Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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This book is about a global experiment conducted with two aims. The first aim relates to a new approach to solving global problems such as poverty, pollution, habitat loss and climate change. The second aim is to bring about better lives for all.

The method of the experiment may be expressed figuratively as a move to another planet whilst keeping our feet placed firmly on Planet Earth. This is achieved by a change in our understanding of what makes knowledge possible — we effectively change our knowledge to live in a different world. This change is conceptually simple but what is harder to grasp is the impact of its consequences. The new possibility for knowledge is based on the most detailed and precise science about how we, our planet and the universe function and its consequences penetrate all quarters of life. Mankind has made an enormous investment to acquire this knowledge and we now need to pay it due attention.

Many people are now paying due attention, but they are diverse and unconnected. So in this experiment, we asked them what they

understand by the new possibility of knowledge and what do they see as its consequences. Responses have come from all around the world and from many different fields: ecological business, ecological accounting and marketing; traditions and sustainability in Latin America, Russia and Vietnam; mobilising people through dynamic citizenship and art collectives; Developing Nairobi in accordance with a Triple Top Line Approach; the emerging Chinese Eco-civilisation; and educating for sustainability in Singapore and Tasmania. The experiment reveals diversity in thought and action that crosses disciplinary boundaries, but all are united by the one specific change in the possibility of knowledge. This book takes us closer to what is intrinsic in the functioning of our world and of ourselves.

Intrinsic Capability is a portal, a point of entry

Just to be clear, it is not the kind of portal constructed to impress. It is not for example a grand entrance to a church, cathedral, temple or mosque that imposes itself on ordinary people to engender respect and reverence in anticipation of sundry revelations about the roles and influences that supernatural powers have on our lives. But it is nonetheless a point of egress to a way to radically alter lives.

Like formal religions, Intrinsic Capability changes lives by directing us to a different way of seeing the world but this new view is based on the best knowledge we now have of how the world works. Mankind has invested enormous time and resources to find out how the world functions. Consequently, we now know a great deal about the constitution of ourselves and the world we occupy. We now know for example that from the very small to the very large, nothing stands apart, alone, separately, distinct, or discrete. From the strange quantum activities of subatomic particles, to elements, molecules, compounds, cells, blood, bones, brains, people, societies, nations, continents, planets, stars, galaxies and more, we see that all is interconnected, dynamic and ceaselessly changing. Mountains, planets, stars and galaxies come and go — on a long enough time scale. Scientists now provide detailed, testable accounts of the relations that are within and are constitutive of our interconnected world and we come

across them frequently in matters of health, pollution, climate change, extinctions and more. In day-to-day life, we are having to learn how best to live and develop in accordance with how the world is, how it functions intrinsically, and how it responds to our pollution and mistreatment in both the environment and our bodies. We need to live and develop institutions that work with and not against the world as we now know it — we need *intrinsic* development.

So this book is about guidance derived from science for people to live well and for developing our societies. It deals with concrete matters of building a city or managing a business as well as how best to educate and engage people in this fundamental transition. But it cannot be prescriptive for it is a book as much about “beliefs” rather than the simple, *prima facie* “facts” that many demand from science. This is because the word “fact” represents something far too small; in reality a little reflection will reveal the origins of any particular “fact” to be running away over far horizons. Take the “fact” of your life. You are likely to know this “fact” well enough for to be otherwise may be seen as a route to mental illness. And yet whichever way you reflect upon yourself, there is nothing straightforward to grasp, nothing to clearly and simply delineate, no constant, closed concept, no amenable story that captures your life as discrete facts that are not dependent upon and related to your family, ancestors, history, friends, society, language, assumptions, species, genetics, environment, biosphere and on to the restless, interacting compounds, molecules, atoms and subatomic particles that constitute our physical selves and which in turn have their origins in our solar system, in the remote supernovae of distant galaxies, in the big bang and so on. I am no simply “fact”, and neither are you, so we necessarily handle beliefs in this book — and that requires a discerning, critical approach. Such an approach can be learned and this is one task of Intrinsic Capability.

