

Four Days in France¹: An Integral Interlude

Tam Lundy

A Call to Home

When the invitation came, I knew I had to go. A professional gathering on international development, sponsored by Integral University (IU). Like the theory that informed it, the event was itself a bit of a groundbreaker, the first that IU has offered. And so I went, to meet others who are cheerfully greeting the challenge to apply integral theory in practical ways.

Four days in the south of France. In Perpignan, a medieval city on the edge of the Pyrenees. Mediterranean air and ambiance. Palm trees and pink marble sidewalks. The crossroads of French and Catalan cuisine. A traveler's dream. But I was there for the talk. Integral talk.

In Canada, I work in British Columbia (BC) with BC Healthy Communities, a province-wide initiative whose mission is to foster health, well-being and healthy development in communities throughout British Columbia. Over the past year, in my role as Education and Development Coordinator, I have introduced the integral model as a helpful framework to guide our thinking and our practice. And, while community development practitioners and policy makers alike have expressed interest and resonance, there is still much to learn about its practical application. Since this work can be lonely at times the opportunity to talk to colleagues was like a call to home.

And so, in pink and palm treed Perpignan, I spent four days in an integral huddle. My companions and I explored and expanded theory, shared problems and potentials, invited insights into the projects we're involved with, and pushed the edges of our own thinking and practice. As happens when misfits come together, community was quick to coalesce. And the rudiments of an international network took root. It was a good beginning.

The Incredible Thickness of Theory: A Celebration

Integral seminars typically begin with a "theory day"—an opportunity for participants to revisit and review the theoretical foundations of Ken Wilber's integral framework. Recently, Ken's work has itself evolved, from that body of work that has come to be known as "Wilber-4" to the newer material that has emerged with the writing of Integral Spirituality, now acknowledged as "Wilber-5."

Wilber-4, of course, laid the theoretical foundations known as AQAL: all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types. Framed by four quadrants, AQAL posits four basic perspectives: interior, exterior, individual and collective. Wilber-5 goes further. While preserving the four native perspectives from which we view the world and experience reality arising (UL, LL, UR, LR), Wilber-5 expands the AQAL map to include eight basic perceptions, or zones. Each zone guides inquiry into the *inside* and *outside* view of the phenomena arising in each quadrant. Participants observed that, weaving together research methods that effectively address

¹ "A Charette for Dialogue, Innovation, and Visioning" Integral International Development Centre, Integral University. October 15 – 18, 2006. Perpignan, France

each zone, integral methodological pluralism becomes the paradigmatic foundation from which a truly integral inquiry can proceed.

Next, we leapt into discussion of other important theoretical contributions of Wilber-5. We explored “altitude,” a holarchic measure that describes stage attainment in *all* lines of development. From there we investigated the notion of a “Kosmic address:” the location in the AQAL matrix from which phenomena arise (for example, attitudes, behaviours, social structures, worldviews). The concept of a Kosmic address helps to shine light on the notion that fundamental realities exist independent of co-created social and cultural contexts, making the “myth of the given” harder to uphold. We also reviewed the Wilber-Combs Lattice, clarifying that transpersonal *states* of consciousness can be experienced at any *stage* of development, and that state experiences will be interpreted according to the stage from which they were experienced. This, of course, adds depth to the way we interpret our everyday experiences, even while it expands perspectives on the concept of enlightenment.

We also took some time to explore a topic that continues to confuse and perplex: the relationship between individual and social holons. Examined closely, say some, social holons cannot really be classified as holons at all. As Fred Kofman explains, to qualify as a holon an entity must possess an interior dimension and an exterior dimension, each arising in cultural and systemic contexts.² In other words, a holon possesses sentience. We noted that, while individuals possess sentience, a group does not. Rather, while a group or society—as an aggregate of individuals (or holons)—possesses intention and will, these agentic qualities cannot be assigned to the group itself. Groups and societies possess a dominant discourse, not a dominant monad. A clear understanding of the relationships and dynamics among individual and social holons is particularly important for practitioners whose work is centered in the realm of culture (LL) and social systems and structures (LR). We concluded that additional work, both theory building and practice-shaping, is needed in this area.

Integral in Action: Stories from the Edge

This headlong dive into theory helped to frame the discussion that unfolded over the next few days. Our stories drew on a broad range of educational and professional experiences, as economists, lawyers, engineers, geographers, historians, university professors, and as consultants in such diverse fields as international development, business, sustainability, community development, and resource management. Our organizational affiliations were equally diverse, including the World Bank, UNDP, the Inter-American Development Bank, universities, the private sector, various levels of government, and a variety of international and domestic NGO’s. And while our native and learned languages included English, French, Vietnamese, Spanish, Turkish, Estonian, Dutch, German, Russian, Finnish and Kiswahili, there was another language that united us: integral.

Amidst such diversity, it was shared language and concepts that helped us to see patterns amongst the myriad of ways that practitioners are using the integral model in their work-in-the-world. We learned about initiatives that are applying the integral framework in community building initiatives on many continents; these stories took us as far afield as Scotland, Georgia, South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Bolivia, Venezuela, El Salvador and Canada. And further.

