



## RE[FRAME]: SEEING SOMETHING ELSE

“He has nice boots”, said a well-known business tycoon to a chairwoman of a large family business, commenting on the attire of Roberto Verganti during a conference at the Stockholm School of Economics. This is not the way one typically judges the standing of a scholar. Two years later that chairwoman was attending our program.

How do you see new things? Perhaps when you travel, when you change job, when you fall in love or simply when you perceive an anomaly. In February 2022 we launched the RE[FRAME] program to help leaders to elevate their capability to see new things. We thought we might emigrate to Patagonia if we wouldn't succeed. At the same time, we thought, if we succeed with the program, a visit to Patagonia could still be done as a celebration.

We didn't go to Patagonia. We bought a house in Skogsö outside Saltsjöbaden instead. The mind is amazing when it comes to creating meaning. There is always a third alternative if we search for it. We finished the program in October 2022 and here is my summary.

*Malin Pedro*

*This reflection is part of my discovery journey. If you would like to receive my logbook every second month, please click [here](#).*



## THE DOG SEES THE CAT BEFORE YOU DO

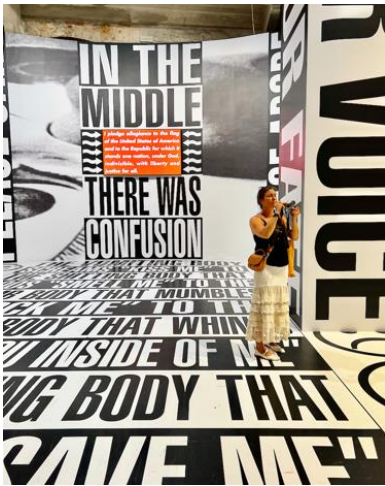
I would like to address the question of what framing is before going into reframing. The mind is always filled with something, and reality offers to many stimuli every second that the brain can't handle. This is well known from neuroscience. The things that get in is somewhat relevant. In systemic thinking there are theories of autopoiesis and self-regulating system which means that the mind is getting back to its own logic. An ox for an Italian designer is the quality of the leather; for a farmer the ox is a tool to work the land and the chef want the perfect steak. The Hindu might think something else. So, reframing starts with perspectives. If you walk from the bus to your home with the eyes of a dog you will quickly notice a cat hiding behind the curtains of a window, but if you are a geologist, you might notice the different textures of the soil, and an urban architect might wonder about why





traffic is so intense tonight. Each function, professional, role and human tend to focus on different things when interpreting reality. We know this, but it is also simple to forget it in daily life.

### HAPPILY IRRELEVANT

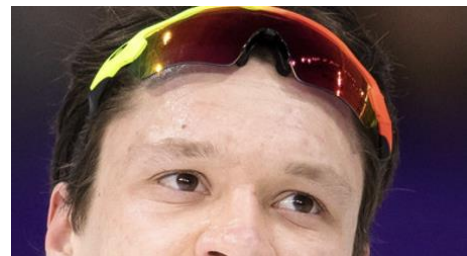


When we face the confusion of the world, we make sense what lies in front of us by wearing a simplifying filter. In other words, we “frame”. Reframing happens when we change filter: we pay attention to other things that make more sense in a changing world. The challenge is that, if you have been very successful, it is hard to do something new in life. You could stay like this forever. But you can’t, the success of the past is not the success of the future. Continue as you do, and you will simply become happily irrelevant.

How could the Illy family not see Nespresso coming? They simply thought it was not an espresso; it was chemicals that made the white foam and not the pressure as in a real espresso. We tend to get stuck in the myth of our minds. They make us feel safe and happy.

### NILS

When you already have seen a lot, how can you see new? If you won the Olympics, what is the next step? Speed skater Nils van der Pohl won two gold medals at the 2022 Beijing Olympics and the way he prepared for the ordeal was to say the least nonorthodox. Around every sport there is a view of what to do to reach the top. Nils changed the view on several of the accepted myths around his sport. Like myths, frames are invisible. Nils challenged them and designed his own philosophy. He also made this philosophy open and available right after he won the medals. Reframing literally kneads our way of thinking. It can occur in the depth of our identity as humans, but also more broadly in organizational transformation. How can we do this? How can we become better in reframing ourselves, and in supporting a team, an organization, or an entire ecosystem to reframe? These are the questions we brought into our program.



