

Reaching for Integral Thinking in a Swedish School

An interview with Birgitta Spjuth¹

By Nick Drummond and Mats Edin, Nordic Integral
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Summary

In this interview with Headmaster Birgitta Spjuth we enquire into what level of thinking and leadership is being used to generate the solutions necessary for tackling the challenging situations now facing Swedish education. As Don Beck pointed out in our first interview, quoting Einstein, *"our problems cannot be solved using the same level and complexity of thinking that created them."* And therefore it's time to recognise this upward evolutionary potential to more complex levels of thinking and the inevitable *"steps and stages for enabling human and global emergence and the maps that will guide us."*

So are we rising to this challenge? We are definitely seeing signs of this, but the process of stretching ones mind can at times be very challenging, as Birgitta Spjuth commented in one of our discussions concerning integral thinking, *"I'm uncomfortable, but getting used to it."* In this interview she expresses a position that understandably – because it is so much a part of our Scandinavian culture – is a result of pluralistic thinking where we want to honour all perspectives and avoiding top-down hierarchical models of inner development and the need for ranking. However this level of thinking actually prohibits one from recognising a need for second tier integral maps in order to generate the quality of solutions necessary for the problems being faced. It can be expressed as, *"I'm not sure that things that we would call premodern are premodern. I mean wouldn't it be possible that a village in Afghanistan, that we call premodern, is a perspective, when in fact the culture there is just as postmodern as ours?"* While we also see the beginnings of second tier thinking, accepting the position that people do develop and there are significant differences that cannot be levelled out and must be acknowledged. This comes across in the following comments, *"It's not possible for me to not make a judgement about a person who comes from a small village in Afghanistan and is against equality. I can understand them, but I cannot accept what they say as being good." "Until we learn how meet different minds professionally we will have everything here, from fear of foreigners to xenophobia."*

As Don Beck pointed out, the Nordic region is poised on taking a leap to second tier and generating the solutions that we desperately need, as in areas like education, or to stagnate in postmodern pluralistic thinking. For if we see our role as changing to more and more complex levels of thinking and caring, then we will have to make a distinct choice as to our responsibilities as leaders from this higher position of moral responsibility in order to enable human emergence. When we choose to recognise this higher truth within ourselves we

¹ Birgitta Spjuth is Headmaster for Holmaskolan, an elementary level publicly funded school in the city of Malmö, in the south of Sweden. Birgitta was awarded the Malmö City 2003 School Leader Award for the schools language development program. Birgitta can be reached at tel. +46 40 34 31 50 or e-mail birgitta.spjuth@malmö.se

express as Birgitta, "As a leader you have fewer choices. There are certain things that I could do that I just cannot allow myself to do." Because having now reached this more mature level, "You can't allow yourself to do certain things" that were once possible at lower levels.

1. Holmaskolan²

ND: Birgitta, can you please describe Holmaskolan?

BS: The school district of Holma includes day-care (one-year old) up to school year six (twelve-years old). The school includes some five hundred children and of these approx. three hundred in years 0-6, with approx one hundred staff working in the school, preschool, nursery school, day care facilities and after-school recreation centre.

Holma is a district of Malmö City that is becoming increasingly segregated. We have now 90-95% of children here who speak a foreign language and this change has happened rapidly during the four years that I have been working here at Holmaskolan. There are very few Swedish children in our nursery school. We have three large ethnic groups including Arabian, which are the largest group, Albanian and Afghan as well as a collection of smaller groups. Both the Arabian and the Albanian groups are growing while there are fewer and fewer of the smaller ethnic groups. They are becoming more and more homogenous groups.

2. What is the context of education?

ND: What do you feel is the purpose of the school and education in the postmodern society?

BS: The school has several purposes. It has a future objective, which is to give children something to stand on when they become adults, to own knowledge about themselves in order to be and live with others in what we call society, something we really don't know all that much about. Education is also about something that exists now, what is beneficial about education right now?