Intrinsic Capability is necessarily a modest, reflective portal. It serves neither the establishment of enduring, fixed knowledge nor the narrow interests of power and hegemony. The best way to think of this portal is to draw from your memory, provide embellishment, and conjure in your imagination a place where you were stopped in your tracks. Where beauty, freshness, meaning, insight, hope and any other good, embracing

feeling usurped your thoughts, swamped your anxieties, pummelled and pulled your rationality, took you ever-so-momentarily out of yourself, and locate there your own Intrinsic Capability portal to help access the rest of this book.

Other places where you might look to access this book include those thoughts, traditions and practices that have endured. For example, the Intrinsic Capability portal itself is nothing new:

The best explanation I can offer is that the Shinto shrine is a visible and ever-active expression of the factual kinship — in the most literal sense of the word — which exists between individual man and the whole earth, celestial bodies and deities, whatever name they be given.

When entering it, one inevitably becomes more or less conscious of that blood-relation, and the realisation of it throws into the background all feelings of anxiety, antagonism, loneliness, discouragement, as when a child comes to rest on its mother's lap.

A feeling of almost palpable peace and security falls upon the visitor as he proceeds further into the holy enclosure, and to those unready for it, it comes as a shock. Epithets such as *kogoshi* (god-like) and *kami-sabi* (divinely serene) seem fully justified.

— Jean Herbert, *Shinto, At the Fountain-Head of Japan*, 1967.

Indeed more of the *Intrinsic* content of this book may be found in those traditions and systems of thought that help us to better understand ourselves, our relations with each other and our relations with the natural world. Such traditions and systems can be seen as an aspect of science, as long-term experiments in living well on Planet Earth, for if they work — why reinvent them?

To summarise, Intrinsic Capability (IC) is based on science but not straightforward, hard, unreflecting scientific facts; this book is about engaging and working with facts with an open and critical mind. It is a route to a changing, evolving and ever-so wide-open thoughtscape that you can access no matter where you find yourself or whatever troubles your mind. It is as real as scientific discoveries and as potentially enduring and life-changing as a religion but it is neither created nor accessed for the

one time by this book — once you recognise its knowledge and understanding, it is to be found everywhere.

Heraclitus effectively stepped through his own personalised IC portal around 2.5 millennia ago when getting his feet wet to declare that you never step into the same stream twice. More recently, the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead provided many ways to pass through the IC portal: “There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.” (Whitehead, 2001 [1954]).

The IC portal is a way to explore and revise freedom. Take “Free Markets” for example, the concept is widely accepted and applied with such a measure of certainty and closure, that it is adversely, perhaps irreversible, damaging the planet and its inhabitants. We urgently need to free ourselves of free-markets.

Similarly in microeconomics, the formal, detailed financial accounts provided of the activities of businesses engender stagnation. The Jesuit Order faced and overcame this problem centuries ago with the use of a financial accounting system based on a cash box requiring two different keys held by two different people. As Quattrone (2015, pp. 23–24) explains:

The existence of a material padlock operated by two keys allowed a continuous performance around the notion of rational and legitimated behaviour when cashing and spending money. This continuous mediation around and questioning of the rationale informing the opening of the box made the Jesuit rationality an unfolding one.

As with every graphical representation, the translation of cash movements into accounting inscriptions would have reduced the multifaceted nature of the Jesuit administration to a mere financial matter, leading to an incontrovertible financial *theoria* and to unreflective actions. This unreflective representation would have deprived the Jesuit member of that indifference that characterised the Jesuit’s self and made him able to exert wise judgment. Jesuits’ representations, whether dealing with spiritual or financial matters, were meant to manage and not reduce the ‘virtuality of the possible’ of Jesuit behaviours (Barthes, 1971). They were not aimed at producing matters of fact but matters of concern.