### A PROGRAM ON THE ROAD



The RE[FRAME] program was carried out for nine months between February and October 2022. The training structure is not like regular education, but a hybrid between classic seminars in digital and physical setting, a reversed mentorship program (with students from SSE), and action learning. The latter implied to address organizational change activities that participant chose themselves and involved the participants' stakeholders. Learning occurred “in the context” rather than in the

classroom, and therefore traveling and engagement with the participants location was important. Participants came in pairs, because dialogue in the program was essential, and a pair is the most intimate form of dialogue; and it also facilitated stronger impact on their own organizations. In short, it was a course without a classic list of predefined topics, since the learning depends on the specific participants personal questions and business challenges. Unveiling what was the most pressing questions to address was a core part of the dialogues with the

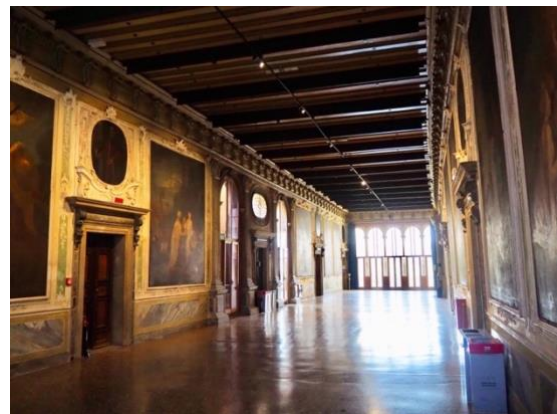


participants and the pairs, well before the first plenary session took place. Three digital modules, three physical modules and a tailored training effort in the participants' own organization meant that the program was constantly “on the road” and shaking up many managers' calendars. It worked because we deeply wanted to reach more people in the ecosystem of the participants. The plenary physical meetings took place in Stockholm, in Venice and in Tuscany with external speakers and Program Director Malin Pedro, Professor Roberto Verganti and Professor Mattia Bianchi.

## WE TRAVELED TO VENICE AND WE TALKED TO TREES

We started the program with a digital session, by exploring collective intelligence and the capability to meta reflect about the phenomena of leadership and oneself. We combined this with reframing exercises to find one self's question.

Then we moved into our first physical day of the course. And the first surprise stroke: as a participant welcomed us to the newly built food laboratory of her corporation, a thunderstorm turned the electric power off in the entire building. Chef Jessie, from Urban Deli, made it next to impossible to cook without power. She improvised vegetarian food for all of us on an outdoor grill. It couldn't be a better start for us. In a fantastic old barn, we got to enjoy the welcome dinner in the rays of light from lit candles. There we talked about what marked our childhood and then created what, we believe, are our first frames of behavioral patterns. We then explore hermeneutics as the philosophy of interpretation. It might not have been a well-known and easily eaten subject, but it was still a powerful umbrella for the concept of reframe. The next day took us directly into the heart of art and the practical act to become an artist oneself. Other episodes to tell is the moment when The Heckscher-Ohlin room at SSE filled up with sparkling energy when ten students arrived to meet their sparring partner in the program.



We opened our second digital session with a key question in reframing: how do we see things when we are immersed into them? This point was risen by Zelensky, in his remarkable digital communication, referring to how populations may take freedom for granted when they have it. We then explored two important elements to rise the quality of dialogue for reframing: Professor Patricia Shaw invited us to step up with courage and engage in conversations that might not occur otherwise, whereas Professor Amy Edmonson introduced the concept of psychological safety, as a condition to enable others to speak up.





We then traveled to Venice for our second physical plenary session. Here we dived into art reflection at the Venice Biennale, sustainability, business challenges, the art of thinking as a pair like Sherlock Holmes and Watson and different gestalt methods inspired by the venetian Commedia dell'Arte. The program entered the last phase with a digital session on Family business. For the last physical session, we were invited to a private villa in Sansepolcro, in the Tuscan countryside. Here, blessed by an unusual warm October sun, we focused on embracing the practice of reframing, supported by reflections on systemic thinking and living systems. The participants took time to forge their personal commitments and ended as researchers drawing their own map of the reframing theories.

“We talked to trees, do you understand? We talked to trees”, said one of the participants, senior leader of large shipping corporation, to a group interested in the Reframe program in an afternoon in late November 2022. “And you know what? It worked! The trees talked back to us”, the leader continued.