I think the school, in this sense, has a special purpose if we look at how society is today. But one has to look at which school one is working and which society one is living. For me the context of Holmaskolan is that which is important. However if we live somewhere else than that school is also different as the context changes. While the limits for the school are the same, I believe what actually takes place will be different. For us it is about how these children will be able to live within a multiethnic and multicultural society. Today we are experiencing many tensions that we have to find creative ways of handling. And I believe this is one of education's main tasks. But this is more a way of being, more an attitude in fact. Then of course comes basic knowledge. Obviously education is about knowledge. But of course this concept of knowledge is very broad – What is knowledge? It covers everything from reading, writing, and arithmetic to our relationships with ourselves and other people.

ME: Certain subjects taught today will be of no use to students, but regardless of what may happen we can guarantee that they will have use of basic skills and knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

BS: This is certainly the case. For example we are investing a lot in reading, a basic knowledge, which I firmly believe will be very important. This is a skill that you can have and use as you journey. Then of course one can learn in different ways, so that learning and the disposition to learn is also knowledge.

² Holma Elementary School.

3. We see differences that are as wide as historic periods in time

ND: How would you describe the change in education and society during your years of being a teacher? What has changed?

BS: I think about the City of Malmö where I have worked since 1975. If one looks at the positive side then students are more involved, we have now a more student centred process, than for 30 years ago. While the negative side is that we have lost several on the way.

Students have a much greater possibility of developing a sense of positive self-confidence and identity than for thirty years ago. There is so much more to choose from. We have students in year five who are very impressive in their ability to express themselves, converse and assert a point of view. They can reflect on their own development and describe situations that they are not satisfied with. They can formulate an understanding about something that is not good but also about what has improved. Many also show clear development in their self-confidence, for example in being able to give a talk in front of an adult audience. That this is the case has to do with the context these students are living in which demands a lot from them. But this development process is not guaranteed in all students as many parents lack a necessary level of security themselves and are not able to affirm and encourage prosocial development in their children. So the school has an important role to play here. This is why we feel that norms and values are so important, though we can of course discuss which norms and values are important. I feel most would agree that we experience a greater sense of disrespect than before, though it is not so easy for me to say this.

As an example, I have two daughters and my eldest daughter is soon twenty-five. I don't think that there is that great a difference between when she was in year six and how it is today. But then again this has to do with where one goes to school, and I guess this can be a real difference. There are very great differences existing between different schools within this city. In fact the difference can be as great as going back one generation in time. I believe that the difference in social class and segregation is greater than for thirty years ago. It's like we are living in many different worlds at the same time. I can see this myself.

Our attitude as teachers is something crucially important and it is an area we, at least in this school, have and continue to put a lot of effort and time into. It is enticing to believe that everything is working well so long as one fulfils the norms and values that the teachers hold. But as soon as you leave this comfortable environment you find that it is not so. I believe one can easily fool oneself into believing things are okay.

We as adults are able to see these problems immediately. We see and experience the two or more distinct worlds that these students are growing up in. Of course I have my own prejudices, but I believe that if one was to, for example, work in Limhamn [a wealthy district of the City of Malmö] you would find that one would not see this problem of needing to integrate culturally and most likely not be prepared to meet these different worlds positively.

4. Key issues for education

ND: What do you see as being the future for schools in Malmö? What do feel are our key issues of concern?

BS: Basic knowledge skills and social segregation. It's really about getting to know and understand ourselves and each other better and how to behave towards other people. For students at this school it is terribly important.

It is also not very easily accomplished. Many people seem to wish that it could be done with the wave of a wand. It's like we don't want things to get better. This inertia to change makes me very tired. It's more acceptable to say; "Look, it didn't work, what did I tell you? To hell with it all!"

And I'm really not sure why this is so, why people want to be victims. But when the problems continue to get worse it becomes even more important that we learn to tackle this by understand ourselves. However many instead express "No, it won't work."

For example, when things get out of hand we can choose to behave in two ways. We either feel optimistic and say, "This is very important and we need to think carefully. What are we going to do now? Is what we are doing really effective?" Or we can choose the negative approach and say, "Damn it all! Why is it always me? I just can't be bothered. If I ignore it, it might go away."

I find this difficult to handle when one has chosen to work with children professionally and thinks this way. I find it very provocative. To me it represents an immature sense of responsibility. And as a school leader I have noticed that it is very difficult for me to handle because it provokes me so much. I can't allow myself to deal with this on a personal level. Choosing to take these things personally while working in such a school just won't work. The effect would be disastrous. We signal and say much more than we understand.

