

# *Sustainability*

...as defined by a free-lance  
doctoral intensive



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## **Introduction**

From 3-6 September 2010, Fielding Graduate University, a leader in innovative adult education, hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering at OUR Ecovillage on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. This Gathering was billed as an “Intensive” exploring the title “Sustainability: Sustainable Change, Social Justice, and Organizational Systems.” While the sub-topics in this title certainly were included to attract the attention of the target audience – doctoral students in the programs Human and Organizational Development and Educational Leadership and Change – they also may reveal underlying orientations toward the discussion of sustainability favored by the scholar-practitioner community at large. What exactly *is* “sustainability?” Can its essence be most meaningfully apprehended through the lenses of “sustainable change,” “social justice,” and “organizational systems?”

In this Report, I wish to review how the question of sustainability was explored ostensibly, empirically, and theoretically by the participants at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering; for, I believe, the Gathering was a unique opportunity to arrive at the essence of this now somewhat beleaguered term “sustainability.” In order to justify this assertion, I will describe the context, the nature of the participants and the style of education, and then, especially, how the dialogue evolved over the course of the three-and-a-half days of the Intensive and on into an extended email dialogue for some months afterward. By the end of the Report, I hope to leave the impression that this Intensive was a prototype, a precedent, a forerunner that could serve as a model for framing the sustainability discussion within an academically rigorous yet qualitatively *authentic* exploratory milieu.

## **The Context**

Fielding Graduate Institute was founded in Santa Barbara in 1974 as the realization of the vision of three experienced educators: Frederic Hudson, Hallock Hoffman, and Renata Tesch (from the website at [www.fielding.edu](http://www.fielding.edu)). The purpose of this new Institute was to provide “a nationally recognized graduate school, which would serve mid-career professionals who wanted to pursue an advanced degree but whose educational and professional objectives could not be met by traditional institutions of higher education” (ibid). Since this prospective group of students already was actively involved with meaningful and self-fulfilling work, their doctoral education would be tailored towards augmenting their professional skills and capabilities as well as, with a special Fielding touch, enriching their personal development. From the beginning, Fielding students were given uncommon latitudes of self-direction and responsibility in defining their

educational goals and designing and implementing their programs. In the curriculum, a given set of Knowledge Areas could be interpreted and adapted to each student's particular needs, as perceived by their professional, personal, and creative aspirations. Faculty were there in the official roles of "mentor" or "advisor" – though in practice they were often more like "guides" in the self-directed learning and usually would not be offended to be considered as "colleagues" in the attainment of the "scholar-practitioner" ideal.

This tradition has continued until this day – while the original Institute has grown into a successful, full-featured University. Along with Ph.D. programs in Human and Organization Development, Educational Leadership and Change, and Psychology, the University boasts an interesting collection of thematic Centers and Initiatives, such as the Alonso Center for Psychodynamic Studies, the Creative Longevity and Wisdom Institute, the Foundation for the Advancement of Social Theory, the Information Society and Knowledge Organization, and the Institute for Social Innovation. It was into this lively educational environment that the Fielding Village Gathering concept emerged. Alum Jeff Leinaweaver believed that the problem of "sustainability" was gaining enough significance and widespread attention to warrant its own thematic association; and so, after a little coaxing, administration offered support for a Regional Intensive focused on this theme.

Fielding describes itself as a "distributed network learning" system. There is no campus; students are scattered all across the continent and even extending overseas, communicating via interactive computer technology while periodically meeting face-to-face in various national, regional, and local gatherings. Most of these gatherings occur in the conference rooms of hotels or occasionally at someone's home or some other community venue. Jeff had the novel notion of holding the first Village Gathering at an existing "ecovillage," by definition a model of sustainable development. Since Jeff resides in the Pacific Northwest, he approached OUR Ecovillage on Vancouver Island; and thus began the world's first fruitful collaboration between an operational ecovillage and a gaggle of free-lance doctoral students on a self-directed academic mission.

