the participants have been able to establish an adult to adult relationship. After we finish talking, all express a sense of relief for not letting old stuff trail the program in the form of irritation and bitterness. This is in the spirit of our old basic conviction in MiL: there are few mistakes that are not opportunities for learning. Learning does not take place where blame or punishment reign.

And a few words about Swedish and US. culture

Before stepping into the hustle and bustle of New York we have a quick orientation of the City by Anna West, a photographer who is also the manager of Lars Cederholm's New York office. She has been supporting us in getting all complicated logistics under control.

We also revisit the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator taken by all participants at the start of the program. The participants are offered their own MBTI type descriptions to read. The purpose of this is in the line of a preparatory reminder: "Who am I as I look at, visit, and experience this unfamiliar place?"

In order to look at some differences besides the personality differences measured by the MBTI Lars talks about cultural differences briefly describing the Hofstede research on cultural value, particularly as it pertains to Swedes and Americans. This information is supplemented by examples and personal experiences from the participants some of whom are very well traveled. We also discuss the innumerable boundaries between us as individuals, teams, companies: age, gender, professional background and others.

We have a visit from Åke Almgren, one of ABB's top presidents in the US. He discusses the difference between Swedish and US managers. Some particularly interesting points he raises are the US managers' tendency for undifferentiated optimism, the political nature of action and why unsuspecting and problem oriented Swedish managers often have trouble finding their way in US organizations. He gives us a briefing about his industry in the face of US deregulation and his wisdom on how to put together high performing teams within ABB. Åke made a comment worth noting: "The main difference between the military and the private industries is that the military is not in a war but we are."

And now ... here is New York!!

Let's take a look at the city! Do you know where you are?! We give every one a subway map and ask them to organize themselves into four "exploration groups". The task is to go to four high-energy places: the New York Stock Exchange, Grand Central Station, World Trade Center and the Empire State Building. At their chosen destination they will spend time alone and with the group to answer the following type of questions:

- What energy is driving and ordering what you are observing?
- What are the formal elements that regulate the flow and traffic?
- How do you feel when you observe this place?
- What are the esthetic elements that you can see?
- What will this place look like in 50 years?

Out of the debrief in a fishbowl setting when the groups come back to our seminar room there are comments like: **How interesting it is to look and investigate together. *The group sees much more than the individual. (We create a new Swedish word, 'mer-seende' which literally means the groups' 'moresight'.) * I will do that again, ask questions to the view or the object I am*

*watching. * From now on travel will never be the same. It is amazing how much there is to see that I normally would not pay attention to! * When Mats told us what he has seen, I saw it too. * Now I don't need to go to the World Trade Center. I can see it in my mind's eye as you were telling us about your experience actually being there.*

We must have respect for how differently each of us will view the same situation. A farmer contemplating a piece of land may think of crops and harvesting, a soldier may think about places to hide.

Art as leadership, leadership in art

Two of Lars's New York artist friends have agreed to meet us in their studios. Jack Whitten, meets what catches his eye with his soul, transforming people and events into abstract renderings through his art-mind. Cris Gianakos adds beauty and interesting shapes to his environment with playful and strong, formal statements that are often tar black. We split into two groups and one group goes to Jack's studio while the other goes to Cris's. Both artists talk about all phenomena being different for each of us and help us understand that there is no recipe for making art. After two and a half hours of dialogue about the creative act, the artist's responsibility to himself and others, and the concepts of courage, motivation, vision, rewards, and creativity, one group goes to the Guggenheim Museum with Lars's painter friend, Chris de Boschnek, and the other group goes to the Museum of Modern Art with Lars and Cris Gianakos. The purpose is to look at art beyond the obvious and again to investigate concept like courage, motivation, visions, rewards, and creativity.