There are of course many who choose a more mature sense of responsibility. However the energy created and sent out feels much greater when it comes from the immature perspective.

5. Problems in schools

ND: What sort of problems do you have to tackle?

BS: Partly concrete objective problems like the sense of unease in the area with gang building and many break-ins. This state of unease may or may not be able to be explained, I'm not sure. Then there are children who have to learn to read more and better. Then of course is the problem of how I as a headmaster handle these problems among the staff. The first set of problems is owed by everybody, while there are other specific problems that I have because I'm Headmaster. And I have to handle this distinction in a mature way. It's like I'm sitting on different levels while at the same time having to answer with certainty what my primary intention is. It is so easy that one doesn't have time to reflect. You can lose your perspective very easily, and this is very dangerous, especially when you fall into choosing and expressing a negative perspective as we talked about earlier.

If I compare my role with that of other staff at this school, my perspective is very different. As Headmaster I must have this other, more mature perspective. I may be able to communicate it and others on the school staff may also share it, which would be good, but being school leader I must have this perspective of being clear about my primary intention.

ME: When I speak with school leaders and teachers I tell them that the higher they are in a pyramid or hierarchy, the fewer choices they have. This has to be so. It is a natural hierarchy. An Indian chief will eat last only if there is enough food for everybody. A teacher candidate has more choices, he can say; "Damn it all I'm going home. These kids are too much, they're really badly behaved." While children aged six have very many choices and little responsibility.

BS: That's right. As a leader you have fewer choices. There are certain things that I could do that I just cannot allow myself to do. You can't allow yourself to do certain things.

6. The effect of refugees and asylum-seekers

ND: What effect has the influx of refugees and asylum-seekers had on the Swedish culture and the educational climate at Homaskolan?

BS: I think this is very interesting. I spoke recently with a young twenty-year-old woman who had said she had begun listening to a radio program about people and faith and they were discussing the Middle East. We began speaking about distinctions between Middle Eastern cultures and our own culture and about what was better or worse. She said, "Without a doubt I have to say that it is better here. I cannot think that wearing a veil is good. I must think that from my context and perspective that it is far better not to wear a veil." I thought about what and how she said this and felt that it was a very mature and sensible way of thinking.

I can't take a neutral stance. And it's possibly that this can be mixed up with intelligence. But I have to believe that who I am is good for me.

ME: It seems that this woman has stepped beyond the postmodern experience and has broken thought one of its barriers. She says this because this is what she honestly believes.

BS: Yes, for sure. This becomes very strong when many more like her think and express themselves in this good way. There is no disparaging of other peoples values in what she is saying.

But going back to your question, certainly the influx of refugees is affecting us; we are certainly putting values on it, but at the same time pretending that we are not judging it. It's not possible for me to not make a judgement about a person who comes from a small village in Afghanistan and is against equality. I can understand them, but I cannot accept what they say as being good.

ME: No, take an extreme case of a father who kills his wife or daughter because she has not dressed as custom dictates and exposed her belly. We can say, "But they have their cultural traditions which we must respect." But of course it is very baroque to say such a thing. Why? Because the vast majority of our culture has developed through these more traditional ways of thinking.

BS: Exactly.

ME: But it demands a lot of courage from this young woman you described to express herself as she is doing.

BS: That hardest part is being able to distinguish things. That fact that you are able to say, "No I don't think that perspective is right, I think this perspective is much better." And one doesn't have to depreciate the other person in the process. But unfortunately this is what usually happens and we can see bad examples of this here at this school where parents are belittled and disparaged by some teachers. Until we learn to how meet different minds professionally we will have everything here, from fear of foreigners to xenophobia. But at the same time we can't like, tolerate and accept these extreme perspectives.

