

UBUNTU/IMBIZO

Gather in a circle/ grow together

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Foreword

This is the story about a group of young South African men and woman from seven tribes who came together to learn about the leader within and how to interact with the white corporate world in South Africa. It is about how they listened to their inner voices and opened the doors to each other's stories and secrets. It is a story about the promise of black leaders for South Africa, about hope and a possible future in kindness and harmony among ethnic groups and races who have everything to win by creating true democracy for all the people. It is a book that describes a model for development that can be applied and modified to suit the needs of the people of this wonderful and challenging creation of the post apartheid South Africa

It is also a story about the relationship between and father and a son working together.

The road to South Africa

In May 2002 I attended a conference at Gibs Business School in Johannesburg. This was the second time I participated in the global network called "Business Driven Action Learning". The year before we had met in Melbourne, Australia where I had been asked to present a book chapter and some thoughts on the relationships between Action Reflection Learning and Tibetan Buddhism. After listening to my presentation, the president of Gibs, Nick Binedell extended an invitation for me to engage students in his Executive MBA program in connection with the conference in 2002. This invitation plus a strong curiosity to understand the forces working for and against the creation of a stable and peaceful nation in the wake of apartheid helped me to make up my mind to go Johannesburg. Nick Binedell who was hosting he Johannesburg conference at the Gibs campus was an enthusiastic voice

of the post apartheid South Africa. He let us know that very strong forces in the different political and ethnic groups were focusing on building a new and great nation beyond racial and economic divides. He said: *"If we focus on what we have done to each other in the past we will never be able to build the new nation. I can understand that white South Africans have emigrated. What is harder for me to understand are those white people who have stayed on but emigrated in their minds. The good news are that we are a critical mass of people who see opportunities and possibilities to heal our country and create a wider base of participation and prosperity for all South Africans"*

I decided to see for my self what these forces looked like. In the past I had participated in consulting work in the Soviet Union and in East Germany a few months after the fall of the Berlin wall. I knew from first hand experience how difficult it is to change deep patterns in the minds and souls of people who have looked at the world through lenses of strong ideologies and the oppression of free exchange of ideas and information. If South Africa can create a new and fair society in spite of what seemed to me like very bad odds, then there was certainly hope for the rest of the world where people have been divided and raging against each other for generations. Mandela who had all the reasons in the world to harbor anger and bitterness had made a great example of himself to show the way to forgiveness. He had made a genuine invitation to all South Africans to build the country together. The truth and reconciliation hearings let people tell horror stories about what they had done during apartheid and then let them go in peace, thus ending the spiral and violence and revenge. From afar I could not help but being impressed by the example of the Mandela government including the most far-reaching constitution in modern times. The rest of the world was wishing the country well and appeared to be in support of its ideals, economy and infrastructure in active ways

Cida City Campus

As a part of the conference program in Johannesburg, a small group of organizational development consultants and academics visited CIDA

City Campus in downtown Johannesburg for an afternoon. This encounter made a deep impression on all of us. Here was a free University, which offered education to young, gifted black students from townships and farming communities hailing from all over South Africa. All the Cida students had economic hardship in common and Cida was making use of novel ideas and principles to open the doors to these youngsters to participate in the new, emerging South African nation. The challenge Cida had taken on was to deliver good business education at a fraction of the cost of a more traditional university.

We were told that the students took part in running the Campus. and were responsible for cooking, cleaning, security, parts of the administration, computer maintenance and so forth. The teachers were a steady stream of volunteers from business and consultancies representing all kinds of functional business expertise. They lectured over TV monitors and could simultaneously teach thousands of students. The students were sitting in small groups all over campus and facilitators were leading reflection and discussion in each group. Every afternoon, the whole campus fell into absolute stillness when the students meditated. Taddy Blecher, the president and founder of CIDA, was charismatic and convincing in explaining his mission to create opportunities for these young people to participate in the development of the nation. He also had a strong conviction that meditation could create a higher consciousness, which would not only improve academic achievement but also benefit the whole country. He was a man with great dreams and an impressive track record. In addition to the business curriculum and academic achievements, Cida students had proven themselves outstanding athletes winning all kinds of first prizes in cricket, soccer, track etcetera. Taddy certainly had attracted the attention of the top politicians and the business community of South Africa. He received a steady stream of invitations to tell the Cida story and had been a guest at such prestigious places as the Economic Forum in Davos and the Lord Mayor of London to talk about the good news and give hope to the world that some experiments were under way which were truly encouraging in bringing support to the economically under developed world with low cost models for education. A stream of well-

known people had come to CIDA to understand the "miracle" and things seemed to have taken a momentum of its own. Money and resources kept coming to Cida in the form of buildings, computers, books, volunteers, and famous guest speakers and so forth. President Mbeki had made a shining example of Cida in a public speech and the Cida board contained an impressive list of important South Africans.

The main campus is presently housed in a former head office of one of the major South African banks, which had relocated to a more rural and suburban part of Johannesburg. Cida received the whole building as a contribution to this effort, which the bank board felt, represented a new hope for the country. The whole thing truly looked like a spiral to heaven.

After Taddy Blecher and some of the students had finished the tour of the campus and given some heartfelt presentations, we were asked to come up with our thoughts and ideas on how the campus could continue the academic success and to increase the capacity to double and triple the enrollment from the present level of 1600 students. When we were about to leave, Taddy approached me with an invitation for dinner. The reason was that I had made some comments regarding an opportunity to mix the academic teaching approach with an action learning strategy. During a long dinner the following evening we came up with some ideas for a pilot program based on my long experience with Action learning (ARL) programs in the US and at the MiL Institute in Sweden. I would volunteer my time, Cida would pay my travel experience and together we would find South African learning coaches for the pilot program. The idea was to get sponsoring companies and organizations to give us four or five fairly high-level strategic business challenges to be tackled by teams. Cida management would be responsible to select about 24 high performers from the fourth year students and we would design and facilitate a fourmodule program stretched over three or four months. The participants would be divided into project teams, each with a learning coach. The participating companies would assign a client or project host to support and open doors for the teams. My own role would be to train

the staff in facilitation skills and to pay attention to the emerging curiosity of the participants and teach theory to the questions as the project work unfolded. The name of the program would be: "Unlocking leadership potential" After the program we would evaluate the results and Cida would look for new ways of integrating Action Reflection Learning (ARL) into the curriculum. We were both excited and promised each other success. When I told Taddy that this kind of approach was used for seasoned managers who needed to lift themselves from managing a business function to leading across functions he became even more enthusiastic. The idea to be in the avant guard seemed to appeal to him.

In a typical open MiL program the participants have 6 to 10 years of managerial experience in some function and most often they have their own profit and loss responsibility. As far as I knew, this would be the first time that anyone used the model on young, black disadvantaged students with no real, hands on business experience. In my mind the opportunity would bring these young black men and women into a white world of which they only had some theoretical knowledge. My own interest was to speed up the learning curve and assess the outcomes for future applications. South Africa seemed to me to be an ideal place for such a bold experiment since the successful integration of the black majority in the predominantly white companies is an absolute must for the peaceful development of the nation. My conversations with black and white business leaders had given me hope for the future since everybody seemed clear about the urgency. Nick Binedell at Gibs was very supportive of the idea and he was on the Cida board. Most people I met felt hopeful, even though the road ahead is neither well paved nor is it predictable. Here was an obvious chance for me to add my little straw to the anthill.

Chapter one

Building the program

Back home, which was New York City, I started to work on a proposal (appendix 1) for the program. A person at Cida, Michelle Jacobs, was assigned by Taddy Blecher to be my partner with the mission to prepare the ground for a first design and teambuilding workshop with the program staff. A flurry of e-mails was exchanged and things started to come together, or so I thought. From Cida a group of five learning coaches/program staff were supposed to come together in Johannesburg to explore the possibilities and the context and come up with base from which to launch the program. The first staff meeting would have to be a sharpening of the purpose and relevance for Cida and for the students, clear expectations and a sense of common ownership for the basic structure of the program modules, clear roles and responsibilities. In addition, I was beginning to have my doubts about how much I would be able to involve Taddy Belcher. He was extremely busy, always on the go, and had not responded to my e-mails. He was often out in the world raising funds and support for Coda. Compared to his boundless enthusiasm he had demonstrated during our first dinner meeting, I was increasingly surprised how far away he was when I wanted the partnership between him and me to stand on solid footing. I was well aware of how important it would be for him to follow the program so he could be part of and take ownership for the outcome, which would most likely be a group of empowered, and enthusiastic students with a taste for change.

In the beginning of October of 2002 I packed my bags and flew to Johannesburg to build the foundation for the program.

Throughout the book I will make quotations from my personal diary. These entries are not written with anybody but myself in mind. I will make a few editorial clarifications but in essence the texts remain intact.

In a few cases I have protected the identity of some of the people in and around the program.

Below is an excerpt from my personal diary:

I am back in Africa and my interest is perked. Michelle met me at the airport. She asked me on the phone to recognize her without having any description of how she would look. I did recognize her for some reason. Her head was (almost) shaven and she was wearing a very hip and modern outfit. In contrast to her outfit she appeared business like and to the point. The first thing she told me was that four of the six facilitators had pulled out during the last couple of days. All of them were victims of circumstances. This morning she had received a call that one of the reserves had also pulled out. What to do now?? I am challenged and have to think on my feet. What a start! I wonder how all this can be turned into an opportunity. It surely does not feel good right now.

I have flashbacks to India, East Germany, Vietnam, The Soviet Union and schoolwork in the Bronx in NY City. " I have been in unexpected and tight spots before and this one looks and feels gloomy to me. I suddenly remember how hopeless I felt during one such event which took place in 1990 when standing in front of one hundred key stakeholders in a Soviet science research town, which had gone utterly and completely bankrupt when the Soviet government declared that 95% of the funding was withdrawn and they were on their own. I suddenly became aware that they had hopes that the answer somehow rested with me, the "foreign expert" The honest clarification who you are in each professional situation is a key to faster implementation. Michelle was looking at me for answers on how to handle this crisis.