The IC portal does not have two keys since it is an open door: instead it has two sides. On the one side, there is a set of facts, hard, indisputable and accepted by many people without reflection. For convenience, we can label this side *Modern*. The IC meaning of *Modern*, its thoughtscape, is one aspect of the subject of this book to be explored thoroughly. But to start the exploration, as a first guide, key *Modern* features that have our attention include its quirky use of Rationality which is instantiated in its understanding of Capitalism, economic exchange, tradition, development, rewards and a limited lifetime of achievement.

When stepping through the IC portal, we follow the footsteps of two colleagues now deceased, Grey Beard and the Older Boy (Birkin and Polesie, 2012). These two characters recorded their encounters over several decades as they passed through the *Modern* thoughtscape and its derivations. They described the IC portal as an example of an episteme change after Foucault (2002 [1966]).

They passed through the portal to describe a new age, an emerging episteme, which they named *Primal*. They were both accountants so their view of the *Primal* episteme included ideas for economics and business which include a transition from *economic maximisation* to *ecological optimisation*, a Triple Top Line business appraisal method and a conceptual shift from “bulldozer” to “dinghy” companies. They also discovered the *Primal* thoughtscape to be rich in ecological relations and a wealth of time-tested traditions available to guide cultures and lives.

When they talked of their experiences and understanding, they found many others who were thinking the same way. In time, it became apparent to Grey Beard and the Older Boy that large number of people from all quarters were either in transition, at the cusp of changing, or had fully changed, were already truly *Primal*. The pair slowly came to recognise that the *Primal* was in a sense ever thus; ever going back to basics, changing, revising, refreshing, restating and reapplying itself. They talked, debated, sweated and struggled and came to an obvious conclusion known since the beginning of time to all that participate from philosophers to worms, from seagulls to neutrinos, that the only constant is change. Change is the way of the world.

The pair explained their observations of the epistemic transition as a movement:

From Modern abstract rational belief systems (such as neo-classical economic theory and mainstream financial accounting).

To Primal pragmatic empiricism (based on the findings of science supported by ancient traditions that have endured).

They also noted that the *Modern* abstract rational belief systems were very good at providing clear factual explanations of how to organise our institutions and our lives and how to get more stuff. It is the promise of more stuff that motivates many people, sometimes excessively enough to be reminiscent of the feeding frenzies of sharks. ... but it is far, far more dangerous.

Although very old, Grey Beard and the Older Boy thought they had better assist the transition and help establish the emerging new age, the *Primal*. To this end they created an online presence, Intrinsic Earth to help people to focus and mobilize "... a social movement exploring new possibilities for knowledge, connecting healthy & vibrant human communities and supporting people, governments and businesses in the transition to a sustainable world." (Intrinsic Earth, 2018).

They also got a publisher to promise to publish a book in which people in the transition would write about their own thoughts and observations. Eventually, posthumously, the book was published and it is now in your hands. The book's content is very varied as it represents the reach and depth of the transition in many quarters:

- Working for better lives for all;
- What we have known for thousands of years and what we have just discovered;
- Changing our understanding of success in business by changing the practices of marketing and accounting;
- Building cities for people and not capital;
- Educating to challenge beliefs and assumptions and moving forward to think about how things could be otherwise;

- Engaging, empowering and mobilising society;
- An emerging civilisation;
- Art, artistic collectives and sustainability.

It is a range of topics that taps into the diversity of the world itself. Everyone they asked was keen to contribute. They all saw in the book a unity and collaboration that strengthened and enlarged their own arguments and struggles. What now follows are summaries of their contributions as they presented in this book.

Chapter 2: Traditions

Strategies for epistemic survival: Slave and scholar rebels in the boundaries of Hispanic America

Alejandro and Mónica are personally aware of the range of other than Modern knowledge and capabilities in South America. For them, these alternatives provide so many other options for development especially those that link ecological knowledge, people, and alternative ways of living. They see these alternatives in an ontological sense as different ways of being or existing. However the very presence of these alternatives interacts with Modernity to create tensions, the wrong sense of urgency and sometimes sacrifices are required.