ME: *If we can look at things in terms of development then a nine year old will not necessary be upset by the fact that a two year old has trouble walking in a pair of new rain pants without falling over all the time. We can explain to the nine year old that he has to have patience because in time his little brother is going to learn how to walk with these awkward pants on without falling over all the time. We have to understand that there is a direction of development and that this has nothing to do with good or bad, it's just about evolutionary development. And the same is the case if you come as a refugee from a premodern society to a postmodern society. It's going to take a while to develop a more complex level of thinking. I think you gave a good example when you talked about parents who don't want their children to shower. It's going to take a while but within a year or two an adjustment will have occurred in the parents thinking and the kids will be showering.*

BS: Exactly, we must continually tell parents that their children have to shower, that it is compulsory after sports training, but at the same time see that some parents will be more difficult than others and that we don't beat ourselves over our own heads in thinking that everyone will understand this the first time they hear it. It has to be a process of growing understanding over time.

ME: *We must accept that there will always be new eleven year olds. There is a huge group of premodern or preconventional thinking people out there who are on their way here. There will always be new eight year olds, eleven year olds and fifteen year olds. There will always be children entering puberty and parents and teachers who will have to butt heads with them.*

BS: I'm not sure that things that we would call premodern are premodern. I mean wouldn't it be possible that a village in Afghanistan, that we call premodern, is a perspective, when in fact the culture there is just as postmodern as ours? I'm not sure.

ND: *No, we must be very clear about these distinctions in development and thinking, otherwise we risk not being able to see differences in evolution and complexity.*

ME: *These students you talked about who spoke with politicians are being heavily influenced by a postmodern ME culture, while many of their parents have come from a premodern culture where the focus has been a WE culture, based on our culture, traditions, family and tribe. If the group feels good, I feel good. The group goes before me and I am prepared to sacrifice myself for the good of the group. In this background I don't learn the self-confidence necessary to stand up and say to a politician, "Now listen, I think ..." Instead it is a WE feeling of bonding and staying together, and waiting for ones turn.*

This WE bonding or premodern way of thinking can be seen in good and bad forms of gang building. While the postmodern kid says instead, "I couldn't give a damn about them. I dream all day of sitting in front of a TV camera and saying, 'And here comes Britney Spears latest video, and I know her.'"

BS: We are continually handling differences, but having difficulty integrating things in a positive way. It's crazy and ends up wasting a lot of good energy. For example we have a school with lots of Arabian culture, and I mean fine culture, it's actually very unique. Too often we think about problems without looking at valuable contributions. All too often we think of cultural integration as being about nothing more than new sorts of food to eat.

ME: *You speak about assimilation, adaptation, and becoming integrated.*

BS: Yes. There are different ways of thinking and understanding that I find very interesting. Arabic is very different and therefore very exciting. Another example is when I sit and talk with Arabian fathers about the need for showering. They have another way of discussing that I find exciting to engage in. They negotiate the whole time. You put forward your best position and they put forward their best position, so that in the end you reach an agreement, just like bargaining at a bazaar. They reach a win – win resolution in a way we are not familiar with. We should be able to integrate this much better than we do. It's easier for us to focus on seeing problems, which we have many, rather than identifying our resources.

7. The school's psychosocial work environment

ND: In the August the National Teachers federation published its annual work environment report study.³ Several schools in Malmö where near to being closed because the threat of violence had become a major problem. Recently another rapport was published showing that 3 out of the top 10 schools in Sweden were in towns close to Malmö. Why is there such variation?

BS: I think this has to do with where one works, but also what one has for expectations and volition. Certainly it can be very difficult if your expectations are that the school should be a certain way, while reality is very different. Reality can be very difficult and tough. This shouldn't be underestimated.

It is certainly very difficult working as a secondary level schoolteacher and having twenty-five unmotivated students. It is a hopelessly difficult situation that anyone can understand. If one doesn't feel this way one isn't sane.

While if you work at a primary school out in the country it's most probably going to be a very tranquil and pleasant experience. Children are wonderful until they start crying, throwing stones and hitting each other. It really has to do with ones ability to handle all these different situations. It's difficult for me to say why it is difficult, because there is no doubt that it is difficult, but one can't say that. What does one do to change that which is difficult? It is difficult being one teacher in the face of all this trying to change the situation. One could possibly change ones way of working. You could seek support from others. One could possibly split up the class. One person cannot do this. And if one feels that one is not being given the right skills and supported it is going to very difficult indeed.