We didn't just talk to trees in the program. We moved inside the organizations to practice reframing on their own business challenges. One of the participants seized this work to define a vision for employee engagement, and two other participants, during two workshops, decided that the language and concepts from reframing would become part of the DNA of the organization.

### **REFRAMING AS POTTERY MAKING**

At the beginning of the program, the participants had to wear a white and red-striped shirt and were asked to illustrate their own identity in the shape of a flag, which was later sewed in full scale. We finished the program with the crafts from Skogsö east of Stockholm. Handmade ceramic vases from recycled clay from Sweden and Italy were produced as course diplomas for the participants. The training had created unique values for everyone involved.



### **CONTEXTS OF REFRAMING**

Usually when we think of frames it is about what an individual sees or what a particular organization sees. In a broader sense, it's just as much about what an entire ecosystem sees as more meaningful. The electric car was initially a small car that was usually found in city centers like Paris. Today, the electric car is a luxury car and parking lots, and villas are being modified to fit the new family car. Reframing therefore happens at three levels: one level is the individual person, who can reshape herself, her vision and purpose and life; a second level, is the organization and ecosystem of players who collectively give meaning to a context; a third level concerns things (such as products, like the electric car).





## THE PRACTICE OF REFRAMING

There are many theories and a rich flora of tools for reframing. They pertain to different fields: mental training, psychology, psychosynthesis, crises management, systemic thinking, design. How to do it? Tools to be used are many, and I will mention some in this paper.

A good practice is to externalize, that is to take out and represent your own thoughts. You may write them down, draw them, pick metaphorical images, or other ways. Whatever you do this representation is the subject of your meta reflection on your view and your underlying assumptions. A meta-reflection that you can do alone or together with others. And that you will forge continuously in your process. This meta-reflection is fueled by your thoughts and your knowledge, your ideology, but also by your feelings, your intuition, your imagination, your fantasy, your senses, and your physical awareness.



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How do you engage and move forward in this meta-reflection? Often the process is activated by something that create a meaningful disturbance. This means not something that is in the space of familiar, likable, or dislikable. Rather, it is something you long for, or something unexpected that you are fascinated about, a question that continuously nudge inside your head, or a person who does something that intrigue you. Keywords are longing, fascination, fantasy, novelty, intriguing. There, if you are alert, you stop for a moment.

Reframing is favored by a particular mindset where the worst thing you can do, in front of a “disturbance” is to make up your mind quickly, “because you know”.

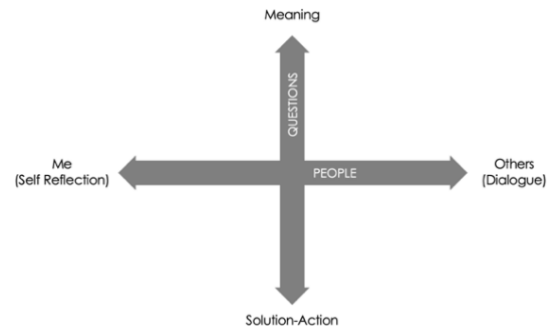
It starts from a neutral, exploratory, and curious mind. From here, we do not provide answers, but we imagine hypotheses. We act on them, as reframing arise from practice and tickling the system. It's all about trial and error. We tickle the system, and we test ourselves. Then we actively listen to the reactions we get back from others and from ourselves. This makes us a reflexive practitioner. Attention to feedback and signals is central. A never-ending story. The process of reframing never ends. It is based on social construction, as reality is created in between people. Therefore, dialogue and questions are such central elements. In this continuous process, we start by seeing where we stand and what is within the field of seeing, expand and open the image to new interpretations, and then let go and embrace the new.





## SEEING WHERE I'M STANDING

Seeing where I'm standing means to start by exposing your own frame. You can do this by thinking about possible solutions or actions and moving up in a meta-reflection about the meaning of that solution or action. This reflection moves between moments of self-reflection (within ourselves) and moments of dialogue with others. You can begin anywhere within these four fields. In front of a disturbance, you stop and dive deeper by reflecting on what you see (the solution), the meaning of it, alone or with others. This is the first step in which you put forward a hypothesis. The next step is to be ready to question this hypothesis, which often are highly influenced by your pre-understanding, and open yourself up for other interpretations.