OUR Ecovillage is a demonstration site of sustainable living. Director Brandy Gallagher has won notoriety for her efforts at persistently and successfully working with officials at all levels of government to win approval for the various code and zoning changes that were required to bring the ecovillage vision into (legal) reality. For example, there is now a province-wide zoning specification for "multiple use on 20-acres," whereas the standard in the semi-rural area where OUR Ecovillage is located is to have single-use residential on 5-acre lots. "Multiple use" means that the ecovillage can have commercial, light industrial, educational, agricultural *as well as* residential uses all in one location – the very essence of the village pattern. While many would consider the lifestyle at OUR Ecovillage a bit rustic, nevertheless it is a world-class prototype of integrating various sustainable systems and technologies in one place. The world

certainly needs more demonstration sites like this, and so the ecovillage became an ideal learning environment in which to convene an Intensive focused on “sustainability.”

## **The Cast**

From this point forward, I will choose not to mention any names but instead speak of all those who attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering as generic “participants.” I make this choice to concentrate on the ideas that were presented without giving additional weight to whether these ideas were presented by students, faculty, alumni, or residents of the ecovillage itself. With that in mind, I can say that 15 people registered for the sustainability Intensive, though one had to drop out before it actually commenced. Of these 15 people, 5 were active doctoral students, 3 were recent alumni fairly new to wearing the Ph.D. title, 3 were Fielding faculty (with one faculty bringing a spouse), 1 was a resident of the ecovillage, 1 was a local individual who was considering moving into the ecovillage, 1 was an active guest workshop leader (who happens to hold a Ph.D.) and the one remaining was an administrator at Fielding. All in all, this was certainly a highly educated group to be entering a discussion about sustainability. Could the level of education have influenced the direction that the discussion would take?

The participants also were widely dispersed geographically, with 2 originating from Florida, 3 from Southern California, 3 from Washington State, 4 from right there on Vancouver Island, 1 from elsewhere in British Columbia, 1 from Alberta, and the last a dual resident of Canada and Mexico – so this was very much an inter-regional as well as inter-*national* Regional Intensive. These diverse points of origin assured that discussion would remain broad-based, focused on universals, fundamental principles perhaps, instead of concentrating on sustainability issues pertinent to or limited by a particular place. It’s also important to mention that the skills and interests of the participants likewise were diverse; not one of them could be considered a sustainability ‘expert’ per se; each brought to the Gathering their own perspective based on their own ongoing life-work. This diversity of interests assured that discussion would remain well-rounded, multi-disciplinary – even multi-dimensional – instead of focused more narrowly on a particular theme or sub-theme of sustainability.

## **The Syllabus**

During the promotion of the Intensive to the greater Fielding community, a set of attachments was sent out that included a recommended reading list. It will be instructive to review the contents of this list to get a feel for how the issue of “sustainability” is interpreted at the doctoral level of education. Once again, I choose to omit names so as to concentrate on the nature of the themes as a whole:

- Our Common Future: World Commission on Environment and Development
- Ecology and Community
- An Ecological Example of the Adaptive Cycle
- Critical Neurophilosophy and Indigenous Wisdom
- Anthropocentrism's Antidote
- A Survival Guide for Leaders
- Is There an Ecological Unconsciousness?
- The Ecology of Leadership
- Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply

This representative list reveals an epistemology as diverse as the community of self-directed learners for which it was intended. Included here are science, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, management, current issues such as food security, and the report from a World Commission. Interestingly, "ecology" is explicitly mentioned in almost half of these items, suggesting that sustainability is somehow grounded in ecology, or at least depends on an ecological awareness or way of thinking.

