

# Let the Culture Speak

- what do we do in the group we call "Let the Culture Speak"?

some personal impressions written by Göran Stille, October 2007

What is 'Let The Culture Speak'? I have been asked this question many times. But each time I try to answer I hesitate, even this time. A trivial answer is that it is a number of people who meet for around 8 hours four times a year. The group involves itself in an ongoing exploration into **what real living culture is**. This exploration takes the form of a dialogue containing reflections on what is going on outside in society, between individuals in the group and for each individual in the group.

But still, in spite of this hesitation, I have participated in the group for some 10 years now. It must have created some deeper sense of value in me. But my verbal expressions did not follow easily.

## The outcome for me

As I have this experience I will push myself to go deeper. A first attempt is to describe it as: "It is everything by being nothing". But this sounds very cryptic.

A second attempt goes like this. The outcome of being in the group very much depends on me and on my state of mind. It depends on my eagerness to move ahead, to step out of old attitudes and thinking and move into unknown territory. But, it also depends on my ability to stay put when things move too fast or when interaction with others becomes too difficult or painful.

Often I have described myself as a rational human being. I have done that for many years. I almost thought I was such a creature. I believed that my conscious mind was in control of my actions. At least I thought it should be and could be. This idea existed up to some years ago.

Today I have learnt that a lot of my own actions, or lack of actions, are influenced by what goes on in some other part of my brain, in the subconscious and unconscious. For a long time this learning was in theory and "a valid principle". Now I know it as actual personal experience.

Some of such non-conscious material is purely individual. It should be regarded as such and treated with great respect. But some of it I do have in common with people around me: family, working groups, political parties, social groups, ethnic groups, nations etc. This I call culture. I participate in "Let The Culture Speak" because I want to learn more about my interactions with all those cultures around me.

## How we work in the group

In order to reach this understanding, the work in the group follows a specific but rather broad method. Teresa von Sommaruga Howard acts as conductor of the dialogue in the group. She is good at supporting the "flow" in the group and in helping us making sense of it.

**The essence of the method, as I see it, is really being there. It is to be open, present and sensitive to what happens and to reflect on it. This can easily be said but is difficult to achieve.** Furthermore we do not rest on delivered descriptions about culture or debating various views and interpretations about what it is. **We ourselves are the culture. We ourselves are the learning material.**

Our working method helps me to become conscious about a lot of things I do in my life without knowing it. The work in the group gives me hands-on-training in relating to other individuals, particularly in situations of uncertainty. I think it improves the quality of how I relate to others and to life itself. I think participating in the group has made me a better listener. I very much appreciate the opportunity of taking part in the work of this group.

Göran Stille