Cida is located in the very center of Johannesburg in a modern high-rise once belonging to a large South /African bank. Taddy came out to meet me in the reception and was falling all over me how wonderful this would all be. The facts that the whole ARL

program seemed to be falling apart from the word go did not seem to face him in the least. No excuses for remaining incommunicado. No mention of the situation with absent learning coaches. Just a string of comments on how excited he was that this program would now begin. A lovely young lady, Leigh Meinert who is a Cida staff person came to meet me and she wanted to come along to make sure that our program ideas would fit into other Cida initiatives of which there seem to be many. Leigh will probably be a great guide to help me understand Cida. Marti, (a great and smart woman who had been to my workshop at Gibs) had showed an interest in participating in the program and she was now a part of the staff. She is a professional coach and perhaps she will have a tough time to change to the particular skills needed here. She seems willing to explore the particular approaches that I have in mind. Michelle remains cautious in terms of her participation. We have no black facilitator. That is definitely not acceptable. What would be the message to the participants? On a whim I called Lackson, the wonderful receptionist at Illovo Lodge (Gibs campus). My impression of him was very favorable after some good and interesting talk during my last visit to Johannesburg. He is an accountant by training, which may not be the most obvious background for a learning coach. He has a kind heart, a good sense of humor and the right attitude and that adds up to 90 % of everything. If I pay special attention to him he can learn on the job. I can sense a firm and strong person behind his sweet emanation. In the past he was very interested in understanding the program. He called me right back after ten minutes, packed his bags and showed up an hour later having cleared this opportunity with his boss. A senior Cida student listening to the name Siphawe, came up to me at the reception and asked if he could be part of the program staff and I said yes without having any idea who this man is or what he can do. This is improvisation!! We were going to a retreat lodge (Naledi) about 30 km out of Johannesburg. Michelle just received a call from Jane, the caretaker at the Naledi Lodge, that she can only accept four persons (we are six) and she was

annoyed that we had not yet arrived. And here I was juggling things around at the Cida reception. By the way, I learned from Taddy that we have invited a group of Cida students to come along for the day since we have the opportunity to meet with Credo Mutwa Baba (a Sangoma or story teller, healer and writer and the custodian of Zulu tribal history) People tell me that he is a South African national treasure and it is a great honor to be in his presence. I am getting anxious since we don't have much time to bring things together but.... go with the flow. Credo Mutwa Baba is meant to be. Who knows what will turn up? After getting lost a few times trying to find our way to Naledi, we spent two hours coughing in his kraal full of dense smoke and listening to him telling stories from the Zulu tradition, mostly heroic, dreamlike tales of struggles against the evil white man. For the first time I really felt stereotyped as a white man and got the feeling what black Africans must have felt during apartheid. Ouch!! Ouch!! Is there some message for me here? Indeed an interesting and painful initiation to race relationships.

Anna (my wife who had come along for the experience) had been asked a month ago by Michelle to give a two-day painting workshop. She had made careful preparations and specified what material she would need. Now this arrangement had been changed to two hours spread out over two days. This is all about going along and recreate. Work with what is. When Anna came to the class the person responsible for the paint, brushes and canvases, had probably left town and could not be found. He had everything safely locked up and no one had extra keys. Anna asked the students what they felt they could do in a painting class without any material. The students enthusiastically suggested that they could imagine the colors and make drawings and then the color could come later. The class turned out to be wonderful and Anna was full of awe of these creative young folks. Anna's feedback to me was that these were wonderful, soft and patient people with

alert minds and great imagination. She thought that our leadership program would do well.

Naledi Lodge

Once we had settled in at Naledi, I was curious to learn what was behind the lack of organization at Cida. Leigh was helpful in explaining Cida based on her experience of being on the inside. She was close to Taddy and the Cida management. Michelle who was a part time consultant engaged for special projects also knew what it was like to work different parts of the system. Siphawe, the oldest student at Cida played the role of representing the student voices. Later it turned out that Siphawe was viewed by the other students, both as part of the management and part of the student body, which created some interesting dynamics since he ended up as a participant in the actual program. Marti had been a volunteer at Cida teaching Mathematics and she could tell stories about what life as a volunteer was like for her and other people she knew. As I listened to the stories and perceptions of how strangely adhocratic Cida is I could lift my projections that the resistance to respond to my emails and calls had something to do with my energy and approach. My store of frustration was in no way unique. Cida had a reputation of being unorganized and was hiding this fact behind the fig leaf called "The Department of Miracles" where Tom Peters was the appointed chairperson

Lackson, the total outsider, helped us set some background to the puzzle in the context of black African culture. Throughout the program, Lackson often played the role of my culture guide when I was unsure of what was going on beyond the obvious.

We did the usual getting to know each other. Strengths and weaknesses both in our personal lives as well as in our roles as professionals were laid out, our hopes and expectations and what we were standing for in terms of our professional and personal choices in life. I discussed my vision for the program and sketched a bit of my own back ground in humanistic psychology and my work as a Gestalt trained consultant. I

spent some time discussing what I had been learning in my 20 plus years of experience as an educator in running activities in and around action learning programs aimed at executives in the corporate and public sector. I also gave some background of the MiL Institute in Sweden and its pedagogical view for. (Appendix, MiL Institute

I told everybody the basics of how a typical ARL program can be built and pointed out that, both the staff and later the participants were expected to have input and suggest changes. What needed to stand firm were the basic principles of ARL; the program had to be based on teamwork on real projects, using learning coaches to help the participants reflect on the experience both from content as well as a process point of view. It was also important to me that we were thinking of the students as participants since we were moving from a teaching model to a learner centered model where every individual's participation was the key to success. We also surfaced some of our concerns around commitment, funds, and active support from Cida management. Since it is hard to understand the ARL model without having personal experience, I spent some time preparing us to live with ambiguity and uncertainty. We needed to plan but we also had to get used to the idea that a lot would have to be made up as we go along. Since I was in very unknown territory it was even more important not to get overly planned in terms of what to do and how to do it. One of my own worries was my lack of understanding of the different tribal cultures and what limitations and forces would be at work in implementing this kind of program, which would focus on the active involvement, and curiosity of the learner. I did have some assumptions about black African culture as being informed by hierarchy and collective sense of responsibility based on harmony and conflict avoidance.

Because of my contacts with Gibs I had already discussed the possibility to have Gibs audit our program to get an independent assessment of the quality of the effort. My own role would be to design the modules, look for opportunities to teach relevant theory and coach the project learning coaches.

We discussed the vision and we all agreed that Cida was standing for hope for the future and that the ARL approach would be a positive influence on Cida's educational philosophy. We could start the process of developing agents for change and perhaps increase the possibility for Cida to turn out a new group of leaders who have an entrepreneurial mindset, who can help themselves and others to develop positive attitudes and skills. We were hoping to turn out people with confidence based on a positive view of the human potential and a true passion to be of help in building the emerging South African society.

We discussed what kind of role models we would have to be in being the leaders of the program but also active learners together with the participants. It would be important to be transparent in terms of design choices and give and receive honest feedback in order to continuously improve our performance.

From my diary:

We made the introductions. This is an interesting and predictable beginning when we all say what we want each other to hear. We look good, we connect and we show each other all our good will and good intentions. Things have been going very well as long as we have been staying on the level of lofty visions but I notice more of a hesitation when we are moving into the action part of preparing for the program. Michelle is pulling out of the role to be the program director between now and the program start. I wonder why? Siphwe seems to be the only one left and he wants the job but he is making excuses that he has too much on his plate. When Marti and Leigh promised to support him, he seemed a little calmer and accepted with tears and gratitude. Later in the day Michelle got into a second wind when she discovered that the ARL program could become the start of a new venture called Cida consulting. I wonder about her. She has very good intentions but some of her jargon I recognize from idealistic new age circles in the US. We are all happy with Lackson and his soft ways. Marti is like a rock and she will be a strong force to make the program

happen. Leigh is like a shining light and a voice of hope and possibilities. She is the best guide to the world of Cida. Today we all took a nature walk and I took the opportunity to walk with Michelle. We both opened up a bit to each other. She comes from a tough upbringing and she deserves more compassion than I have been able to give her.

After three long Naledi days we all went back to Johannesburg to meet with Taddy Blecher. The way we choose to make the presentation to him was to sit in a circle and, without rehearsal, discuss our ideas for the program, resources and support and everything else it would take to get started. The enthusiasm in the circle was contagious. Taddy was invited to sit and listen on the outside of the circle and make note of any question he might have. He was making copious notes and responded with his unconditional support and a promise to go out and recruit companies who would give us projects for the program. For reasons not clear to me he is insisting on the program starting in May instead of February as we had planned. Now I have to get the dates nailed down and rearrange my calendar.

On the Porch of Edeni Wilderness lodge

After the staff preparation, Anna and I went on a Safari in and around the Krueger Park. Here are some entries to give some African background

In the middle of the wilderness we are not too far from the place where the first humanoid stood up and looked over the savanna. It is probably safe to say that human consciousness started its evolution about here. This is as good a place as any to diminish the gap between man and nature. Our trekker, Robert, is helping us understand nature and makes the invisible visible. Not a trace of routine guide talk. He seems fully present to us and the nature and wildlife around us. He comes from a long lineage of trekkers and talks about nature and the animals with respect and natural love. Today he showed us how people survive in the

wilderness; thought us how to read what kinds of animals have been around the water whole by reading (and smelling) the different kinds of dung. Gun in hand he showed us how to read the ground and the bushes for small traces and evidence of different animals. We also learned to make fire with sticks and dry elephant dung and to make simple and effective bird traps in case we ever got lost in nature. During the walk, Robert was very careful in instructing us how to behave if lions would confront us. "Stay still, don't turn around and don't run. The lion will roar and throw dirt on you face with its paws. Close you eyes but don't move"! I listened carefully since I had heard that lions in the area have become used to killing and eating refugees from Mozambique who venture to cross the border on foot.

Since I am interested in how communities are built, I asked Robert to show and tell us about termites, the master architects of air-conditioned large constructions. Using long thin sticks he poked around in the mound and pulled out dozens of termites every time. He helped himself to a healthy serving of termites right from the termite mound and offered me to eat some, which I politely declined. I told him that I had seen a film about chimpanzees doing the same thing in nature. The argument was that these primates were capable of constructive thinking in using tools as extensions of themselves. Robert replied that the chimps had learned this through watching and copying humans eating termites. He seemed very sure of this assertion.