The actual syllabus for the course is just as broad in its epistemological foundation. In order to create a thematic list as above, for the purpose of comparison, I extract proposed topics of analysis from representative paragraphs in the course handouts:

- Authenticity and Sustainability
- Environmental Anthropology
- World Systems Theory
- Environmental Activism
- Environmental Policy
- Ecological Systems
- Systems Theories
- Complexity Thinking
- Social Justice
- Spiritual Fulfillment

Isn't it notable that "ecology" is mentioned here only once? The preferred terminology for topical analysis instead centers upon "environment" and "systems." It would seem apparent, then, at first glance, that "sustainability as defined by a free-lance doctoral intensive" gives primary importance to the triad environment-ecology-systems. What these three disciplines have in common, of course, is the intention of learning how to perceive in terms of coherent 'wholes' as an antidote to the reductionistic thinking that characterized our most previous age.

The triad also emphasizes the vital importance of recognizing relationships, of all kinds: there is less meaning to be gained from contemplating individuals in isolation than there is in understanding how these individuals exist and interact *in relationship*. Could these perspectives so simply stated be the very essence of sustainability? Perhaps; yet without a meaningful outlet they too could become merely so many more mental gymnastics. Therefore, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering also mentioned “social justice” and “spiritual fulfillment” as necessary areas of concern.

## **The Pedagogy**

The promotional flyer for the Gathering introduced the experience:

This will not be a typical Fielding hotel or living room event. We are striving for coherence: faculty, venue, and guests that will model – as well as present, converse and reflect upon – ecological sustainability. Meals will be on-site, using locally available food. We have invited guests from the local foods movement to discuss sustainable food chains.

Indeed, the ecovillage setting was an integral component of the pedagogy. While the doctoral seminars were underway, the residents of the ecovillage carried on their business as usual. The Fielding group was thus a sub-community within an active community setting. We would emerge from seminar to take meals within a large, multi-featured, outdoor kitchen and dining area, bordered by gardens with a view, amid the residents themselves. Our scheduled learning events included harvesting a potato patch and canning some pickles; thus there was an applied somatic complementarity to our intellectual deliberations. One of the participants even offered a yoga class one afternoon.

The actual physical setting for seminar was a beautifully sculpted ‘cob’ building that the community affectionately named “The Sanctuary.” Cob is a medium of sand, straw, clay, and water that is mixed by bare feet and applied by hand, built up sequentially upon a sturdy stone foundation. The medium lends itself readily to constructing wide sweeping angles; the building can incorporate graceful flowing motions. For example, there was not a single right angle in the commodious room where we held our discussions. A large picture window facing south let in plenty of gentle refracted daylight from the overcast Pacific Northwest sky. There were mandalas fitted into the walls with a large tapestry securing one end of the room. The entire structure was nestled into a clearing at the edge of the conifer forest so that the soothing scent of green permeated the atmosphere both inside and out. Environment-behavior research claims that the quality and characteristics of our environment influence our potentials. From that perspective, a case could be made that the physical setting for our sustainability Intensive induced a very different quality to the discussion – and to the whole felt experience – than

would have been present in the conference room of a hotel. Maybe it's contradictory to attempt to arrive at the essence of sustainability in an institutional corporate setting?

## **The Content**

I've noticed that within a gathering of doctoral students, each participant will tend to align with or champion one particular point of view. Maybe this is because a Ph.D. education requires going deep – “digging a well” – into one specific vein of inquiry? Maybe it's more generally a reflection of human identity? Whatever the reason, this phenomenon provided the sustainability Intensive with all the benefits of an assembled interdisciplinary team – although, of course, this team was self-selected. Ironically, the self-selection process ensured that there were just enough people present to form a comfortable circle of chairs around the meeting room. This group size was optimal: large enough to bring out rich and varied content yet not so large that some voices remained silent.

As mentioned, the organizers prepared a syllabus; however, in practice this syllabus became more of a guide than a schedule. Novel opportunities emerged, one of the faculty was delayed, and the ecovillage had its own ebb and flow. The content of the second half of the Intensive was negotiated rather than planned in advance. With all that in mind, here is some of the material that was presented:

There was an “Awakening the Dreamer Symposium,” a reference to the Pachamama Alliance and its purpose to revive earth-based spirituality. The function of ‘storytelling’ in a sustainable culture was emphasized as a technique for stirring the emotions and making things sacred. This point was made vivid in a theatrical manner by the telling of a story to the cadence of a rattle about the role of the ancestors in our lives.