## OPENING UP

How do you open up to new interpretations? Reframing is about brain training and about gently but firmly questioning your own truth. Anxiety can appear just like in any creative process, as you do not know where you are going. You do not even know when to end, and you may feel you are wasting your time. You need to trust the undefined and take help from someone else.

Traveling to unfamiliar environments because it is seen as a particularly important act as we physically cross the boundaries of what we see as normal and familiar. You can also switch roles with someone to gain new insights from someone else's perspective. Or you can invite interpreters who investigate similar problems but from another domain.

Again, exploring new ways to represent your thoughts can help you see new things. For example, metaphorical work and stories are creative tools that can be used to find new angles when thoughts get stuck. Or you can design an experience or prototype that responds back to you. There are ways to train the mindset and sensitivity to see what things and situations tell you. Art and nature, in this respect, are powerful mind trainers. Therefore, we visited the Biennale in Venice or interviewed trees.

## EMBRACING

Notwithstanding reframing is a continuous process, a moment comes when you need to commit to a path. In other words, the moment comes to insert the clay vase into the oven. Now it must be solidified to maintain its shape. And at the same





time, the moment comes to let the old frames go. In other words, to leave the old room and walk in a new space. Write down your manifesto: what you believe in and what you don't. You can also find new representations that fix the image in your memory and also dedicate time to close the old path, in good terms. There was nothing wrong there, but it does not make sense anymore in your new world. An individual or collective ritual can help you set the transition from the old to the new. Until it's time to reframe again.

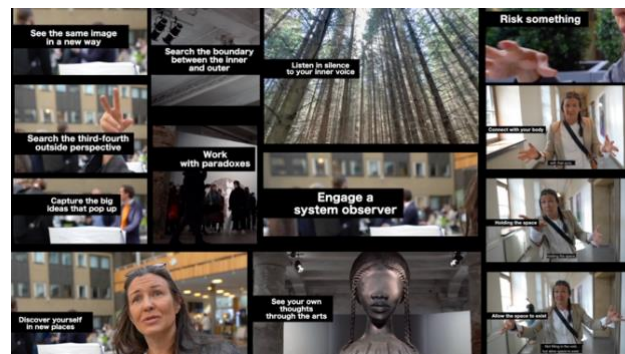


## THE WRITER

I wrote this article as a way to reframe myself from the role of a Program Director and Faculty at Executive Education SSE into something that is still to be discovered. A documentary filmmaker followed me during a week in May 2022 and the result can be seen in a [10 min film](#). We asked the program participants to write a paper consisting of 1000 words about a leadership question they were curious about. To mirror the instructions we gave them, I exposed myself in the short film and wrote this paper on my own process. If you ask someone to reframe themselves, you should be the first in line to try it yourself.

|          | Current Story   | New Story   |          |
|----------|---|---|----------|
| MEANING  | So far I thought about me as...<br>Create consciousness and courage in people's and organizations lives.                              | I will think about me as...<br>Raise my Voice and explore   | MEANING  |
| CONTEXT  | Because...<br>Mother, Single<br>Leadership training and group dynamics for 20 years. I wanted to be in the most advanced environment! | Because...<br>I've been doing what I've been doing<br>A new house in Skogås   | CONTEXT  |
| SOLUTION | For example ...<br>Program Director of SSE.<br>Education within Systemic thinking.<br>UN  | For example ...<br>Travels to Italy with extended family.<br>Learn Italian<br>UN asks for systemic development and leadership training<br>Flexible time, slack! | SOLUTION |
| SKETCH   |   |    | SKETCH   |

I started my career in the Armed Forces as an officer in the reserve. I was the first woman from my Infantry brigade. Savings from a SFOR mission in Bosnia made it possible to pay for a pilot school in US. I arrived back to Sweden in the age of twenty-two without any luggage, since it got stolen. But I had my flight license. And right in the moment when I reached the dream I had fought for, I realized that these dreams were not what I wanted to work with.



Mental training, sport psychology, crises therapy and psychosynthesis, while parachuting in the Army, were my way into consulting. After a period into different consultancies in Stockholm, I came across group dynamic and systemic thinking, which took me to the Danish systemic company Attractor. I then continued as a Program Director at Executive Education at Stockholm School of Economics. After four years I ended in June 2021. During a week in silence and slow walks in the forest, I listened to what my heart silently told me. "You need to be free, until you know your purpose again."