The animals can no longer roam the world but it is in everybody's interest that we maintain enough of this natural habitat to give people a chance to at least imagine where we all have come from. When we realize the connection and care for all living things it may be easier to care about each other. All the black people I have met here in South Africa seem very calm, kind and together. The warm smiles and easy laughter is never far away. Robert is not an exception.

I am very curious how all these people of South Africa will manage the complexity of their relationships; Boers, Anglos, Asians, Cape colored, 48 different indigenous tribes, some stronger and more dominant than others and, on top of everything else, a steady influx of refugees and

illegal immigrant from other African countries, predominantly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique but also from the Congo and many West African nations. Formally segregation is over in South Africa, now replaced by one of the most modern and progressive constitutions on this planet but in effect the economic segregation is still in striking evidence. It is enough to travel between Sowetho and the white neighborhoods of Johannesburg to realize what some of the challenges ahead will be. People are looking for hope and Cida offers hope. What we are going to do will have a chance to make a difference. I am bursting with anticipation to pull my straw to the hill and I am convinced that we will make a difference here.

Dinner with some Cida Students

Before going back to Sweden from Johannesburg, Anna and I had made an appointment with a group of eight of the four year students from Cida to go out and have dinner and talk. I wanted to get to know them a bit better and was curious to test some assumptions on which the program could be built. We shared a simple meal and a lovely soft evening and I was asking many questions. Again some notes and quotes from my diary relevant to the people we would be working with in the program.

If my brother back in my village dies it is my duty to go back and marry his widow.

In my village we all sit around for meals and we all eat from the same pot. Often we gather around the fire and my grandmother will be telling stories. I miss this time with my family.

Every day we went to school. The teacher had a small black board and he had had the only book. He was reading to us and we would repeat and write words on the blackboard.

At Cida I am being trained to be an accountant. My dream however is to go back to my village and take care of the orphan victims of Aids.

At school we have learned to speak each other's languages. When we started at Cida we could hardly speak English let alone Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and all the other tribal languages.

The first year at Cida many of us were sleeping on the streets. Most of us really had to struggle to get this education.

Many of us have made a promise to go back and help the villages and townships where we are coming from

Where did the partnership go?

Back in my office in New York I was again sending a revised and fairly lengthy proposal to Taddy Blecher laying out the basic structure and the promise of the program (appendix #). Again, I was sending email after email requesting a confirmation of the structure and the expense budget (my own time was a gift from me to Cida) and, to my great astonishment, neither Siphwiwe, the in-house Cida coordinator or Taddy responded. A few times I called and got no response in return. Through my back channels I was learning that Taddy was both leading and managing Cida as well as appearing nationally and internationally to promote the cause and build donor confidence in Cida's future. A small pilot program may be too insignificant in the big picture. In the shadow of this wall of silence it was easy for me to come to the conclusion that the partnership was too weak to hold the program. ARL is about awakening people's curiosity and foster an interest in giving feedback and input into the governance of their organization. As far as I could understand, the Cida students seemed to care deeply about Cida but now, my informants told me, there were growing concerns about the disappearing spirit of Cida. In fact Taddy was speaking to the public with his enormously contagious enthusiasm about yesterday's Cida. It became increasingly evident to me that today's reality looked different and less enthusiastic. With an ongoing dialogue between participants and management these challenges could become great opportunities for

positive change. On the other hand, where no such partnership exists it may turn into frustrations with empowered students in an organization, which, in this case, is confused by split vision and lacking organizational structure and routines to hold things together. In my own experience I had seen both scenarios unfold and I was determined to do my best to make the experience a win-win proposition for all parties involved. But how?

The other concern on my mind was to make sure that preparations were made such as recruitment, interviews, reading materials, guest resources, logistics, food, lodging, and transportation. Without a fully committed person in place at Cida these things could not be handled from New York or Sweden. Michelle was no longer involved and had other jobs at Cida and the new person was obviously not briefed and looked at the program as a job on top of another job. It had come to my attention that an internship program had been set up for the forth year students. The inspiration had come from the upcoming ARL program where the students would work in companies on strategic issues. Students could now choose to go to the ARL program or join the intern program where the prospect to get a job was the big lure. The original idea with the ARL program had been to make a pilot where some of the brightest and most energetic students would be hand picked to test the concept and help Cida apply some form of ARL technique to the future curriculum. This condition had now disappeared and since no one was in place to give information about the ARL program there was a very mild interest in signing up

But the whole ship was in trouble. The original Cida spirit of Ubuntu was in jeopardy. The organization was challenged through split vision between quality education and the more hidden vision to urgently create a large mass of students who would meditate and thereby change the consciousness of South Africa. Before its present incarnation Cida had been the Maharishi University. The name was changed but when you take soap out of a wooden box you will experience the smell of soap for a long time. The students were split in their willingness to meditate and

those who were, received special privileges and were given the name Cidhas.

For a while I was seriously pondering giving up the whole thing but felt I had come to the point of no return and I was determined to make the program happen somehow. The overarching issue for me was to keep the management of Cida close enough to the program so that they could be prepared to handle the inevitable discussions with a group of people who have learned to work with feed back, manage change and take a systems view of threats and opportunities for Cida going forward. Like in any other organization, there certainly would be challenges. The purpose for the ARL program was to create leaders and change agents and they would want to make a contribution to Cida. In my discussions with Taddy I had been very careful to point out this partnership opportunity to Taddy but did he listen or did he understand? It is hard to understand ARL without having had the experience of being through a program. I was asking myself if I could trust Taddy's previous exuberant support of the ideas and me. Were he and his management willing to listen? The best interventions in a system had always been when the top management had been participating and taken an active interest in the program. I was full of doubt and increasingly curious how the whole initiative would come about.

Adam goes to South Africa

In March of 2003, I brought my son Adam to a MiL workshop called "tool days" where we were exploring different ways to help MiL staff optimize learning opportunities for program participants. Adam who, at the time, was on his last leg at the business school at the University of Lund, had some mature and thoughtful contributions to make during this workshop. It suddenly dawned on me that he might be able to go to South Africa and help me with the preparations and stay on until the end of the program in the beginning of August. Adam was at the time 24 years old, full of energy and blessed with an entrepreneurial spirit. He has a more than average tolerance for ambiguity and loves to solve problems in tight spots. He had spent a year in Australia as an exchange

student. He had traveled across the vast Australian desert in 4X4 wheelers. He had lived in Barcelona for half a year to learn to speak Spanish. He had otherwise proven himself open-minded, curious and self-starting during our trips to India and other exotic places. On the other side I had to weigh his tendency to become volatile and sometimes melodramatic during stressful situations. Working with Cida required patience and good portion of diplomacy. This would be a good opportunity to face Adam with a real, urgent and complex project where most of the problems were dilemmas and paradoxes to be managed in a chaotic and unorganized situation. He would have to practice diplomacy and a good measure of patience and spend time building a supporting network before taking action. All this had to happen within a tight time frame. This would also provide an opportunity for Adam and me to bring our relationship into some new and un-chartered waters. It seemed like an opportunity to feed many birds from one crumb and a win/win situation.

Adam gladly accepted the challenge and, after several meetings to set the agenda for him, he left for Johannesburg three weeks ahead of the program start. The main thrust of his job would be to make sure that we had good projects. The criteria were: Mainly white companies, strategic projects which had top management attention and no clear solutions in sight. We also needed to make sure that the company project host or client was committed to the effort and had a personal stake in the success of the project. On top of it we had to recruit the kind of participants who were prepared to come into the program with realistic expectations and hopes. Adam also needed to network all the concerned Cida parties, get the research agenda in place, negotiate with guest resources and have personal meetings with each of the students interested to sign up for the program. He also needed to make sure that we had a place for the four one week modules, break out rooms for the project teams, food, kitchen personnel and all the educational resources needed to build a successful program. Cida is chronically short of financial resource and cash so all this had to happen at next to no cost.

Since I had promised Cida that no charges for professional time would be made, it was necessary to finance Adam's cost from personal funds. I spoke to Lennart Rohlin, my friend and CEO of the Milinstitute and was given a sum of money to pay for Adam's expenses, enough for his travel, health insurance and a few other things. Since a lot of the approaches to learning and development came from my eighteen years of experiences at MiL it was only fair that the program would be conducted under the official umbrella of the MiL Institute. From the MiL office a huge box of relevant ARL books and articles was sent to Cida as required pre-program reading.

I will let Adam tell you in his own words what the first month was like on the ground at Cida:

My South African experience

The idea of my journey came suddenly. I knew very little about the whole project and, at the time, had my mind set on a course in Organizational Development and Human Resource management at the institution for pedagogy at the University of Lund. When my father asked me to go I realized that I had to make up my mind quickly. The complexity and novelty of the project, my mixed emotions of anxiety and curiosity about South Africa and Johannesburg, and the journey into the black South African culture really had the feeling of a great adventure and an opportunity to learn in action. I just could not resist. I had never set foot in sub-Saharan Africa. I thought I knew something about the social problems South Africa was facing which of course had some scary aspects to it. Johannesburg has a reputation to be one of the most dangerous cities on this planet. Someone had told me that the city ranked right after Kabul and Baghdad. All of my preconceived notions were about to be challenged. South Africa, it's nature and people were about to take a firm grip on me for, what I think, the rest of my life and Johannesburg would prove to be a very misunderstood city. My four months in Joburg would become a life growing and great experience both from any side you want to look at it.

Arriving in Joburg

On the morning of the 27th of April my Swiss flight descended towards Johannesburg International Airport. I got a glimpse of the dry, arid province of Gauteng and there was the outline of a city where I now needed to find my new and temporary home away from home and a work challenge which filled me with performance anxiety. Siphiwe, a senior student at CIDA City Campus, picked me up. He struck me as a very helpful and kind person, fully committed to make my work as easy as possible. He was to become one of the participants in the ARL program and knew my father from his previous staff meeting.