²Kofman, Fred. “Holons, Heaps and Artifacts.” Available at: <http://www.integralworld.net.kofman.html>

We heard about initiatives that are creating integral knowledge networks, mapping indicators of sustainability and well-being, promoting ethical leadership, building healthy community, teaching sustainable development, managing large-scale economic development projects, and addressing trauma in post-war societies. But while the contexts differ, our stories had a common theme: the promise and potential that an integral perspective brings to the global need for positive change.

Inviting Inquiry and Insight

This promise and potential for positive change was explored further as we broke into small conversation groups. A modified World Café format gave us an opportunity to deepen our dialogue and apply our shared knowledge and experience to emergent and urgent global challenges. Small groups addressed a range of topics arising in earlier discussion: promoting healthy human development, integral responses to HIV/AIDS, leadership in African contexts, and the question of self-other boundaries (no boundary?) in international development work. Conversations were far reaching, seeking practical responses to perplexing problems, as well as the roots of those problems and the dynamics at play within complex issues.

We began to notice certain threads of inquiry that popped up throughout our time together. For those who introduce integral approaches to others, a common question relates to the wisdom of presenting the complete integral framework (AQAL), or a more subtle approach—focusing on quadrants, for example—an approach affectionately known as “integral lite.” And when is it appropriate to invite integral exploration without using the term at all?

Another thread of inquiry led to the observation that in development work, as in most other disciplines, the primary emphasis is on *doing*. In a modern professional landscape, it is our doing that is measured, and it is our doing that is rewarded. But integral theory reminds us of the importance of *being*. And of *becoming*. Seen through an integral lens, our actions are intimately related to our own developmental achievements and the evolving perspectives that they engender, including our perspectives on the relationship between self and other. For instance, developmental activity will look different when it is informed by a sociocentric perspective than it will when it is carried out from a worldcentric perspective. And healthy sociocentric perspectives are necessary foundations for an eventual shift to healthy worldcentric perspectives. Therefore, effective and sustainable development work will pay attention to human development—to being and becoming—not only in the people and communities we work with, but in ourselves as practitioners. Most importantly, perhaps, our developmental attentiveness will be most effective when it includes personal and collective shadow work. Hmmm.

Random Reflections

Our four days have come to a close. We share final thoughts, pose for pictures, and make plans to meet again. Istanbul next year? Yes!

What do I bring home with me? First of all, an awareness that the work I do has a lot in common with the work of my colleagues in other parts of the world. Like Adriana in El Salvador, Yene in Ethiopia, and Will in Australia, my work fosters health, well-being, and healthy development in people, in communities, in regions, in countries. Like Nick in Scotland, William in Canada, and Paul in Egypt, my work attempts to address *all* of the factors that influence health, well-being and healthy development: social, economic, environmental,

physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural. Responding to the realities emerging in different corners of the globe, the details might look different but the work is the same. And with an integral map to guide this work, with integral concepts and language to deepen the discourse, the inquiry will continue and the insights will grow.

I also bring home a renewed commitment to use integral language and concepts in my development work in Canada. Some important foundations have already been laid. For example, BC Healthy Communities has adopted an integral capacity building approach, one that addresses the whole person within the whole community. As our website³ explains, “an integral lens helps us to see important interconnections among people, organizations, and sectors. An integral lens also helps us explore the complex relationship between human activity and the environment. And it helps us to address the interconnections among the multiple determinants of health, well-being and healthy development.

An integral approach to capacity building recognizes that community has four dimensions: individual and collective, interior and exterior. Our Integral Capacity Building Framework and the Integral Map of Community work hand-in-hand, stressing the importance of paying attention to each of these dimensions. With an integral approach, we can unify what is often a fragmented approach to community building, making a bigger difference, a more sustainable difference.

While communities are becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of the issues that they must address, they are less certain how to address that complexity. The integral framework offers a simple yet comprehensive logic model to guide planning, policy making, practice and evaluation. As Albert Einstein so famously said, “we can’t solve our problems at the same level of thinking with which we created them.” The integral model can assist communities to take their thinking and actions to the next level.

Finally, I came away with the insight that integral is only as good as we make it. While it remains a theory, it lives in our heads. When it becomes embedded in our day-to-day practice, it lives in our hearts and hands. Engaging head, heart and hands with integral intention will go a long way toward taking community development work to the next level of thinking and action.

This is our potential. And it is also our learning edge. With the integral framework as both a research and practice paradigm, we will make small experiments, strategic forays into less familiar territory. With the integral framework as a guide, we will make learning and action parallel priorities. We will examine community change contexts in all their complexity, engage dual powers of critical thinking and inner reflection, dig into our deepest wisdom, step back a little to allow next steps reveal themselves. Then, with renewed insight and intention, take brave actions in the direction of our dreams.

***Tam Lundy, PhD**, is a consultant, educator, and mentor in the field of human and social development. She has worked extensively with communities and with government, offering leadership and support in capacity building, community consultation and engagement, team and network development, and in planning and evaluation. Tam brings an integral thinking and practice approach to her work as Education and Development Coordinator at BC Healthy Communities. Integrally-informed resources adopted by BCHC include Tam’s Integral Capacity Building Framework and Integral Map of Community; they can be viewed at www.bchealthycommunities.ca.
tamlundy@shaw.ca*

³ www.bchealthycommunities.ca