The function of ‘shamanism’ in a sustainable culture was emphasized in another presentation. This presentation closed with what was called “Ecstatic Dance,” a chance to really get in our bodies and awaken whatever cellular memories may be stored there.

Another presentation focused on Animism, with the lesson that only by recognizing our important relations with Earth's other living creatures can we come to know true sustainability. According to this view, it was the rise of an exclusionary anthropocentrism that regarded other life-forms as expendable, or simply relegated to a functional utilitarianism, that set in motion the unsustainable dynamics. Integral to this presentation was the observation that spiritual practices of indigenous peoples everywhere are (or were) based upon Animism.

There was an interesting presentation given by an ecologist who has been doing active research for a municipality. The scientific content was entitled “Ecosystem Informed Boundary Critique;” it introduced the concept “systemic phenomenography” and utilized excellent graphics to convey information.

One presentation introduced the meta-framework of “World Systems Theory.” This tool was used to analyze global systems of food production. According to World Systems Theory, it is indubitably Capitalism that is the root cause of the sustainability problem.

One more presentation introduced concepts and terminology of ‘systems thinking’ as tools for framing, understanding, and communicating the dynamics of sustainability. As with all the other presentations, lively and extensive dialogue ensued. Fielding certainly embodies democratic educational values; as such, the presenters were not necessarily afforded the aura of ultimate authority: they often had to justify or amplify their positions to the satisfaction of the assembled interdisciplinary team.

It also should be mentioned that a tour of the ecovillage was full of important content. Here, participants were able to witness sustainable technologies and practices in actual operation. Some of these included organic farming, permaculture, water harvesting, green building, renewable energy, animal husbandry, and the social technologies that keep a community happily (or at least tolerantly) working together. The immense value of seeing principles applied in this way would have been missed in a hotel conference room. This fact further highlights the authenticity of conducting a sustainability Intensive at an operational ecovillage.

So now, amid all this rich and varied content, is there any one perspective in particular that adequately addresses the problem of sustainability? Could any of these approaches be considered more important or explanatory than the others? Another angle would be to ask, “Which one of these approaches would achieve the most effect through funding?”

## **The Extended Dialogue**

It’s very important within a distributed network learning environment to create opportunities for participants to come together physically from time to time. Independent learning can often be very precise and productive; yet meeting face-to-face with fellow colleagues on the path adds another dimension to the experience. Not only is there the opportunity to see what other people look like (!), the sense of connection is deepened through eye contact and the sharing of personal space. Communication assumes more subtle forms, especially through body language but also via other nonverbal indicators. Feedback to a given idea or proposal can be instantaneous; the rise and fall of group emotion adds another layer of information. An old friend of mine used to say that independent learning is additive or accumulative whereas active learning in a small group setting can be exponential. For all these reasons, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering proved to be a very valuable learning experience for all.

Yet, the three-and-a-half days of an Intensive is encapsulated condensed time. Some thoughts require time to simmer; fresh insight may be gained only after there’s been some distance, some time to “sleep on it.” Therefore, the participants of the sustainability Intensive

found it worthwhile to continue the dialogue for some months afterward via a group email exchange. The purpose of this section is to document the thread of that dialogue as further indication of how 'sustainability' was interpreted by this representative group of doctoral associates.