We now feel that leadership and art making have some close connections. Both of the artists that we visit lead us into widening and deepening our perceptions and minds. We see that they do not merely reproduce the world, but turn it into forms of beauty. They attempt to show new aspects of the obvious that would remain hidden without

their guidance. It is as if they are creating a world beyond the obvious for us to see. Good business leadership could perhaps be said to be artistic in the sense that it organizes complexities of facts and information into pictures, visions, and goals, thus creating meaning and opening up fields for action.

Here are some comments from when we integrate our learning after the visits:

** The importance of bringing the whole person and enthusiasm to the task of making art is obvious. * It is important to take in everything, not just the object but all the environment around. Perception needs cultivation. Artists seem to do it and we must too! * I had prejudices about what an artist is, the free bohemian with very little structure. That is different for me now. Cris has a very tight system and is running a business, but he can allow himself to be loose and creative at the same time. * Jack said: Art is actuality, not moods or romanticism. * Pay attention to the light, not the dark! * Cris has a great sense of balance between space and objects, his studio and home testify to that. * In the artist's studio I discovered my own artistic vein and I don't know what to do with it just yet. * Jack is so upbeat and yet his pictures are all about such horror, perhaps art is a therapy. * Jack said that art is always a threat to fundamentalism, artists must look at nuances and not extremes. Perhaps we too can look with more nuances. * I know this is really important to me but how can I tell my boss and colleagues that we are spending our time like this in a management development program?*

Courage, leadership, creativity and vision in the mind of a Tibetan Buddhist

Since this seminar week has the purpose to climb out of the box and increase our capacity to take in more information we all go to visit the studio of Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche, one of Lars's two Tibetan teachers. Not very far from the hotel, a regular apartment building, on the eighth floor. We all leave our shoes in the corridor

and squeeze ourselves into a small apartment or studio, with kitchen and living room all in one module. There is barely space for all of us. We sit in rows tightly packed together on the floor on cushions and small mats. There are lots of flowers, including the bouquet that Lars brings as a gift from us all. Stacks of Tibetan sacred books lean on the walls. Hanging from the walls are Tibetan Thangka paintings, illustrations of the lives of different Buddhas. A regular apartment, and yet so different.

On a couch sits the lama, the teacher, who starts by telling us about the fundamentals of Buddhism. He lectures on the value of letting go of dependencies, on getting rid of clinging, attachments, envy, anger, and hatred, and on being comfortable with inevitable change. "Love is beauty and harmony", he says, "If you give, then try to give with your heart without expectations of getting something back". We ask about Buddhism and business, about the role of love in a seemingly heartless world, about courage, about life and death, and about anger and the role of Karma in Buddhist philosophy.

Afterwards, when reflecting on the meeting with the Lama some of the comments are:

** Such a different place, objects, paintings of different Buddhas, all of us sitting on the floor, the unexpected dog that walked in ... hard to keep my mind on the discussion when taking in this very different environment at the same time. * The sense of love and care was really pervasive. * I am curious to know more. We must increase our social competence in areas of philosophy and new concepts to be good leaders!*

** His sense of being relaxed and present made me think of my stress and my full appointment book. I must find more space for myself. * Again I see the importance of working from vision - strong, convincing and so hard to get to. * I learned something about anger and how to stop meeting anger with anger. * This is so exciting. Imagine me sitting and talking about leadership with a Tibetan Buddhist! I would never dream of such a thing happening to me.*

Again, these are a few comments to give a flavor of a couple of hours of being in the presence of a person who is non judgmental and completely present for us. An important reason for this unusual meeting between a Tibetan lama and a group of Swedish leaders is to investigate what we can all learn about different dimensions of leadership from Buddhist concepts. Even more important is to have the experience of meeting someone who is utterly present now. When Lars mentions this remarkable and unusual presence, it is noted as true for many in the group. So hard to see and understand, even when manifested right there in front of us.

Working with anger

Just by chance an incident occurs which becomes an important subject among the participants and one of the situations which will be part of the group's memory. When recalled, the situation will induce smiles of recognition and pondering of how serendipity brings wisdom into our path.