A Russian perspective on the limitation of existing account reporting practices for business development and management

Tatiana and Olga delve into Russian tradition to better understand the Modern Russian focus on business and accountability reporting. Their study is from the spread of the Enlightenment into Russia, to the Soviet state, the collapse of the USSR, perestroika and the impact of sustainability on Russian companies. Within this grand history, Tatiana and Olga seek to re-establish the humans side for the “thinking behind Russian business development and reporting has moved away from the intimate and tender understating of the relations between the humans and nature”.

Their arguments draw on Russian proverbs and the great Russian novelists. They leave us with a tantalising question about the emergence of a new Russia.

Chapter 3: Ecocentric business and marketing: Ideology, reality and vision

This international and multidisciplinary team tackles an emerging tradition, culture, or worldview that provides a very different way of doing business. This change is found to be arising from deep within the modern business world, and it represents a profound challenge to the status quo. By examining some basic assumptions in modern business and by identifying the adaptations and evolutions now underway in the name of sustainability, Helen, Adam, Véronique and Joëlle reveal how businesses are coping with all the relations to the world that always have been there, but have been overlooked in modernity. From a foundation in scientific and systems studies, the authors use an ecological perspective to challenge to consumerism and its principal agent, modern marketing. The authors skillfully describe the changes as a shift from an anthropocentric to ecocentric ontology, whilst providing corporate leaders with realistic and operational transformation strategies, redesigned business models and opportunities in new products and services.

Chapter 4: Towards an ecological accounting

People experience and make sense of the world... and they give accounts. Accounts take many forms from art and music to verbal traditions, literature, diaries, and company performance reports. We are an account-giving and account-receiving species. Such accounts help us to navigate and to make sense of our world, but such accounts can also be malign and blind us to the destruction of ourselves and of the world we inhabit. In this chapter, Rob explores the extent to which the social and environmental accounting might help in closing the gap between (i) the formal organisational accounts of Modernity that ignore society and ecology relations and (ii) the possibilities of a humankind with a more sensible relationship with its own and with ecological nature.

Chapter 5: Ecological civilisation

China's emerging ecological civilisation

In this contribution, Liu and John examine China's emerging ecological civilisation. They consider that China's philosophical traditions, based on Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, have created an embedded ecological wisdom that is still highly influential in China today. These philosophies and accompanying traditions are argued to underpin China's emerging ecological civilisation which they explain as an example of epistemic change. In addition, the changes in China can be linked to the Capability Approach of Amartya Sen in so far as the Chinese people are regaining basic capabilities of which they were previously denied: to be able to breathe clean air; drink pure water; to work with fair working conditions; and to move and work wherever they wish.

Can Vietnamese traditional values drive 'Sustainability'? an Emic perspective

Here Lien tries something she has never done before and that is to write an emic account of Vietnamese culture and its impact on their relationship with Nature. An emic perspective relates to the perspective of a person living within a culture so it is rich with insight and understanding about their own way of living. This contribution is enriched by drawing on research by other Vietnamese and foreign authors.

Chapter 6: African development and management

Development in Nairobi: Three into One does not GO!

In Nairobi, over the past decade, low-density suburban districts have experienced rapid vertical densification resulting in a preponderance of high-rise apartment blocks where single-dwelling units historically held sway. The emergent new apartments are "modern" in the universal sense of the word representing the architectural expression of global capital.

Situated in the global South, the buildings differ very little from architectural expression in the global North and bear little relationship to local and traditional modes of architectural expression. Yet, an opportunity exists to celebrate local culture and use it for locally appropriate modes of architectural expression. In addition, the 2016 *Ngorongoro Declaration* recognised that culture is a crucial ingredient in the path towards achieving sustainable development. In this chapter, Collins examines the tensions in the development of Nairobi city between, on the one hand, local cultures and traditions and, on the other, globalised capital.

