



PARALLEL PAPERS II
FRIDAY 7th JULY 1600-1715
ROOM IV - 7.0.22

Louise Tonelli & Michelle S. May
*Transmogrification: An apprehensive
RIDE through dusk or dawn in
free(dom) towards gelassenheit*

Robben Island a small island of the coast of South Africa, is a place where throughout the country's history South African society has dumped those parts of itself which the majority/ minority felt uncomfortable with. The island is home to the Robben Island Diversity Experience (RIDE), a group relations conference, held annually to study South African Diversity Dynamics.

RIDE enables individuals to explore shared experiences in a contained hygienic environment, ethereal yet impermeable, as members arrange and re-arrange chairs in a symphony of chaos and structure promoting and inhibiting cooperation towards task performance. Ultimately leaving behind chairs, while carrying with them, only the dream or nightmare of having been part of something not quite tangible yet always present in the mind.

The aim of this study is to understand members' transmogrification and what this means for the individual and the organization. A qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology research design exploring the experiences of five RIDE members who attended the event. Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) the applied research method enabled data collection from a focus group, analysis of data (themes generated by the participants) and interpretation by the researchers from a system psychodynamics perspective.

The members of Ride, speak of "change to the core of a person" not just a "change to the shop front". To ultimately "letting go" of "their cherished philosophies- gelassenheit" However the members experience the process as "dominated" by a sense of "free(dom)" that feels as though it must be attained. This makes them "dom" (stupid). It is a "shock to see the self". During this "shocking" experience it "opens the messiness inside". The "messiness must be allowed to happen" but "not be allowed to happen without purpose". It is like a "pot spilling over in the kitchen which is fine" it can be "cleaned up however if it spills over in the other rooms it becomes a problem".

As employees move through the shadows, in the sway of organisational life with all its disruptions, the conversation could add value to understanding conscious and unconscious motives of group members, in a cultural space, where members share a common experience. Which may never have been explored from the perspective of an individual as an individual. The conscious ethereal allusiveness of the phantasy of organisational development perhaps transmogrifying unconsciously towards gelassenheit.

Louise Tonelli

Industrial and Organisational Psychologist,
Lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, University of South Africa (UNISA)

Michelle S. May

Clinical Psychologist and Organisational Consultant, Professor in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, University of South Africa (UNISA)