

The Story of the Group Analytic Institute in Stockholm

A narrative

A background

Group and analysis have a long history in Sweden. Many psychoanalysts in Sweden had in the 1960th an interest in group dynamics and group psychotherapy. Ezriel was invited and came over to Stockholm and had seminars and supervised, in the house where EGATIN is meeting today. Groups were conducted by group-pioneers as Nils Haak, Olof Billingberg, Thorsten Sjovall and Kjell Ohrberg, members of the Swedish Psychoanalytical Association. The group experience aimed at one's personal development. This was in parallel with psychoanalysis and you were (at that time) not prohibited to think that the group experience might highlight something not noticed in psychoanalysis, for instance Man's social nature.

One read and discussed Slavson *A textbook in Analytic Group Psychotherapy*, Bion *Experiences in Groups and other papers*, S.H Foulkes and E.J. Anthony *Group Psychotherapy, the Psychoanalytic Approach*, Stock Whitaker and Lieberman *Group psychotherapy through the group process* (the most quoted titles). The interest for groups

could at that time be found everywhere in Sweden. One found it among students at the Universities, among economists and sociologists in the field of business administration and management and consultants concerned with the organisation and management of labour conditions and the employees' statutory right of participation in decision-making, but not so very much among medical, psychiatric professionals. Groups were part of the social engineering system social workers tried to develop. Groups were part of the educational system. Change and development was associated with work in groups.

A hard core of neuroscience has always dominated Swedish psychiatry, so it was at the fringes of that system group psychotherapy got a hold:

1. *Mentalvårdsbyran*: The premises where EGATIN meet today, then *Mentalvårdsbyrån* (Centre for mental health services) designed for psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically based counselling, psychotherapy and group psychotherapy. The County of Stockholm run it.

2. *Children's Village Skå* - a therapeutic society for antisocial children and their families.

3. *Erica foundation* for the psychotherapy of children and the education of child- psychotherapists.

4. The *Institution of Education at the University of Stockholm* and the *Swedish Association for Group Psychotherapy* arranged twice, in the form of two years courses, a basic education in Group psychotherapy, in total for about 100 students, 1968 - 1970

Eric Steadman, who came from Henderson Hospital, London, and the psychologists Lars Lorentzon , Hans Gordon and Lennart Svensson organized 1971 *the Institute for Psychotherapy*. Lorentzon and Gordon had appointments at the Institution of Education at the University. The Institute arranged commissioned education in group-psychotherapy in Stockholm and in different parts of the country. Lorentzon and Gordon were among the founding members of the Group Analytic Institute 1980.

The followers of Klein/ Bion (our TAVI-tradition) and the rest, including S.H.Foulkes' Group-Analysis (later the founders of Institute) fell apart. The theories of projective identification were attractive and could be used to explain "what happens in groups". This was fashionable and matched the growing individualistic tendency. Bion's intellectual stance was obviously enticing, while Foulkes was supposed to lack good theory. Psychoanalysts who were interested in groups often chose the TAVI-tradition. In 1975 we had the first group relation conference in Sigtuna, a small town close to Stockholm. The staff (most of them psychologists) succeeded in building a tradition, here in Sweden called AGSLO, in close collaboration with group relations conferences all over the world. It has a reasonable financial basis as the employer pays the participant's conference fee because it is about organizational dynamics, about job and leadership.

The Swedish Association for Group Psychotherapy celebrated its 25-years-anniversary in 1986. Speakers from abroad were Hans Bosse, Caroline Garland and Colin James.

1977 was the Institute of Group Analysis (London) invited by the Association for Group Psychotherapy to arrange a three days workshop in Stockholm. From London came Malcolm Pines, Liesel Hearst, James Home and Colin James. The workshop was successful. It attracted participants from all over Sweden and from different schools of thought.

1978 the Association for Group Psychotherapy and the Group-Analytic Society, London arranged the 4th European Symposium in Group Analysis in Stockholm.

An Institute is organized 1980.

At the end of the 1970th the enthusiasm for groups had ebbed away. In Sweden a movement grew aiming at some form of authorization of psychotherapists and suddenly the experienced psychotherapists' and psychoanalysts' interest in group-psychotherapy was dead. They became teachers, the Teachers, and supervisors, the Supervisors, in courses leading to authorization as psychotherapist. One can easily see this as an adjustment to the market. Psychoanalysts began to have problems finding analysands. The psychotherapists, who now multiplied, needed to be provided for by public money and the authorities handling public money asked for rules "whom to pay for what". Individual psychotherapy was definitely in focus.

1980 Lars Lorentzon proposed that we should form a Group Analytic Institute and so we did, in order to preserve a group analytic tradition and culture when individual psychoanalytical psychotherapy seemed to dominate the market. He wrote in the inaugural paper: "With group analysis we don't refer to a fixed group-therapeutic method. For us it is an approach where the group and what happens in the group, the process of the group, is basic. The group conductor's attention is focused on the group's capability to develop and analyse what goes on, in order to promote the individuals' insight. Group analysis as a tradition started in England by the work of S.H.Foulkes and his collaborators. We hope to build on that praxis and develop group analysis 'in Swedish'".

The Institute arranged some workshops and managed the first years to attract many participants. But we came to a sudden stop. The self-reflective group seemed to be outmoded.

One of the founding members, Goran Ahlin MD had an appointment at the County Council of Stockholm, with a task to arrange and effect training in psychotherapy according to the rules now laid down by Socialstyrelsen leading to authorization as psychotherapists, for employees of the County

Council. He built an institution for this at Langbro Hospital. The rapid development of a sell-and-bye-system had as one consequence a freedom to create courses as long as the rules of the Board of Social Welfare were respected, but as another consequence a burden of a fragile economy dependent on the market of the County Council. Goran Ahlin started a three years training in Group analytic group-psychotherapy, matching the rules for authorization, at this institution at Langbro Hospital (today: Sällskapet, a private society). He could burrow teachers and supervisors from the Group Analytic Institute but for obvious organizational and financial reasons the Institute had no influence over the training.

In month June, for more than 10 years now, the Institute has arranged a 3-days introductory course to Group Analysis. How many participants it attracts, is very much depending on the "economy of Sweden". Participant's fee is often paid by third party.

The Institute started Group Analytic Seminars (beginning 1986), three hours every fortnight, open for the members of the Institute and members of the Association for Group Psychotherapy. This seminar was free, but it built on the active participation of its members. The seminar went on for years (it still goes on, but not so frequently today) and those who had attended it regularly, but not members of the Institute, were recruited to become members of the Institute.

The Institute meets every month. It is often a rather informal meeting, Today, May 2003, the Institute has 16 members.