A Tale of two theoretical cultures: Expanding the application of Habermas' communicative action and Post-colonial theories in management studies and practices in Africa

Post-colonial theory has undoubtedly earned itself a deserving stature but it has achieved this with few contributions from African academics practicing in Africa. In this chapter, Sharif and Adeyinka help to redress this imbalance. It considers that post-colonial theories offer some close similarities with some continental theories including such as Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action. The Theory of Communicative Action with its ethos of mutual communication aimed at achieving an "ideal-speech" situation exude some embracing tenets of post-colonialism. An illustrative case study is provided in this chapter using Ghana's mining industry. A theoretical understanding is useful in achieving a degree of critical relevance. In essence, an application of combined Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action and post-colonial theory showcases how the existential relationship with Africa and the multinational world of mining emanates issues of accountability and transparency.

Chapter 7: Educating for sustainability

In this chapter, Chris and Kim review the history of sustainability education. But sustainability education, like sustainability itself, remains a contested space in which to think and work. There is however a framework that has opened space for society to foster knowledge-building

oriented schools, universities and organisations without walls to study and practice our responsibilities *on sustainability*. Even so, it is in the nature of sustainability that it brings into questions fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the world and our positioning as humans within it. Consequently, Chris and Kim conclude that education for sustainability is primarily about challenging these beliefs and assumptions and moving forward to think about how things could be otherwise.

Chapter 8: Emerging business values

Changing Values

Ecus Ltd. are a multidisciplinary environmental consultancy with offices across the UK. Nick is contributing to the Intrinsic Capability project to help identify the inherent connections people have to the environment and how these can be used by organisations and business to better understand and face their customers.

This contribution on “Changing Values” aims to discuss the response of organisations and business to the intrinsic value of the environment to their customers as well as highlighting opportunities for collaborative working in allied organisations and innovation in business practice.

Social Entrepreneurship in the Agrifood Sector: Smallholder Farmer Co-operatives

This contribution will focus on providing a narrative of the business model developed by the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) in India, based on the principles of social entrepreneurship. The CSA has developed this business model by bringing together over 50,000 smallholder farmers to create farmers cooperatives, and a federation of these cooperatives in the form of a producer company that has created a chain of retail stores to sell the farmers produce directly to the end consumer. The CSA was developed in response to the challenges currently being faced by smallholder farmers in India in being able to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The inability of smallholder farmers to achieve and maintain sustainable livelihoods is due in part to what is known as the agrarian crisis.

Chapter 9: Mobilising citizens

Dynamic Citizenship: Participatory democracy on local level

This chapter describes a number of projects in Sweden and Bosnia-Herzegovina where the concept of dynamic citizenship has served as a model for democratic development. The reinforcement of the democratic process have been the overall perspective of the projects, where the relationship between the citizen and Dynamic Citizenship consists of three “democratic qualities” — the degree of participation, the degree of influence and the degree of involvement. These three “democratic qualities” can only be reached if the terms of openness and insight, political equality and meaningful participation have been clearly defined as a political ambition. In conclusion, Per-Eric argues that *political equality* refers to everyone’s right to participate, influence and be involved in social development regardless of ethnic or cultural background, social or economic status, sex or age.

Engaging Imaginaries: The Role of Artistic Collectives for Transdisciplinary Sustainability

Sustainability requires the integration of different forms of knowledge, not only through the combination of interdisciplinary collaborations, but also through collaborations that transgress the borders of academia — transdisciplinary forms of knowledge. The investigation of environmental aesthetics and arts-based research provides a fruitful platform for such transdisciplinary exchanges. In this chapter, Andressa presents an example of the work of the Brazilian artistic collective “Coletivo Líquida Ação” which focuses on the topic of water: access to water, water use, abuse, pollution, draughts and the complex imaginaries that surround such topic and give meaning to this substance. The focus is the project “Foz Afora” realised by the collective between June and October 2017. This project highlights the current reality of several communities affected by the collapse of a mining-tailings dam and the devastation of the Doce River that occurred in Brazil in November 2015. The aim of this chapter is to investigate, through this example, the multiple aspects of environmental aesthetics and the role of artistic collectives in engaging with local imaginaries towards nature and the

environment and in generating or improving environmental awareness and meaningful actions for sustainability.

Chapter 10: A reflection by Frank Birkin and Thomas Polesie

This Intrinsic Capability portal is open for all — enjoy!