At this point, I think it is fair to reiterate the claim that conducting the Intensive at an operational ecovillage very much influenced the nature of the dialogue. Much of the conversation in between presentations and during mealtime centered upon questioning whether the settlement pattern 'ecovillage' is a viable solution, relevant for the general population. As mentioned previously, many participants considered the lifestyle at OUR Ecovillage a bit too rustic for their tastes. A counterpoint to this sensitivity was the proposition that 'traditional villages' were the original sustainable communities; indeed, three of the presentations sought to revive a consciousness that was clearly 'indigenous,' or 'traditional' – maybe even 'tribal' – and therefore village-based. One of the participants mentioned that the concept "urban village" is currently enjoying widespread attention among the planning profession. Therefore, even though *eco-village* may not be the appropriate choice for everybody, nevertheless, there is a potent charge in this root word 'village' – and this is where the email exchange picked up.

One of the first responses was to zero-in on the village idea:

I caution you not to romanticize the rural villages in Italy or Thailand too much. People across the planet are abandoning villages in droves because they have no way to make a living in villages but have high hopes of finding wage work in cities. To stay in villages, people have to be able to make a living there.

These were surely important considerations; for there *has* been a tendency to romanticize traditional villages as models for the future. One could say that the whole ecovillage movement itself is an idealist romanticization. The hard facts of economic life have to be dealt with squarely in any viable sustainable solution scenario, and this has been a major stumbling block in ecovillage experiments around the globe.

Despite these cautions, the next respondent seemed inspired to defend the village line of thinking:

I think there is enough evidence to make the case that it has been the high concentrated energy found in fossil fuels that has enabled densely concentrated mega-cities in the first place...In the future anticipated scenario of "energy descent," as fossil fuels become scarcer and more expensive, there will be a reverse migration out of the cities and back to the villages. This gives Village Design a whole new application.

This respondent went on to describe a recent experience in the mega-city of Sao Paulo, where colleagues have begun securing property in the hinterland upon which to build their 'ecovillage'

as refuge for the anticipated melt-down and ensuing collapse of law and order in the mega-city. A more emotional tone was then introduced:

I can't help but romanticize the traditional villages of Italy and Siam (and Provence, Slovenia, etc., etc.): the phenomenology of experiencing these places bypasses my rational thinking process and goes direct to my soul! Traditional villages were the original sustainable communities; we have a lot to learn from them.

A substantive and learned reply came back, still within the context of the sustainability Intensive, for this was the group's email list:

You are absolutely right that when we run out of fossil fuels...we will be forced to return to a village way of life. However, these villages will not be exactly the same as rural villages and I do not think people will move en masse back into the countryside. I think we will have to create urban communities that operate on village principles, which makes "village design" very important...And, you are right that we have a lot to learn about what made villages "sustainable." However, do not lose sight of economic issues.

So we see here once again the imperative of integrating "economic issues" into any proposed sustainability solution. Earlier in this Report it was suggested that the triad 'environment-ecology-systems' could represent the essence of sustainability; yet by now it should be obvious that 'economics' must be included as one of the applications. Quite interestingly, in a move that took the sustainability discussion to a whole new depth, this respondent closed by suggesting research into the origin of the first cities, and provided a couple of references to start with.

Another reply came back in due time picking up on the "first cities" lead. Apparently this respondent had written a paper in which it was concluded that "civilization itself is the root of the problem." The dialogue certainly had taken a strange new twist, for this was a perspective that had not been introduced at the actual Gathering. Perhaps it needed time to simmer? This new twist apparently held a charge, for another participant was urged to write:

I think that what we call "civilization" is indeed the problem. 74% of pre-contact peoples were peaceful and lived intentionally according to principles of sustainability. The worldview that understands our connection to the other "People" (rocks, frogs, rivers, whales) is a worldview that can allow for balance and change to occur at the same time.

How interesting that all the threads began to interweave. The Animism presentation from the original Intensive now acquired a broader base: it was obviously *the* sustainable worldview that preceded the rise of civilization, or city-based culture. Could we infer that the incorporation of a village-based pattern to replace the city-based pattern would coincide with a resurgence of respect for all life? Or would this worldview need to precede sustainable re-organization? Whatever the case, in the words of one participant, "although civilization is generally

considered an obvious improvement over pre-civilized (i.e. village-based) patterns, it actually comes as a mixed blessing” – and one merely has to look around at the world today to confirm this allegation.