8. Social intelligence. What needs to be focused on?

ND: What theories and models are being used at Holmaskolan to handle the challenges you have described?

We can see both positive and negative spirals. We have a problem with many conflicts existing between and with students, staff and parents. And this has a lot to do with different

³ In August the Teachers Federation in Sweden published a report based on an annual work environment study. The report presented two pictures. A positive picture being that 24% of teachers feeling that their work situation has improved during the last year, while only 40 % being satisfied. It found that 11% of teachers had been exposed to direct threats by their students, 3% being exposed to violence, and 29 % exposed to insults and harassment. 40% of these teachers chose not to report it to their employers. The city of Malmö is experiencing increasing numbers of students carrying weapons. In Malmö alone, Sweden's third largest city, several schools where near to being closed because the threat of violence had become such a problem. Teachers have one of the highest incidences of sick leave, with 9% of all teachers in Sweden on sick leave for periods longer than one month.

perspectives regarding handling conflicts. This results in a negative spiral of much time and energy being consumed. Teachers feel that there should be a better cooperation between them and parents and the result is that classroom teaching suffers.

On the positive side there exist a lot of things that are good. We have a long tradition of health education and environmental thinking. We have a committed and engaged staff. We have a large interest in language development. So it's very important that we reinforce the things that we have that are positive.

Last year we were able to start using the Aggression Replacement Training program. We have four specially trained teachers in the program and it is being used with students as well as for staff training.

One of the things that we have done is develop a common language-teaching program called "Holmamodellen", that is used from preschool and up to grade six. The program took a year to develop and evolved all staff actively taking part. It has had very positive results. We were able to receive a grant of 500.000 SEK for purchasing books, training staff and employing a part time librarian. We now have a fantastic library. A lot is focused on developing the students reading skills and self-identity. It is actually a model that is continually developing and involves all teachers.

We have also done a lot for and with parents. This includes parent education programs and a parent council. We also developed what we call a Contract of Cooperation entered into between the school and the individual student's parents. Students, parents and staff were actively involved in developing the contract. A process in itself that took time to develop. It can be seen as an individual development plan in regards to ones social competence. We realised that this contract isn't worth much if students aren't actively encouraged to develop and learn prosocial forms of behaviour, i.e. social and emotional learning. It seems somewhat uncomfortable and belittling for me to feel that students have to learn this at school, but unfortunately it is not something given from ones family.

To help with this we developed a program for teaching prosocial behaviour and were able to base this on fourteen interpersonal skills from the program Aggression Replacement Training as well as combining exercises from other programs as those used in emotional intelligence (EQ) training. All teachers were involved in developing the program. The material is very good and all classes are expected to work with it each week as a basis in developing prosocial behaviour and prevent bullying. Involving everyone in the development was done to create a feeling of responsibly and consensus amongst all staff for its implementation, that no one would resist its use. Many teachers, but not all, use it regularly. At this stage it is still left to the individual teacher to plan. I feel that if everyone is in agreement about the problem and we have a tool that everyone feels is good, then there should exist an individual responsibility to use it. This is true for most, but there are some teachers who choose not to use the material. Despite having reached a common agreement when it comes to down to actually *doing* something one chooses not to partake and using the argument that one doesn't that it takes too much time. I am very impatient and want things to change but realise that this can take a formidable number of years.

We have also been trying to engage parents in the school. We have tested several different parent education programs. And we have gone from having a parent committee to having a parent council. This involves at least two parents from each class. Nearly all classes are now represented. There has also been a good mix of nationalities, gender and language groups. The

parent council has now reached agreement on five key issues after lots of discussion. My role has been to call and facilitate the meetings while not letting my voice dominate. I hope it can be as engaging for them next term, but who knows. We have now also held a "parent café" evening with over sixty parents. These will be focused on different themes allowing discussion with guest speakers. What with unrest in the neighbourhood, we have spoken about gangs and what happens when parents are not outside. An important issue concerns children staying out late without adult supervision.