I don't recall how I imagined that Siphwe would look, but I remember my surprise when I first met him. He was a rather short, slow speaking man with a kind and somewhat sleepy appearance. After the initial pleasantries we started walking towards his car and the first surprise presented itself. There was no car. Siphwe had parked it at a non-parking zone and the car had been towed away by the authorities. Siphwe didn't have any money so I paid the fines and off we went. We toured around town a bit and eventually came to a place called CIDA Park where I was showed around with no explanation. Only a few days later I realized that I had been taken there for a reason. This was to be the temporary home for our program

We went back to central Johannesburg to look around the campus and be introduced to Mr. Taddy Blecher, CEO of CIDA City Campus. Taddy is a great guy and a modern day hero in South Africa, celebrated in his own country and overseas for his efforts at CIDA. This man is a very busy person whom I would be chasing around for support for the following four months. Tired and full impressions Siphwe dropped me off at GIBS Business School in Illovo, where I checked into a hotel room for the first couple of nights before finding a more permanent place to live. Illovo is one of the more posh addresses in Joburg and considered a safe area. For someone who is not familiar with the city, the first question you ask is whether it's safe or not. In Europe the questions would be, is it nice? or charming? or has it got a good atmosphere? In Johannesburg you ask whether it's safe or not. Metro,

bus or walking is just not the thing to do for a newcomer like myself. Without a car going around town would be a risky and complicated affair. The obvious conclusion was to rent a car. Since I was on a very tight budget I needed some cheap wheels. Before 50 hours had passed since my arrival I had rented myself a beat up, vintage Mazda 323, 1986 from the eminent company “Rent-a-wreck”. I had every reason to fear a breakdown at night in some seedy area. I was to change cars twice due the cylinders breaking down to god knows what.

After having fixed my transportation, I set out to find a place to live. I got hold of a computer, found out which sites were good, and started calling on ads. I wanted to share apartment or house with someone or I was risking becoming lonely (which is not a good idea for an off the chart extrovert like myself). After a few calls I found a house in an area called Morningside. A house with five persons between 24 and 30 years of age of different nationalities. Perfect! We were a rainbow coalition of French, Indian South African, a Ugandan honest to God princess and me from Sweden. Later on a girl from New Caledonia in Micronesia joined us. All these young people were well adjusted to the city and became my guides and very good friends. Bye golly we had a great time. Bless you and thank you all!

Going to CIDA City Campus

Arriving at CIDA was an experience that I never will forget. After having been lost in my car a couple of times, I finally found 54 Commissioner Street, which is the address of CIDA City Campus main building. It's quite an experience to walk into the former head office of a large investment bank, downtown Johannesburg, where CIDA now is, on its fourth year of existence. The building was donated to Cida when most business fled downtown in the mid 90's.

I parked my car in their garage and when walking in to the Campus in, I was trying desperately to figure out what to make of it all. To me it looked like a lot of chaos I was frankly confused. This was a new country, a new building, new faces, new culture and the ARL program

still being in its infancy in most aspects. The almost non-existing preparations were due to a shortage of people in an organization that grew like a rolling snowball. What had been accomplished was a couple of vague commitments from the project host companies, a few unconfirmed participants and an off-site location with almost no furniture and in desperate need to be cleaned after many years of neglect. My list of things to do grew by the minute and the walls were closing in on me. Not only had I only just entered a new project with a high degree of uncertainty, but also an organization which I didn't know much about and all this in a city that struck me as incomprehensible. I would be lying if I said that everything was fine. I spent a fair few days dealing with my anger and frustration over the situation. CIDA was a great but chaotic place, and didn't have the resources to support me in the ways I felt needed. Apart from working with bits and peaces on getting the program together, I had to deal with myself. It became trying and difficult considering the stress I experienced. The days to the program kick-off were coming close. By the time I was somewhat operational I had one week to program kick-off.

As I was a newcomer I had to exercise diplomacy and respect the ways of CIDA. My fathers prep talk was ringing in my ears as I tried to exercise restraint. Learning to understand, network, get to know the people and figure out who could help me with what, and all this while respecting their ways and pace, was a great learning experience. All this takes time, and time was something I didn't have much of. I could look back on all this through lenses of despair and frustration, but looking back at the learning opportunities, the privilege to meet and work with people so different from myself, and the challenges, I feel lucky and very thankful. Indeed a blessing in disguise.

Now it was up to me. Get the participants, close the contracts with the host companies, meet the coaches and clarify who's in and who's out, get CIDA Park furnished, get a cook and arrange for grocery shopping, order stationeries, conduct the personality tests, and get everything to happen at the right place at the right time.

It all went well. The first module was a test run and in the very Spartan environment of CIDA Park we conducted the kick-off of the CIDA – MiL ARL Program. Spirits were high and already it had been an adventure with many ups, and some downs. So far, 12 days down, three and a half months of adventure to go.

When plans become real

On May 9th in the early morning my Lufthansa flight arrived in Johannesburg. Adam was waiting for me at the airport full of stories of him as Don Quixote but also of enthusiasm. He had been through a tough initiation but he felt that the situation was under control after a serious lesson in politics and patience at Cida. All people at the Cida management are serious meditators and all transactions are conducted in calm and kind acceptance no matter what obstacles were thrown across the tracks. Adam's drive and need to achieve had been put to the test but now things were aligned so the program could start as planned.

The program staff

The very same day we had a staff meeting at Cida Park with Leigh Meidner, Marti van Rensburg, Lackson Simbumbé, Adam Cederholm and myself. We needed to calibrate and make sure that we had all the ducks in one row that our ideas and expectations generated months ago at Naledi were in sink, that the outline for the first weeks was understood and reflected. Adam was to take the learning coach responsibility for one of the groups and I now had to pay attention to both Adam and Lackson who were learning on the job. The Pygmalion effect of high expectations works great and I let both of them know that I just knew that they both had in them what it would take and I would be there to support them as much as needed. Adam with his quick mind, always ready for an argument may be a bit of a challenge. How would we be able to change from the habitual father/son relationship to a professional relationship where I was the leader? I was not really worried about it but we would definitely have to deal with a reframing of

our relationship as we went along. Leigh was also fairly new to the game but had been involved in leading groups in many different settings. Part of the preparation and ongoing job for me was to coach the coaches and make sure that none of them took over the leadership of the project groups and thereby hindered the learning. Because of Adam's orientation to action, I was a bit concerned about his ability to let the group make mistakes and struggle when it served the development of the group. Marti, knowledgeable and competent had lots of coaching experience but tended to be a little too directive and could run the risk of taking leadership when groups encountered confusion and struggle for leadership. All in all the attitudes and the feeling of respect and camaraderie between the staff was a good ground to stand on. A big question was how much I could delegate teaching jobs to the staff. We would have to feel ourselves through all of that and more.

Module one, Cida park Saturday May 10, 2003

We formed a circle in the room. Twenty-two young black men and women from the last year class at Cida City Campus, Johannesburg were in attendance. It was the beginning of May 2003 and the winter in Johannesburg had just begun. The sky was intensively blue and the air was crisp and a bit chilly. We were to be together for the next three months in a program with the purpose to prepare the program participants to take a place of responsibility in the new South Africa. And we were to try something that had never been tried before in South Africa or, to my knowledge, anywhere else for that matter. None of them had any real experience in working in traditionally white South African companies and the business knowledge was mostly from books and academic lectures. The participants all came from poor black townships and farming communities from all corners of South Africa. They studied the staff and me discreetly from the corners of their eyes and spoke Zulu to each other in low voices. When I tried to meet their eyes they shifted away from me and lowered the gaze. They had most probably never heard a conversation in their homes about the things we were going to deal with here. All of us in that room were about to embark on something very new, fresh and challenging. Adam had provided me with

some notes from his pre program meetings with individual and the whole group so I had some idea of their present level of understanding. There is one cornerstone of how people think and react that must be understood when working with black, south African people.

A person is a person because of others.

That is essentially the meaning of Ubuntu, which is proclaimed as the unifying values, and vision of the emerging South African nation. It takes a village to raise a child would be a statement from the mindset of Ubuntu. Most of the world population is raised in societies where the group is the key to the individual's sense of identity and belonging. A persons sorrows and happiness are intrinsically intertwined with the in-group. The upside is the absence of personal guilt and related neurosis and the price to pay is the adherence and conformity to the group norms.

I had worked in collectivistic setting before in places like Singapore, Vietnam and India but what would it be like to successfully implement in an ARL program designed and conceived through a western individualistic mindset?

All of the students in the program had been with Cida from the very first beginning and been part of creating the Cida spirit. They had cleared and painted the very first Cida Campus, which was a dilapidated building in downtown Johannesburg. They had participated in the campus maintenance such as cleaning, cooking, administrative chores and computer maintenance. They "owned" Cida. Three years ago they had started to build this home away from home through a great spirit of cooperation and hard work to make a success story out of Cida. Cida had given them this chance to receive a free education and to come out of some pretty hopeless circumstances in dusty towns built of corrugated steel, massive poverty and joblessness. Many languages and tribes were represented: four Zulus, three Vendas, three Xhosas, three Sothos, two Tswanas, two Shanganes and two Pedis. Three and half years ago when they first met each other at Cida they could hardly understand each other and English was definitely not a language which they mastered. In addition to English, they had to learn each other's languages and now all

of them were fairly fluent in three or four languages but Zulu turned out to be the language of preference between them. Later in the program I learned that some of that Great Spirit had faded away and their expectations of what was going to take place in this program was ranging from cynical to vague hopes.

Now we were going to form teams and start working with real, complex strategic challenges in four organizations willing to take social responsibility and let us in behind the curtains of the white power in South African organizations.

Setting the stage

Taddy came to the Cida Park Campus about 15 km away from central Johannesburg to open the program, introduce me and the staff and wish us Godspeed with our efforts. He was his usual charismatic speaker and again I was amazed at his uncanny ability to lift spirits and bring hope and look for the very best in people. I was glad to have his stamp of approval in this formal and official way.

During the first hour or so we laid out the basic program including dates for the four modules, structure of the community of learners and the kinds of projects we had in store for them. We let them know that the program, with its formal and later informal structure, would serve as a living laboratory to better understand ourselves and how we could best serve as leaders, each one with his or her own style, strengths and flat sides. We also discussed the ARL learning philosophy and the kinds of personal motivation and responsibilities needed for success. Teaching would mostly take place when the questions came up and curiosity would be the engine driving most of the program. There would be some books to read but the real book was the one that we handed out to them. Just a book with blank pages, which they themselves would have to write. At the end of the program they would be the proud owners of a book written by themselves with their own and very personal leadership theory, the only one that would really work when all was said and done.