Just at the moment when Khenpo Tsewang is developing his thoughts on anger and its consequences, on the importance of purifying and transforming anger into love and kindness, the door opens without any knocking, a woman steps in – with her shoes on – and starts noisily unpacking three or four bags of groceries, putting stuff in cupboards, drawers, and the refrigerator. There is no way for us to hear what the teacher is saying, so after a while he asks her with a mild voice to wait, to attend to the unpacking later and please sit down with us until we are finished. "You said four o'clock!" she insists with anger in her voice. "Please", says the lama, "sit down".

The woman sits down on the floor with us. Our talk resumes and after a short while a humming is heard in the background. It becomes louder and louder. We realize that she is saying mantras - with her eyes closed. Soon the noise is too loud and again the lama turns to her: "Please go and do your mantras in the next room". She leaves, goes into the apartment's bedroom and resumes her loud saying of her prayers. The sound is

dominating the room and interferes with the rest of the interview.

When we are leaving the lama, Lars confides to the rest of us that this kind of incident is not unusual. "This woman has a tendency to create noise and confusion in many of our meetings". So we ask: "Why don't you do something? Why doesn't any one reprimand her? Why don't you get angry? Why don't people kick her out?" Lars' answer is lucid: "She is a kind of gift to help us clearly see our anger. In that way she is also a teacher, and you should respect your teachers".

Three organizations with soul

What is it like to be in an organization in which people work with their hearts and minds, in which the driving forces come from a conviction that they are doing the right thing, in which personal values are in alignment with those of the organization? Equipped with this question we disperse into three groups and go on expeditions to three different organizations that have impressed Lars.

We visit Bank Street College from which a breed of teachers and principals leave with an educational model centered around the child; Learning takes place most effectively when the whole system is engaged. People that come out of Bank Street have a very clear foundation for their terms of engagement as educators. What is really behind that conviction?

The Bellevue Hospital Emergency Room deals with the worse imaginable horror, shootings, knifings, car crashes, etc. In the midst of it all people are engaged and seem to love their work. Why?

The Bronx New School is a consensus driven, flat organization run by parents, teachers, and principal. People who work in the school are involved body and soul in their jobs as educators and in shaping the school and its philosophy. How did this happen?

Before going out, Lars and Thomas talk to the whole group about models for understanding complex systems, and consulting skills. How do we cross boundaries and enter a client organization to ensure a productive encounter, a fruitful client/consultant relationship? Our purpose is to find the soul and give our host organizations some feedback. All groups use a diagnostic model to make sense of all our impressions. We look at leadership, goals and visions, rewards, relationships, structures, the environment, and helpful supporting mechanisms. We talk in groups, we make individual interviews, we reflect. The engagement between these organizations and us is spirited and mutually beneficial. We make many observations that are useful, and we can see the benefit of our outsider perspective to the three organizations.

More of the unknown

The evening is spent in yet another setting. The teams eventually meet at Sylvia's, a soul food restaurant in the heart of Harlem. We got there on foot, by taxi or by subway to a station just a block away. This is Wednesday night and really the first evening with genuine American food on the table. Sunday was Italian cooking with opera singing included, Monday was Indian food four blocks away from the hotel, and Tuesday was Chinese in a Chinatown restaurant. Now we devour corn on the cob, mashed potatoes, spare ribs, southern fried chicken with all kinds of sweet sauces. To top it off we had big pieces of cake with the coffee. The drink before dinner was Swedish absolute vodka on the rocks in a cognac snifter... a nostalgic reminder of a world we know. Dinner is followed by amateur night at the nearby famous Apollo Theater. Here African American talents in music and show business have a chance to meet a big audience for the first time – with or without mercy. We go there to be entertained but also to have a profound cultural experience and to reflect on the concept of feedback. The performers who pleased were carried to the skies and those who did not live up to expectations were booed off the stage with what seemed like a devastating cruelty.