I have also seen the need for us to make better use of the decreasing resources used in the district and available for student health care. So to make better use of our resources I brought together the different stakeholders in the district. This actually later became a political directive for all schools and districts to follow, but this felt okay for us because we were already started, and it was something that we actually saw a need for. The stakeholder group includes myself as school principal and group coordinator, our school nurse, representatives from police, MKB (Malmö City Housing), social services, the local sport associations' coordinator, youth field workers, the school parent council, an international public health advisor, an Afghan woman employed by the local authorities as a "link worker" between different ethnic groups and society, also a young Albanian woman representative from the local youth council.

The group has decided on certain things that it wants to work with. One of these is after school activities. Earlier this year we started a range of groups including Hip-Hop, art, guitar, piano, basketball, bandy, and drama without being certain how we could finance it all. We sought funding and received a large grant. The program is now continuing and working very well and has received large interest and demand. In addition we also have girl groups that our school nurse runs. So together we have been able to organise and support a wide range of after school activities.

The stakeholder group has also received funding whereby we have been able to have a day at a conference centre brainstorming and discussing which problems to focus on, one being the problem of children being out late without adult supervision. This was later taken back to each of the stakeholders, with both staff and parents also seeing this as a key issue. The parent council then accepted responsibility to organise a parent discussion night on that theme and invite in the local police to inform and discuss gang building. The public health advisor came and talked about the importance of sleep along with our district school doctor.

***ME:** A pre-conventional thinking person accepts that everyone cannot be an expert. So they ask the expert in a very natural manner. And if the expert answers as an expert it becomes a very rewarding meeting of minds.*

9. Leadership

***ME:** I think you have been talking about this next question of leadership the whole time. What kind of leadership do you feel is necessary as a school leader and teacher today? You have already said a lot about this, about having different perspectives and in the end about not having a choice. You have also asked, "What do I want as a school leader or teacher?" If I have a vision, then despite whomever I meet, students, parents or teachers, if I really want to reach for a vision, then the problems I meet on the way will be insignificant. Like parents who before having a child wish it to be healthy, but when they have the child in most cases contend with whatever difficulties may arise because the choice has already been made. So what kind of leadership do you feel is needed today?*

BS: Actually this is very good question. I have often wondered recently if I could be a leader somewhere else. One could certainly be a leader for other organisations as well. I can really only answer for myself. But I must be enthusiastic, interested in and committed to what I am doing because this is what motivates me. I have difficulty sitting back and not being fully committed. At the same time one needs a sense of indifference, though this may sound cold. One is committed, but at the same time one must be able to let it go. It is very demanding to hold this perspective all the time.

ND: Do you at times feel frightened in your role as school leader?

BS: I feel concerned more than frightened because I know how much energy this is going to take. I can see things that are going to happen, but I try not to let it affect me personally. It's not a personal fear. I have two grown children myself and I am very concerned for their future. In fact I'm more concerned for the future now than I was before when they were younger.

ME: I also feel frightened but I don't let it stop me. My relationship to this feeling is very important. You certainly know what frightened is, but it doesn't seem like you let it stop you.

BS: No, definitely not. When I am here, I am here and I am fully concerned with working with that which I feel is important.

10. Reflecting on Spiral Dynamics

ND: I have discussed the value systems model of Spiral Dynamics with you at least three times over the last two years. What are your thoughts?

BS: I can't really accept it. I am very...I feel that my analysis of the world is different and that this model is based on something else. In a way I feel it is very un-materialistic [subjective] for me. I really can't put a finger on it. I haven't really thought about it that much Nick. Something about it bothers me, but I'm not sure what it is. It's not that I think that the conclusions it draws are wrong, but the way.

ND: Can you describe your understanding of the model and what you believe it tries to convey?

BS: It's about, of course, the process of change and evolution in society over time. Social development, am I wrong? Both inner and outer dimensions.

ND: Yes. It's about recognising how our inner psychological value systems can and do develop in relationship to our outer problems and the Life Conditions we are forced to manage. For example if we go back to the problems we faced one hundred years ago in Sweden we were using a quite different way of thinking in order to survive than we use today. Each time we are forced to tackle more complex problems there is an impulse to develop a more complex level of thinking. If this weren't so then it would be sufficient for all of us to continue thinking in a postconventional way.