This first module would be about getting to know each other in a deeper way. We needed to understand each other's personal background and history and the kinds of dreams and hopes we harbored for our futures. We also would establish the vision of the program, construct project teams and assign coaches to each team. Later in the week we would introduce the four projects and we had invited all the four organizations to come and present their respective challenge to the program. We would set some ground rules for the teams, makes sure that their first interview with the project hosts would go well in terms of setting up a model for initial contact and agreements, how to conduct and interview and make sure that the calendars were set for the first visit at the host companies which would take place close to the formal ending of this first module.

What must come together must first come apart

One important thing to do when one wants a group of people to be brought together is to surface differences so that everybody can take a look at the parts. The (western) theory is that people will hesitate to join a group fully before each part is acknowledged and seen by everybody without judgment. My question was; how does individuation look in a collectivistic group of people? When I asked them to brainstorm all the differences we could think of in the room, people initially looked puzzled and immobilized. After a while we got the momentum going and during reflection the following day some people reflected on the fact that they had never thought about themselves in this way. We got a list together with the main factors which distinguished us from each other people; male, female, tribal differences, religion, family background, personality, South African provinces, languages, appearance, skin color, size of family, educational background, personal interests and hobbies, future dreams and some more things I did not include in my notes.

The first introduction to our participants:

After this first round of activities, we laid out 88 picture cards on the floor in the middle of the circle. Each card had a drawing (a snake, a man in bed, a bridge with a rainbow above, a turtle, a hospital bed etc) We asked each one, including the staff, to look through the pictures and then pick one or two cards which made a deep association to something important in our lives and be prepared to introduce ourselves to the rest through telling the story. In addition we asked them to reflect on a personal statement based on the present understanding of the program. What kinds of attitudes, values and skills would be needed to make the program a success for everybody including everyone in the room, Cida at large and certainly for the participating companies?

Some quotes from the card exercise;

I picked the snake. It reminds me of my family. The green color in the grass is for me the healing power and the reasons to forgive. It reminds me how I am here to make friends and be with people at their level. What I can contribute is to give strength to others. I am a good communicator and have some good basic business skills.

I picked a hand with pencil. I am curious and want to learn. I keep records and I make sure that my goals in life are in writing. I am here to understand why people react the way they do. I want to learn how to team up with capable people. I have problems with listening to others and I am sometimes very impatient. I have difficulties understanding some people's personalities. I will bring my easy ways to make contacts with others. I also have had some business experience, which may be useful.

I picked the card with the troubled surface of the water. My life has been full of trouble. I feel restless when I don't understand. I also picked the card with the house and the shovel. The shovel signifies hard work and being able to make ends meet. I will work hard in this program and I can

be a good learner. I tend to jump to conclusion and sometimes I stop listening. My self-confidence is my enemy.

I picked the mother with the child. My mother is dead and she thought me everything in life. She taught me to be a human being. I also have no father and I try to listen to what he would advise me when I am in trouble. I think we can make it if we come in with love and faith. I have a tendency to lose confidence and I need to overcome it. I am a youth leader at our church and I have some leadership skills.

I picked the picture of fire. A man I loved died. He was a prophet at our church. We used to go to him for advise and he took us all as his child. I am a youth leader at church. I read the bible. With love and faith we can be successful here. I also picked the card with the face hidden behind a hand. I am not always open with others. I want to give 200% in this program. I want to share knowledge and I need to learn how to respond to rudeness and I want to learn how to be a good consultant to others.

I picked mirrors and stairs. I need to look at myself and be ready to climb the stairs and open the door. What will be there on the other side? What are the gifts waiting for me? I am good at bringing order into things and I can apply my knowledge. I need to stretch and overcome setting too low goals for myself. I lack self-confidence.

I picked the card with the fire and the screaming man. Life has been tough for me. I feel lonely and it's hard for me to share my thought and feeling with others. I am willing to be an activator, I have power and I want to be a contributor. I need to build up my confidence and be more self-reliant

I picked the man with the hand. I wan to be the master of my own destiny. I was traumatized and injured. I have to appreciate who I am. It does not matter how many times you fall. What matter is how many times you stand up? I am easy to get to know and I can motivate others. I am a good listener. I need to manage my time properly.

A hand with a pen and two people dancing. People say that we Africans have not contributed to the development of civilizations. We did not record our culture in books and written poems and we never made it to the history of the world. We have something else and I want to understand what that is.

The dance is about love, joy and to remind us to celebrate. I am here to learn to start my own business. I bring a positive attitude and some business experience.

I picked the turtle. I am very slow and honest. I want to work with honest people. It is difficult for me to adapt to new situations. I want to gain in confidence and come up with a good model for teaching others.

Two people hugging and the guitar. I sympathize with people who have problems. When I am depressed I play music at full blast. I am friendly and I want to be a highly rated business leader. I would like to speak with the same confidence as Lackson.

Bird and rainbow; peace and unity are interrelated. We need to come together to succeed. I am good at relationships, I need to trust myself more and I must be able to present better.

Calendar and dancing; we must make sure we have fun together. I have some accounting skills. I wonder if I can learn how to apply my skills in real life? I am cooperative. I need to build my confidence and my ability to make presentations.

Athletes and rainbow; remember where you have been and face the challenges of life. I like to look at what is possible.

Tree with flower and hospital and doctor. My mother was always working hard growing our food. I was helping her and I used to hate it but later in life I came to love this work. I broke my leg and had a very bad experience. People who I thought were my friends turned out not to

care about me. I am friendly, I trust people, and I can listen. I need to gain confidence and learn how to present myself to others.

Rainbow and dancing (**Leigh**); I take risks and I love people who go after their dreams. I like to learn more about coaching my team and I want to make an art form out of reflecting on my own and other people's experiences.

A card with two opposites (**Marti**); I have a lot of opposites in me. I strive for balance and stillness and like solitude. I read a lot and have a wide knowledge base. I am a good listener and a professional coach. I have a strong intuitive sense.

Wristwatch and calendar, two people walking side by side (**Adam**); I feel enslaved by time. It gives freedom and sets limitations at the same time. I am looking for partners, friends and trust. I bring a deep respect for diversity and I would like to use this time with all of you to become more culturally enlightened. I am looking forward to learn about the ARL approach to learning about management and leadership.

Mother with child and traffic light (**Lackson**) I am eager to see how ARL can shape hope and add value to this country. I am here to reflect and learn.

Rainbow: (**Lars**) for me the rainbow symbolizes a bridge, which miraculously appears in the sky. We can cross this magical bridge together and at the end we will find the pot of gold made up of self-confidence, new skills, hope for the future and joy. The vision is that we will all learn how to walk in the sky, which is easy if you are not alone. We need every one of us to make this journey a resounding success. I bring strong motivation and experience to this program and my promise is to apply myself 100% and share what I know as it is appropriate. Since I truly don't know exactly where I am, my hope is that you will let me and us into your culture and your world of thoughts, feelings and experiences. I have visited and worked in many places in this world but Africa is still a mystery to me. I am aware of our difference in age and life experience. Being with all of you for the next three months and

getting beyond a more casual and superficial relationship offers a unique opportunity for me to look at myself for only in meeting new worlds with an open mind can I really learn about who I am. I expect to learn many new and exciting things about your world and the staff and I will do what we can to gain your trust. I can't even begin to tell you all how wonderful it is for me to be here now.

How on earth will this all work?

During these introductions, being a bit hard of hearing, I had to listen with all my attention since most of the participants spoke in low, mostly mumbling voices directed at the carpet. In addition, I had yet to get used to the typical South African Black English, which has another rhythm and tone to it than Boer and Anglo white or Indian English. I think I got my quotes mostly right though. My notes have been checked against Adam's notes and he hears well and was already used to the dialect. As I was listening to each one of them, my basic assumption was that I was witnessing some kind of a low key, ritualistic way to greet an unknown, ambiguous situation in the presence of a white man in authority position. To add another challenge to my ability to remain fully present in the here and now, I must admit that my mind was distracted and going in many directions. What really drove the inner voices was a mix between a clear sense of excitement and challenge mixed with grave concerns about the journey ahead. How ready were these young men and women for a program like this? Had I set something in motion beyond the reach of these young men and women? It worried me that the challenge of finding an effective communication style would be difficult during the three months we had at our disposal. If they would be unable to get out of this intense shyness and apparent insecurity, we would be having difficulties in gaining credibility when discussing corporate strategic issues with their (mostly white) clients. I harbored misgivings that the projects would fail and end in cynicism in a world that needed bridge building and mutual respect.

Soccer as a metaphor for a way of working together

On the other hand, I had hope based on something that I witnessed before we assembled for the first meeting in our main room. Twelve or so of the young men were playing soccer on the big field in front of our retreat place. The game went back and forth with amazing skill and vigor. I was asking Adam if the full force of the Cida soccer team was enrolled in the program. It seemed impossible that a random team of 4th year students would have such amazing high quality of skills and competitive spirit. All of them played with total commitment, they were loud and yet relaxed, laughing with each other while competing fiercely for the ball. They were all amazingly considerate and kind to each other and yet the competition was total and intense. There was no arbiter at work and none needed! I watched in fascination for 20 minutes or so. On the way to our retreat room, I asked some of them how they knew how to distinguish their team players from the competing players? I was surprised to know that the game was played as a total team with individuals fighting for the ball and passing to whoever was free who would pass to the next until one of them made a goal. It was about making goals but when a goal was made everybody seemed to celebrate which had really puzzled me while watching. No separate teams in existence. So much for assumptions and using the habitual lenses of making sense of the world. I was fascinated and hopeful having detected an energy and ability to focus that we could build on while building the program.

Struggling with a hidden agenda

In working with culture change in corporations, one has to keep the following professional imperative in mind. If you really want to help a system to change you must not want to change it. Behind this paradox hides the fact that the central job in (organizational) development is focused on bringing awareness to the different parts and the whole of the system so that it will mobilize its' own energy to change. If the outside helper/consultant has his or her own hidden agenda, the work is likely to suffer in its promise to bring positive change towards more effective work processes. In this case I did have an agenda, which I was aware of and truly struggled with; I was convinced that the basic philosophy of

our approach had the potential to bring enormous potential to help people in South Africa to build rainbow (multi ethnic) coalitions and learn together with excitement. I was terrified that we would fall on our faces and that my promise to the students and Taddy would come to nothing much.