Thursday morning we are back at our camp, the ring of chairs where we have collected and contained our feelings and learnings up until now. Here are some of our reflections:

** The team is so important. When we trust and are open to each other, there is no end to how we can help each other see and experience. *I have to start forming my own opinion before I begin to push clichés on what I am experiencing. *I was scared to go to Harlem because of everything I have heard. That fear is gone now. *I will start doing a reflection session ever so often when I get back to my organization. *I have to stop trying to change everything to my liking. I must start living with the world in a more open and accepting way! * Our team is able to be superficial and just have fun and we can go deep too. It is not either/or, it's really possible to do both. * Spirit in an organization is clearly what makes structure work. * I am perplexed that the people in Bronx, a dirty, poor and run down neighborhood, can create such a happy place in the midst of it all. The same is true of the emergency room. It is the spirit that counts, not the environment. * This is great, but how do we keep the spirit going? * I believe we can find the spirit of our own organization. We just have to go and find it.. it is really possible!*

What is Just In Time Learning – JITL?

In MiL we believe that the best learning takes place when our whole person, body and mind, is involved in solving a problem or taking advantage of an opportunity. Scheduling a learning experience so tight that there is no time to discuss theory is simply not appropriate. Particularly not when there is a craving for concepts and related learning based on a perceived need. This is when you are really open to learn relevant theory besides the one formulated from your own experience. When you are in a conflict situation you will want to know how to handle that conflict. Or, when you really need to give feedback you want to know what the theory says about it. A professor

once said, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory." ARL would add: "when the teaching of that theory is synchronized with a related experience."

After our reflection session, we spend Thursday morning on theoretical issues relevant to our experiences so far. We talk about working in teams. We talk about extracting the skills and knowledge already in the group, and we also discuss group dynamics theory and skills, and characteristics of high performing teams. We spent time setting up agreements in the project teams on how to handle the group process in each one of the project teams. This is a good time for JITL and in fact many participants are asking for more. Some folks mention how beneficial this session would have been if presented earlier in the program. This is an old MiL discussion. When is the right time?

A visit to the fortress of knowledge

Thursday afternoon we go to Columbia University, Teachers College to talk to Professor Victoria Marsick, an old friend of ours and MiL. She is the Chair Person of the Department of Adult Education and has done extensive research on learning organizations in the US and in Sweden with MiL. Victoria is one of the leading US academics who has studied and written about ARL as a pedagogical approach for executive and organizational development. Another friend and colleague, Professor Lyle Yorks, Chairperson of the Business School at the University of Connecticut, joins Victoria to help us bring clarity to the idea of the learning organization and what leaders do now and will do in the future. Lyle spent weeks observing the Grace Cocoa Global Leadership Forum (where Lars has been the lead consultant) and related interventions, in order to research the effect of an ARL change process and the extent to which learning took place in that particular company. This day he comes to help us look at the results.

We talk about downsizing and outsourcing, about leading the core company. Our participants ask questions such as:

** How can we maintain a great spirit in a spirited organization? * How do we get those on board who are not yet committed to participate in the learning organization? * How do we match experience with theory?*

Victoria gives us several examples of studies she has made to illustrate when organizational learning takes place. She talks about job security and loyalty, the alignment of learning with corporate needs, about Intranet, a model for unstructured information gathering, and about how learning has to be greater than or equal to the rate of change for an organization to survive. Lyle talks about what leaders do and the kind of skills they need: technical skills (how the business operates), conceptual skills (the ability to lift oneself from the specific to the general), and interpersonal skills (ability to form productive work relationships), and the interplay between core executives, free agents, and outsourced functions.

It is often not easy to come into an ARL program and lecture, but on reflection we all feel that the time spent with Victoria and Lyle is well timed and highly productive. One of the participants suggests that we must find new ways of measuring the social realities of our organizations. In fact, he is going to go home and do it. These two scholars may have influenced the lives of thousands of Swedes on this day.

Working with the next generation and more ...