BS: I think this is right, but how does one know that it, this way is a good way to think. What I mean is that there are different cultures. I don't know all that much about different cultures at all...but I think that one can think in another way about this.

ND: *If you think about your own development from childhood to adulthood, you can see a distinct evolution in your way of thinking about yourself and the world. The contexts that you are able to think about have become ever larger and ever more complex, as your own identity and thinking have developed. Consequently there has occurred an inner psychological development and this has occurred as a result of the problems you are tackling and the fact that they have become ever more complex.*

BS: But unfortunately, I'm not so certain that what you are talking about is an automatic or evolutionary process. I mean in what is meant by psychological development. It's possible that there are many people who are actually living in our society and who have a way of thinking...who have a psychological mindset for tackling things that dates back to the stone age. Do you understand? There is nothing automatic.

ND: *Exactly. If we take Malmö City as an example, there are many people living here, who have as Mats and I are saying, a pluralistic or postmodern way of thinking for making sense of the world, but not everyone is thinking on that level. Spiral Dynamics describes, as you know, eight different levels. For simplicity, we can refer to these levels as preconventional, conventional och postconventional, or premodern, modern och postmodern. If we where to speak with a group of fifteen year olds it is quite likely that very few would be thinking or sharing values of individuality, equality, egalitarianism and humanism as espoused by a postmodern mindset. We would instead find most thinking from a very ME focused individualistic and materialistic mindset, one that is more attune with modernism. We would even find many who were still very premodern in their thinking and expressing a WE focused tribalistic mindset based on a gang or group identity. Neither the premodern nor the modern thinking teenager would be expressing their identity and view of the world from a postmodern mindset. You and I meet individuals thinking in this way every day. We live at a time in history when we have this whole spectrum in ways of thinking.*

BS: But how does one know ... I'm not sure my self because I'm not that familiar with it ...but what is the driving force behind this process? Because if one goes back historically I believe this range exists within all societies. Could it be that it is driven forward by some sort of winning force, which shows itself as being something feasible?

ND: *Exactly, that there exists a driving force behind this.*

BS: That's right, and it drives change and development in some way. But I'm not so sure.

ND: *It seems that one of the greatest driving forces is the problems and Life Conditions in the environment that we are living in. But why do we change? It has to do both with our outer environment and our inner ego barriers. We meet individuals who are open, closed or arrested to the possibility for inner development and change. So there is both the outer Life Conditions but also the inner psychological environment. We meet people who never develop past a modern perspective, they will never change. And then we meet others who are more open to change. Sweden is interesting because, being a postmodern pluralistic thinking society, it has a whole spectrum of possibilities.*

BS: Yes, this is what exists, that's true.

ND: *But at the same time we meet many who are closed in their development, who are not open to developing themselves to more complex levels of thinking. Because of this our social*

institutions such as schools and families are not actively creating the favourable climates necessary to further this potential within us. I think we can recognise that we do not wish to return to a premodern or modern way of thinking. We want to promote institutions that can give our children and youth at least a postmodern way of thinking as well as help them go beyond this stance.

BS: Yes, you can create an environment where you believe your children can have success. So it is about this as well. What do you feel brings success? Schools face this same challenge; what brings about success? It would be awful if we said that what was good before was also appropriate now. How do you know it is not this that is driving us? I mean in a way this is about a way of valuing. No Nick...I feel myself... I have difficulty...I become very suspicious when something becomes like ... when it has even the smallest suggestion to something – religious is probable wrong – that is too strong a word, but I can't find a more appropriate word to describe my difficulty for accepting this model. Do you understand what I mean?

ND: You dislike hierarchy?

BS: Yes something like that, there is something there that I'm uncertain about.

ND: The distinction that something is better than something else?

BS: Yes, but I can also accept that this exists.

ND: That one perspective is better than another perspective?

BS: I'm not sure, there is something that implies an implicit faith in this that I'm having trouble with. But I am not sure why. I'm definitely not familiar and well informed enough. I don't know.

ND: But it seems that you are open to continuing this thinking and discussion?

BS: Yes, there is definitely something to continue that is certain. One shouldn't think that it is finished.

ND: Thank you very much for this interview Birgitta and we look forward to engaging with you again soon.