In picking the cards, many said many deeply felt and interesting things but how on earth would people with such insecure and shy behavior meet the challenges to make a difference in the cut throat, individualistic and white male corporate world? Three of our projects came out of the financial sector companies and I was informed that South African financial corporations were global and very competent players both in London and New York as well as in the developing world outside South Africa. We needed to get to work and fast.

Selecting the project teams

Before my arrival Adam had administered the Myers Briggs Type Indicator to the program participants. The ideas were to use the results of the measure as help in personal development and as selection criteria for the project groups. Would these descriptors written in America be relevant to black, South African students born and raised in poverty in townships and dusty framing communities in far away places? The result of taking the instrument was emailed to me ahead of my arrival. Briefly, the MBTI measures the preferences in people's personality and does it with a very high reliability and validity. The such as finding the source of energy in the outside world (extroversion) or in the inside world (introversion) The instrument also indicates preferences regarding how people tend to collect information (through the senses with focus of the here and now and attention to details or by way of using the sixth sense which is referred to as intuition and has more focus on possibilities and the future. It will also indicate preferences in evaluating information with thinking and logic on one end of the polarity and feelings and values on the other. Finally, it measures lifestyle issues such as peoples preference for a planned and structured lifestyle versus a more open-ended, "let's plan as we go along" attitude to work and life.

Adam had emailed me the raw MBTI scores and, to no surprise, I find out that most of the participants scored high on sensing, logic and planned lifestyle. Students who attended Cida had been chosen based on their school grades. The traditional school system is designed and based on the personalities of teachers and educators with similar preferences and therefore tend to do well in school. The only thing that good grades predict accurately is that the students with high grades will score high grades in future academic pursuits. It does not otherwise predict success in life. Since it is hard to plan an ARL program in detail the approach would go against the tendency to plan, structure and work hard on diminishing ambiguity it would be a challenge to help these students expand their natural response to life as it happened. ARL is driven by the curiosity and the questions of the participants and the staff needs to adapt and tamper with the design to ensure maximum interest and attention from the participants

The staff had pre-selected the four project teams based on differences in the MBTI scores and background in terms of academic specializations such as marketing, accounting, entrepreneurship, leadership etc. The purpose was to create as much diversity as possible, knowing that the differences would create tensions but also a richer and deeper analysis unless the groups self-destructed. That is the reason to support the learning with team facilitators to help the teams deal productively with their internal differences. Before we disclosed our suggestions for project teams we brainstormed for some suggestions from the participants and asked them to generate a list with; would it not be great if... and would it not be awful if. We pointed out that whatever list we made it would be difficult to satisfy all the criteria but we could try to optimize around differences. This is what they came up with;

Great if.

We distributed introverts and extroverts

we mix by specializations

Gender

MBTI scores

Religious background

Differences in experiences

We form the teams before we know about the projects

Awful if..

People volunteer based on personal attractions

Distribution by lottery

Grouped by friends ships

Similar agenda

similar gender

Already knew the project

Differentiating the woman

It was clear that women in the traditional black African society have a very different place than the women in the west. It was interesting for me to see how the male/female issue was going to play out during the program. One of the reasons we felt that the male/female distribution in the project teams had relevance was that Cida students since a few years back had separated men and woman during lectures at the Cida Campus. The result had been that the academic achievement level of the women went up significantly, some people claimed as much as 30%. Obviously some major potential for distraction was operating which probably had to do with hormones and testosterones but some cultural aspects were most likely also at work.

The group wanted to have females across the different groups and that would be the suggestion of the staff as well. We also felt that the ultimate choice would have to rest with the women. As we separated the groups physically in the room we also asked them if there were any reasons to change the groups including the question weather the women wanted to be spread out or they would rather form an all female group of five. To make the pros and cons transparent to everyone, we asked the women to sit in a fishbowl to talk about it between themselves. A fishbowl is an approach whereby a free zone is created where a group can voice a special issue without being interrupted or challenged to a discussion from others. The designated group sits in a circle in the

middle of the room with the rest of the participants in a circle on the outside listening. In this case we placed an empty chair in the inner circle, which could be used (only) for questions of clarification from people listening in the outside circle. The person with the question will move into the empty chair, state the question, get the response and then quickly move out again, no arguments or challenges. The five women weighed the pros and cons and ended up with a consensus that they wanted to be distributed over the four teams. One group would consequently have two female members. I made a note how impressed I was listening to the mature, honest and measured conversation on a topic that was potentially risky. Judging from the body language in the outer circle, the men seemed to give the process their full and undivided attention. Later on in the program, I learned how important this process had been for the women. They saw their chance to get truly included and be taken seriously. More about it later. We did a few other things to position the program and create the right expectation but let me jump to the next morning and the morning reflection.

First Dialogue

One of the cornerstones in building a learning community is to start off every day with a dialogue. After a night of reflection (the subconscious always at work) the morning is fresh and the mind rested. Everybody sits in a circle where everybody can see each other with no effort. The staff is distributed around the circle. Before anyone says a word each person takes a ten minutes to reflect in their book on what seems important to say to be present and transparent to the others. To write down ones thoughts brings the thinking into sharper focus and prepares each for speaking with some degree of cohesion and clarity. A bit into the program I would ask people to put the notes aside and speak from the mind rather than reading from notes. During the designated time for the dialogue, anything can be brought up as long as it is not an issue, which should be handled between individuals or for other reasons are best handled in some other setting. When everybody in the program is

gathered and talking in one room it is called the "largest present system or LPS" Everyone listens, trying to fully take in what is being said and tries his or her best in refraining from making internal judgments of right and wrong, good and bad. To build on each other's ideas is encouraged which is different from editing, criticizing or disagreeing. A higher level of consciousness is being formed allowing for multiple perspectives and transparency. The experience of being listened to without having to get involved in a discussion of relevance or legitimacy creates trust and is experienced as a freeing and unusual experience away from the habitual "ping pong interactions of everyday life. Initially, the process is often experienced as scary since one does not have a clear notion where a comment or reflection lands in the minds of others. This was our first dialogue and was still delivered in a hesitant way but I was encouraged by the willingness to be honest and supportive. Everybody participated which was hoped for but not mandated. To sit and talk in a circle is something that is deep inside every Black African and a natural way to express oneself. Here much more so that what I was used to in the world I come from. As the program moved forward these voices became increasingly stronger, deeper and moving.

Some quotes from our very first dialogue session

In my own notes:

Yesterday it was impressive to observe the joy and camaraderie that seems to exist in this group. This was most noticeable in the breaks. Men were holding hands, resting heads in each other's laps. They were talking to each other and interacting with very short physical distance almost bathing in each other's breath. Clearly different from the white world I come from and a bit reminiscent of what I have experienced in India. I hope that these deep connections will not get in the way of saying things to each other that may not be comfortable but need to be said in the service of our development as individuals and group. The strongest theme I am hearing is that people feel inhibited and nervous about not having enough self confidence to meet the challenge of making

a difference in the projects. Fear of making a wrong impression and not gain the respect in the companies you are going to work with. Different from my initial hesitation, I now begin to feel some kind of unfreezing of my doubts. Just for all of us to put words to our insecurities help. When one deals openly with fear, the fear begins to recede. Experience is the best teacher and our challenge is to create a safe climate where the only mistake you can possibly make is the failure to reflect and learn from whatever happens. I also feel very comfortable with the staff. We have a good and warm relationship and I really trust that each of us is up to the task to deliver the support for a successful learning experience. The right attitude is by far, the most important factor to ensure success. I can always help to build some new ARL coaching skills as we go along but to change a bad attitude is trickier. We will learn how to work with each other, staff and participants alike and I know that everyone here will eventually find the courage and confidence to make this all work. Just yesterday I was made aware that Cida management is requesting that each of the participants turn in a daily report from the program. This is not appropriate for what we are trying to do here so I will have to clear that up with the Cida leadership. I suppose that we need to do a better job in explaining to Cida how we must work in this program and how this model is different from the more traditional teaching model at Cida. I will take care of it.

Here are (most of) the voices from the participants

I am learning not to judge the initial appearance. I have been worried that I made the wrong choice to select this ARL program over enrolling in the internship program, which seems a lot more like a real job to me. Now I have changed my mind. This will be a great opportunity for me! I am not sure what or how but I can feel it now. Something is already going on. I am asking myself why I am always in a hurry and fail to reflect on what I am doing for lack of time. I will make things happen here in new ways.

We are here to work together and not to compete. I am beginning to feel at ease and I will speak up. I will stay here and make it happen. I will focus on what I will give up as well as what I will gain. When Lars talked about the Johari window it became clear to me that I really want feedback. With love and respect we can change mountains. *(Note: The Johari window is a model, which looks at what I, and others see in me, which is the free area. There is also an area, which others see in me and I don't, and an area, which I see, and others don't since I hide it from others for whatever reason. Then there is the unconscious, not seen by others or myself. The idea behind the model is to drive home the necessity to make feedback available so the free area can be expanded)*

I was truly confused here in the beginning. I am now finding out that we are relating in a different way to each other. Going into this program I was thinking a lot about some disturbing question. What if we fail? all of us and **for me?** Am I going into something that can have negative consequences for all of us and for me? This is no longer a question for me. There is only one failure and that is to stop learning. There are no mistakes here; it's OK to fail. This is so important and freeing. Our differences are important and from there we will find inspiration and growth. When we played the change game it became clear to me how we limit ourselves. I will give myself to this program. Fully!

(Note: in the change game, pairs turn the backs to each other and change five things in the personal appearance, turn to each other and make observations what has been changed. The process is repeated asking people to again turn back to back and this time change another seven things other than the once already changed. Nervous laughter and comments about how difficult it is. The third time the participants are asked to change yet another seven things. At this time most give up and talk about how difficult or impossible that will be. The point is that when we are asked to change we feel alone and look only to ourselves in spite of the fact that abundant resources exist around us in the form of other people's clothes, jewelry and so on. When the pressure is off we revert to old behavior and put things back where they were before. We feel

uncomfortable and the giggling and laughter is just that but also a way of hiding our discomfort in the process).

I am realizing that I am in the right place. There is a rich connection different from what I am used to. We have to listen to each other and build on each other's ideas. The way we can do this is to fall in love with change. It is not easy but as Lars said: "It takes two to make one". We need help to help. Every one of us will need to be involved, everyone will need to be given a chance and we all know that we have to participate.