We do many other things this week. It is obvious that there is a hunger to better understand the project teams as well as the back home teams so we have many interesting dialogues on teamwork and team development, how to handle difficult team members, how to sustain enthusiasm, consensus building, and on and on. We spend nearly all waking moments in the learning community, in order to create a dialogue around observations of ourselves through

individual and collective experiences. Then there is shopping to do in the city. We entertain each other and get deeper into our relationships during long dinners. Some of us go to late evening jazz clubs in the Greenwich Village, while some end up at the Rainbow Room on top of Rockefeller Center for a late drink. All grist for the mill.

For a last day dialogue, we invite Willow, Tom and Andrew, three intelligent and reflective persons in their mid to late twenties, to explore cross generation assumptions, yet another boundary that we all live with in various degrees. How can we create productive work relationships between us? It is amazing to both of us leading the seminar how little we actually sit down to listen and talk with each other. Here is a quick sketch of that encounter:

The older generation believes:

** that the young managers will give up too easily.. not stay with it * that they do not accept authority yet are not willing to directly confront it * that they really do not trust us in the older generation * that they have turned their back on the political and social structures of our societies including the family as a basic concept * that the younger generation seem selfish and individualistic and perhaps even hedonistic.*

Our young guests agree with many of our assumptions and add:

** Do not confuse individualism with selfishness. * We are very compassionate, we believe in a good government but not in the one we see presently. * We must find new models and we must find new ways of taking care of some of the victims of our society. * The younger generation is suspicious of our hierarchies and manipulation of power, our mistakes around ecology and human relations including the collapse of marriage as a base institution of society. * Most of the young are not willing to work in our "smoke stacks" and are aiming to create new jobs and their own world. * The younger generation also has a leg up on the older generation when it comes to the use of information technology.*

After listing our mutual stereotypes, we go into three groups to talk over the differences and what really lie behind them. The last twenty minutes we extract our learnings and we all agree that this sharing is truly important and worthwhile. We agree that this kind of encounter is something important to reproduce back home in our companies to get a better hold on how we can create viable and meaningful organizations for our younger workers and managers.

Raccoon principle of learning

From the leaders and designers point of view, these seminars are difficult programs to pull off with substance and integrity. Timing and schedule are important. So many people are dependent on us, as we notice when we are late to an appointment. The people involved must understand and be committed to our growth and learning. As leaders of the week, we must balance between tourism and the inner and outer journey that fits the purposes. We ourselves must be what this week is about being: open, reflective, patient, and full of insights. At the last reflection session, after summing up all of our impressions the subject of the leadership of this seminar week comes up and one of the participant says:

** After the first day I had my doubts about the two of you being able to direct this week together. You seemed to belong to two completely different schools of learning and leading. Now at the end I see you have developed into a real radar couple!*

We want to hand it to the participants in MiPP. They really opened their minds. They took a trip into a deep place, they confronted themselves and each other in a caring and loving way. The results are impressive. With New York City as food for thought, reflection, and learning, the participants have consumed this large table of dishes the raccoon way: this animal eats everything and then spits out everything it does not need!

As one of the participants summed up the week in New York:

**In the past I have put restrictions on what I need to see to make sense of situations I am facing. This week has demonstrated to me that I am able to take in much more data without overwhelming myself and come out of it with a better and more solid decision. To do this I need other people with whom I must have solid and trusting relationships. I am not sure how to say this, but it feels like some kind of freedom!*

MiL Concepts

- 1/1996 Lennart Rohlin et. al.:
**What do we mean by
Action Reflection Learning
and other short articles**
- 2/1996 Lars Cederholm and Thomas Sewerin:
**Out of the box
MiL Partner Program in New York City**
- 3/1996 Lennart Rohlin:
Project work in MiL

MiL
INSTITUTE

MiL • Vasbyholm • S-240 10 Dalby • Tel: + 46 46 552 00 • Fax: +46 46 551 20
e-mail: Info@milinstitute.se