I was really undecided but Adam turned me on. I have very high expectations and so far I feel happy. My concern now is that there is no limit. I would like to know what would come next. Things are floating and we need more structure. I need to make order for myself. We are really listening to each other, I see others in a clearer light and I look forward to understand other cultures. I love business and what is going on here seems relevant to my career. I hope I will be ready when this program has some to its end.

I am happy now. I suggest that we dare to be free and loud enough. We need to speak up and be original and say what is on our mind. This is all about giving and receiving. No giving, no receiving. It will be important to go through the whole process and realize who you are and will be.

To sit her and listen to all of you is a great thing. To sit here and listen with an open heart. I am often frustrated and disappointed with Cida. Perhaps I can use this program to help Cida change. When things do not run as they are supposed to we must make them right. I want to help Cida. I am afraid that we are not allowing ourselves to be foolish enough to be out there.

Adam was able to convince me to be part of this program. I need to understand what I will be gaining, what is in it for me. Some of the ideas from yesterday were fascinating such as the Kolb learning cycle and the philosophy behind the program. It is great to be part of a self-organizing

system and learn how to give and receive feedback. We have to believe that we all have the right potential as individuals. How do we let it all out? So far the tools are great and we don't spend time with idle gossip. This is not what I had expected but I am very happy now.

I have to admit that I was nervous and confused about coming here. But I was also curious. The change game was right and I really saw something that I never thought about before. There is always change. Now I feel that it is a privilege to be here and let's commit to solve the problems ahead together. We must stay active and engage in the questions

I feel I belong and I feel supported by everybody in this room. There are really no limits in life. Lars guided meditation drove that home to me. This is a good place for me. We are in a bath and we are getting warm. I was impressed by the fishbowl. It is a democratic form. We are given the poser and we are all involved. We are looking at things differently. Being myself is valuable to other people. Let us have fun together and try to curb out anger. What we are afraid of is fear itself.

You are all saying how good this is. I am given a mirror and I am shaking and my confidence is very low now. I am sensitive when people say critical things about me. I cry a lot. I am afraid of talking here in the group but I promise to get on the train. I can grow. The discussion we had about change really opened my eyes. We take life for granted. Let's accept that change happens all the time.

We all have fear of the unknown; I am ready to challenge that. I like being here since it goes with the rhythm of myself. I will help to be creative. Let's not look at disappointments as bad but as teachers for change.

I am learning a lot here, I tend to lose concentration when we talk too much. We are here to learn from each other but also to teach. I was scared but now I feel good. I feel at home here and I am building

something. I am a very shy person but I understand that fear of failure will prevent us from learning.

Individuals matter! WE need to look at differences and that is great.

My experience of myself is that I am sitting in a locked up room. Now I feel that things are coming together and that there is a way to handle every problem

We are respectful to each other and I already feel more confident. We will have to work to help each other.

I am beginning to see how meaningful this is. My confidence is rising. I can learn from all and everything.

We are here to learn, not to compete. We must look and act, not just think and react.

I had to really force myself to come to this program. I had several options but I choose this. I am not alone here. We are all on a journey together. The mind is a great thing and it can travel into the universe. Now I have no doubt. The best way to learn is to be involved and my mind is opening up. Three months seem to short for this process and I am afraid that time will defeat me.

We are building slowly, starting with who I am and who we are. Positioning of the program. Things are going fine. I need to understand to be understood.

Time to set some ground rules for teamwork

We asked the newly formed teams to go to their team rooms and discuss what skills and characteristics needed to be in place to make the teamwork successful. They were told that they had to come out with an agreement that any of the team members had the right to call a stop and reflect whenever one of the ground rules were set aside. I also asked

each of the learning coaches to come back with an agreement from their respective team how they could best be supportive without taking over the leadership in tough or stuck positions. After about one hour of discussion the teams came back, each with one or two overheads ready to present. I have done this type of exercise many times before but I have almost never seen such a thoughtful list of rules. I asked some questions to each team to explain the meaning behind words such as freedom of expression, trustworthy, honesty and respect and the answers were frank and thoughtful but a little too good to be true. Perhaps the culture of the collective and the centrality of personal relationships had something to do with it. The question in my mind was to what degree the obvious camaraderie between them would protect friendship to the detriment of deeper and more creative cooperative work? Faced with a strategic dilemma with no obvious answers people would predictably view the challenge in so many different ways. How these tensions got resolved was a key part of the learning in this program. To listen and build on ideas, to synergize and find progress where all involved had a stake and sense of ownership is a skill at the core of leadership as far as I am concerned. Another issue to pay attention to was how the team coaches would be helpful in creating a trust without taking a leadership position in the teams, indeed an interesting and very predictable challenge. The essence of the written agreements between learning coaches and teams was: Work as a guide, pay attention to process and please don't pick favorites among us. I was pleased and started to feel real hope and confidence that we would come out on the bright side. The participants felt good about presenting their work on overheads and made sure that as many as possible got the chance to present.

As the teams started to prepare for the first meeting with the clients I was circulating around the team rooms, keeping still and not speaking or otherwise interfering with anything but my presence. The topic for discussion was primarily how they would manage the upcoming meeting with the clients and set an agenda for the meeting. Who would run the meeting and who would present the program, the team(s) and the vision we had for the program. All they knew at this point was a very broad

scope of the nature of the client and the challenge given to us. They knew that we were expecting a minimum of 12 days on the projects and that at some point they would have to negotiate the scope of the project. I had given them a framework to think about which was the issues around entry, confidence building, problem formulation, diagnostics work, intervention and evaluation and the issue of conducting an interview through active listening, paraphrasing and summarizing. In preparation, we spent half a day practicing interviewing skills and with experienced managers I would not give this much structure upfront but here some extra support was needed. During the early stages of a program, people are concerned with presenting their very best side and hold off on dealing openly with negative feelings. They tend to show a low profile, leaving some options for how to engage when the task is understood, expectations are clarified and enough trust and commitment are in place for people to risk having open disagreements. More serious conflicts would float to the surface but more about that later.

Here are some notes from my dairy after these first three days, this time with a strong sense of optimism

We are now engaging around the clients and projects. It amazes me how they are able to conceptualize. They don't just use words but they explain the underlying meaning of what they are saying and seem very concerned in seeking alignment. I was under the impression that they would smooth over differences but that is not really the case so far. People voice objections but one has to listen to understand that they are disagreeing. Objections are raised in soft, kind voices and all the others listen intently without interrupting each other. How will they fare in the fast paced, hardboiled highly competitive industry with their soft and kind ways? I am learning to look beyond the shy and mumbling appearances and only to discover sound ideas, sharp thinking and a range of attractive soft, human qualities. In the world I come from the edges are sharper and individuals express concerns about being made to behave in ways that violates the principle of individual rights. I am beginning to believe that this country can form an integrated society

under an enlightened, democratic leadership and leave the obsession with skincolour far in the background. Yesterday we discussed consulting skills, diagnostic models, team formation and active listening. The temptation to pose leading questions instead of maintaining open-ended curiosity is no different here than in my part of the world. We also prepared the meetings with the clients who will come here tomorrow.

Here are some voices from the third day dialogue

This is exciting. What will it feel like meeting the client? It will not be enough to try to keep eye contact. We also need to be aware of body movement and many other things. It will be hard to refrain from asking leading questions. We must be in charge and they will do most of the talking.

What we are doing here takes courage, risk taking and determination. I feel challenged. I feel less distance here now, I am challenging myself and things are getting better. We must help people to find their own solutions. I must learn to be a guide and refrain from telling people what to do.

I am ready to meet the client company. It helps to have the model to understand. The clients must make use of the information to help themselves. The contracting with our coaches makes me feel more relaxed. The training to listen actively was very helpful.

I fell in love with my team. It felt so honest. We articulated our expectations. This is how I want to be. I learned that listening is a very deep thing. I think we should have better food here.

This is not so much about solving problems as much as it is about managing paradoxes. When we face situations we must go deeper, take the next step. The organizational model is a great way of thinking about organizations. To practice active listening was a great help for me. Also to

contract for transparency is very helpful as a tool and a skill. We closed the gap to our coaches.

We are working hard here and today we will start understanding how we will work with the clients. I have a tendency to jump to conclusions and the listen skills exercise was very helpful. We need to learn to get to the real source of the problems.

I realize how we hear one thing and experience it in so many different ways. The way we have prepared for the client meeting makes me feel calm and confident. In our team we have tied our feet together to make one team

(Marti) For now we are under a warm blanket looking at the canvas of possibilities

I read Lars's article about ghosts in organizations and it is concerned with consulting to organization where the culture is in trouble. We need to live our values in the program. We learn more when we listen and look than when we talk.

I was interested in the idea of the consultant as a guest. How to calm down and observe. How to be aware of the invisible boundaries and cross them with respect to the host (the client). I am not a good listener and I need to learn how to paraphrase. This skill will impact my future.

(Adam) There is great joy in the experience in being heard. We are listening to each other. It is liberating to know that there is no rush to reach a solution. We need to paint the picture with a fine brush and not a roller. The team I am coaching is coming together. Every one takes responsibility, ready to work together. We must become good at hearing the things that are between the lines.

To listen attentively and suspend judgment will be with me forever.

Life is a journey and we can overcome the problems

Yesterday I fell into some traps. The diagnostic tools, particularly the 6-box model was very helpful.

I now understand the role of the guest. The contracting model highlights every step in the process. The walls are talking, listen to them

(Lackson) I am not a leader, I am a guide

I like the democratic nature of what we are doing here.

I now realize what consulting is about and it gives me confidence. We all need to realize that there is a solution behind the solution.

We must live our values. I fell in love with our coach yesterday. We have come closer to each other. I am getting closer.

I am impressed by where we are and in love with learning. Here we say it the way we see it and take responsibility.

As a team we must be very concerned with how we listen. My big problem is that I try to solve everybody's problem. Yesterday I ended up in a corner and I will have to practice more. It is important to make room for people to solve their own problems.

All what I have heard before came into place yesterday. To really be with each other like this is like someone takes you into their arms. We got so many tools yesterday and our first team meeting was exceptional.

Some of our conversations are boring. Leadership is the process of doing the right thing and management is doing the thing right.

As I look back on these notes from the morning dialogue the major themes are about how trust and confidence is growing, that the tools are

helping them to enter the relationship with the client companies and that the whole idea of bringing awareness through listening is an important tool for consultants and in life in general. Every now and then references are made to conversations and tools that are not explained but so much was going on that it seems impossible to mention everything and not go into too much detail

My life

This first week was about creating the right platform for learning from experience. In my way of thinking differentiation must come before integration so we decided to keep deepening the differentiation, this time at the team level. From Mathias Finger at Columbia University, I had learned a method, which he had successfully used in his consulting practice. The idea was to let people listen to headlines and then remember event in life associated to the headline.

In this case each person was equipped with small stacks of 3M Post its in ten different colors, one for each headline they were about to hear from me. I would read out loud a line and they would have three minutes to come up with as many events as possible related to each headline. It was not necessary to write more than a word or two, just enough to recall the underlying story

The headlines were:

- Early childhood including parents, sibling and relatives
- School years back home
- Hobbies and interests
- Romances and other significant relations
- Religion and spiritual experiences
- Work and duties
- Cultural experiences such as dance, music, theater, books, film, storytelling etc.
- Important people and life changing experiences

- Higher education and Cida

After they had been intensely writing for about thirty minutes it was time to set up the events in some kind of pattern. Each was given newsprint and for the next forty minutes they would order the different Post its in whatever pattern made sense to them. Some made neat rows and columns, others arranged circular patterns.

Telling the stories

Back in their team rooms each one had 40 minutes to talk from the events while the others listened without interruption. When each presentation was finished the rest of the team would talk about what they heard, what the themes were and how they felt when listening. The coaches had each joined their teams and I was circulating between the team rooms to listen and make sure everyone had understood the task. Some of the teams stayed up until midnight to talk about where they were coming from. I did not make many notes from the stories but I was profoundly moved and the headline I used when I wrote in my diary that evening was:

Stories from another planet

No one has come to this place in a chauffeur driven limousine. To be here now is a consequence of pure grit and determination. Many of the stories are about the hunger for knowledge and a way out of poverty and despair. My deepest hope is that these people will be leaders of this country because they understand the journey and what it takes to get on the road to a better and more inclusive world. There were so many stories. One person had been thrown out from home as a young kid and had made a living begging for food and living on the streets. Several had been beaten and locked up when their mothers had died and the other wives in the household had become next in line to raise them. One had run twelve kilometers and back to school every day in spite of a father who did not support education. Another had to plow the fields every day

and had studied at night in spite of physical exhaustion. When they were accepted at Cida many had come to Johannesburg without anywhere to stay and had been sleeping on the streets just to be able to have an education. From the first day I had been complaining to Cida that no pillowcases and bed sheets had been provided for the dorms. It became clear to me that few if any of them had ever used sheets. A pillow and a blanket was the standard. Another false assumption based on cultural habitual patterns.

One thing is increasingly clear to me and that is that we need to find some way to increase their ability to speak in public. We need black role models and we need a drama or theater teacher to help us to deliver messages in public.

Dialogue

We are really different. Reality is what each one of us sees. We look at the very same thing and we come up with different perspectives. We need to accept the challenge to continue to challenge ourselves. Our teams are the safe containers and home base. Let the stories be heard. This is a great environment to be in.

It is amazing how my experience has shaped who I am. Hearing each other's stories there is a lot I can identify with. Looking deeper into the skills and characteristics of the High Performing Team (HPT) it is clear what people must expect of each other. I really see the value of working in a team.

I was inspired of the stories and what other team members said. We also seem more ready to speak up and inspire each other. I am still amazed how we formed out teams and how happy everybody is where they ended up. I enjoy getting to know each of my friends.

We still have a long way to go when it comes to our presentation skills. When we presented the HPT to each other we did a great job. We don't

need to shift mountains to do presentations. Now that we are at ease with each other and with the staff we can do it. There are so many ways of saying and seeing things. I am beginning to understand why it is that people do what they do. It does not matter who is on the team, what matters is how we perform together.

I was nervous about who would be on my team. We did a great job forming the teams so that no one felt excluded. Listening to each other's stories I can identify with a lot of what was said.

We really don't have to be afraid of each other. Our team presentations on the HPT went really well. It just seemed to flow. We can really produce results, simple and quick. Listen to each other's life stories was so interesting. So many things have happened to us. I have doubted my creativity but now when there is room to explore and create together things seem to flow.

It is so good to get to know each other. I am amazed when listening to our life stories. I am also aware of how we can look at the same thing in such different ways.

We did a lot of things yesterday. So much that it gets mixed together. Reflecting like we are doing now and every morning is just great. The way we have formed our teams is great. What matters to me now is that we all are happy with where we are. I can see how we appreciate one another. We have all know each other for many years but we have never known each other so deeply. It was great to tell and listen to each other's life stories.

I just love my life story. I have not known where I have come from until now. I fell in love with my life. When I put the pen down I started smiling. The memories just keep coming. I love the fishbowl technique to let our voices be heard.

It is hard for me to talk about myself. It was good to go back and re-live all these moments and then stand in front of others and talk about it. In the fishbowl it was nice to be heard as a woman.

It dawned on me how much we have to tell. We are different but we have so much in common. When we did our HPT presentations it was amazing what we came up with. We did a good job in forming our teams.

Are we all islands? What kind of lives will we live in the future? It is clear to me that we really need to compliment each other. There was a time when I really did not think that white people were born like us. Listening to our stories opens me up. I feel that I understand human life a bit more now. We have a destination

When the women were given the freedom of choice that really shows respect. I am impressed by where we are now.

To tell my story was a great thing. The process was fantastic! Now I feel we know each other in the team.

The way we are forming the program and the teams is a good thing. We really came to the same point and everyone was heard and included. This is the first time I have felt the freedom to talk about myself. It will not be the last time. I can see how we are improving.

I love to learn new things every day. We come from different backgrounds and experiences. I want my own problems and I don't want to swap them with anybody else's. I am getting anxious about meeting the companies and starting to work on the projects. Things are going well and the staff is working well together. I don't like the food here.

It was great for me to work out what kind of team we want to be. To work with each other is just great. Even when difficulties turn up there is always a way out. We have to be ready to face difficulties.

I am so amazed that even Ishmael is beginning to speak up. I have never heard him say anything in public in the four years I have known him.

The body covers the person. The person is inside. To solve problems we need to get to know each other's persons. The leader will be found in the context of the challenge.

(Lackson) When things are transparent they become easier to deal with. It is so important to involve people in everything.

Each one of us has enough resources. We just need to bring ourselves to the party. Great to welcome Patience (a late arriving participant) to the team.

Yesterday I really saw change, confidence and joy. When Lars showed the Fs on the overhead (an illusion seen in different ways by different people) it became really clear how we could see things in different ways. We are good storytellers and I was really touched. Life is a present full of surprises.

(Marti) It is great to experience the willingness to share experiences. I enjoy a sense of lightness and the confidence is on the rise

(Adam) I am impressed and touched. I am learning. It is really this easy to make progress?

Preparing the client companies

Before my arrival to South Africa, Adam had visited to the four client organizations with the purpose to introduce the program and set the right expectations for the projects. The criteria for the project selection were as follows: strategic in nature, not a yes and no problem but rather a systemic dilemma where the solutions could be argued from multiple perspectives. Ideally the top management should be aware of the

challenge. The ideal client was the person who was responsible for the solution. He or she would not have a clear idea of how the challenge would be managed. That person would be in regular communication with the team and help arranging for data collection and overall access to people. We were also hoping that the client would be concerned with what was learned both in the teams and in working through the relation with the client system.

The client companies arrives

As the company representatives arrived to our campus, the coaches and I would briefly meet them and share what we were doing in the program. We introduced the learning coaches and expressed a wish for a good relation between the client and them to help facilitate feedback between the teams and the key people in the client organization. We thanked them for their participation and their decision to let us help them with the strategic crossroads they were facing. We shared the conviction that the presence of these young men and women would bring useful, fresh perspectives provided that the clients supported and committed resources to the teams. The first presentation would take place with all participants and companies present. Two of our companies were operating in the car financing industry and were to some degree in competition with each other. We talked about confidentiality and decided that it would be inappropriate to have the two competitors listen to each other's presentations.

All of the companies sent teams of people; all of them seemed concerned with the challenges and were really looking for help. The West Bank client was the CEO, Andy Frey who was facing a problem of great concern to him. He came to us with strong expectations of the team and with a promise of significant support in order to get the job done. He let us know that the final presentation would be made to the West Bank Board of directors and he would make sure that the team was prepared for that event.

For me it was the perfect client; high expectations, a real complex issue and the power to make decisions. In my private conversations with him he expressed a strong approval of our program and felt that working together in this format was the right approach. Since Adam had worked with the companies I will let him describe the process of getting the project coordination in place.

Adam you need to write about the four companies, the nature of the challenge and something about your own work around getting them to participate and how the first public presentations went.

Preparing for the first meeting with the client

The teams had a meeting with the purpose to generate some questions in preparation for the first encounter with the client.

We had already prepared ourselves by working in trios doing interviews, active listening and different ways of paraphrasing. Each person took turns presenting personal challenges from school or private life while the others actively listened and the other observed with the purpose to give feedback. As is evident from the dialogues the practice and understanding of active listening made a deep impression on the participants. We all agreed that listening is a fundamental skill since the purpose of the projects were to help raise awareness and enable the client to come to its own conclusions of what to do and not do. It would be important to stick to open-ended questions, paraphrase as pictures begin to emerge and hold back on questions until you feel the client has provided you with clear picture of the challenge.

This notes are limited to the preparation for the program and the first module. We continued to work for half a year in two more modules. The program had many positive outcomes and clearly prepared the young men and woman for life. The host companies all felt that the presence of the teams had a positive impact on their understanding of the dilemma originally presented to the program. The over all feedback

was very positive. It is a joy that many of the student/participants are still in touch with me. I have been the guest of honor at a wedding, invited to share meals with students and their families in shanty towns in Johanneeburg and, in the spring of 2018, I will receive two of the participants in Sweden to talk about future support. For me personally this is one of the most profound cross cultural experiences where I was invited in to a culture that help me develop my wisdom of how to live my life moving from independence to the realization of interdependence. Adam and I expanded our professional realtionship in addition to the father/son contact.