At this point in the extended dialogue, some prevailing themes began to orient themselves. As an example, one repeat respondent added more insight to the civilization twist:

I agree...that civilization is one source of UNSustainability, [however] I think the root of UNSustainability lies in capitalism because it is a system that depends on expansion in perpetuity and destroying the environment in the process of growth.

To this re-assertion of the economic imperative, a reply came back attempting to make a connection between capitalism and civilization:

If I am to understand these issues thoroughly, I will need to be able to articulate the exact relationship between “capitalism” and “civilization.” I don’t think [the urban theorists] would say that the first cities practiced a form of capitalism; yet may we conjecture that the appearance of capitalism was inevitable given the socio-economic cultural pattern that was initiated in those first cities? It’s already been proposed, from another perspective, that the UNSustainability of today is the result, or climax, of the trajectory that was set forth in those first cities.

Whew! – it’s starting to look like getting to the bottom of the sustainability problem is going to take a whole semester (or degree) rather than simply a three-and-a-half day Intensive, for there are some very deeply ingrained systemic issues to investigate and unravel. Instead of going there, I thought I would begin to create a boundary around what had been demonstrated thus far as a way to delimit a ‘package’ of learning that could be shared with others. I deduced that the issues had tended to polarize along a single axis: on one side there were the hard facts of economics, especially as enforced by Capitalism; and on the other side there were the consciousness issues of Animism, Pachamama, and Ecstatic Dance. As a metaphor for communicating this understanding, I thought I would suggest that, according to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering, there was an external “hardware” (economics) and an internal “software” (consciousness) to sustainability. In this model (that had arisen from the Gathering itself), the triad ‘environment-ecology-systems’ was both the context and the methodology for implementation. The overall trajectory of the system would be *from* civilization *to* a village-based pattern.

As I was contemplating this course of action, a remarkable event occurred: two of the participants who thus far had been silent in the extended dialogue suddenly decided to provide input. These fresh perspectives arrived not only on the same day, as I looked closer at the transmissions I discovered that they were sent just ten minutes apart! I thought this was an extraordinary example of self-organization. The first input suggested that “Integral Theory,” a

framework consisting of *four* dimensions, would offer something valuable to the discussion. The second input emphasized the importance of “values:”

There is an energy of respect, appreciation and gratitude that is somehow vital to this discussion about sustainable economic processes...What I see is the need for a shift in values and more importantly this has to come from those companies or businesses who have the economic power to influence a change in direction from “more-more-more” to “enough-enough-enough.”

With this new, seemingly serendipitous, input, my polarity model swiftly became obsolete. The vital role of personal values in the problem of sustainability had not been acknowledged to date; yet this was far too important to leave out. “Personal values” theoretically could be considered more “software,” yet the inclusion seemed to me to make that polarity unbalanced: personal values are indeed a different dimension than Animism, Pachamama, and Ecstatic Dance, so the suggestion of adding four dimensions made a whole lot of sense.

The extended dialogue continued for another month or so, mostly reinforcing previous positions with an occasional twist, yet a decisive point had been reached: considering all that had been said, the four-dimensional model of sustainability would most accurately represent the lessons coming out of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering.

### **The Four-Dimensional Model**

Integral Theory, of course, arises from the work of Ken Wilber (here at last I finally can award a reference without prejudicing the flow of ideas!). In his book *A Brief History of Everything* (1996), in a chapter entitled “The Four Corners of the Kosmos,” Wilber describes the thought process by which he arrived at a four-dimensional model of reality. His stated purpose was to create a representational “map” that could guide thinkers from a modernist to a postmodern worldview:

[M]ost of the maps of the world that have been offered are in fact holarchical, for the simple reason that holarchies are impossible to avoid (because holons are impossible to avoid). We have literally hundreds and hundreds of these holarchical maps from around the world – East and West, North and South, ancient and modern (p. 72).

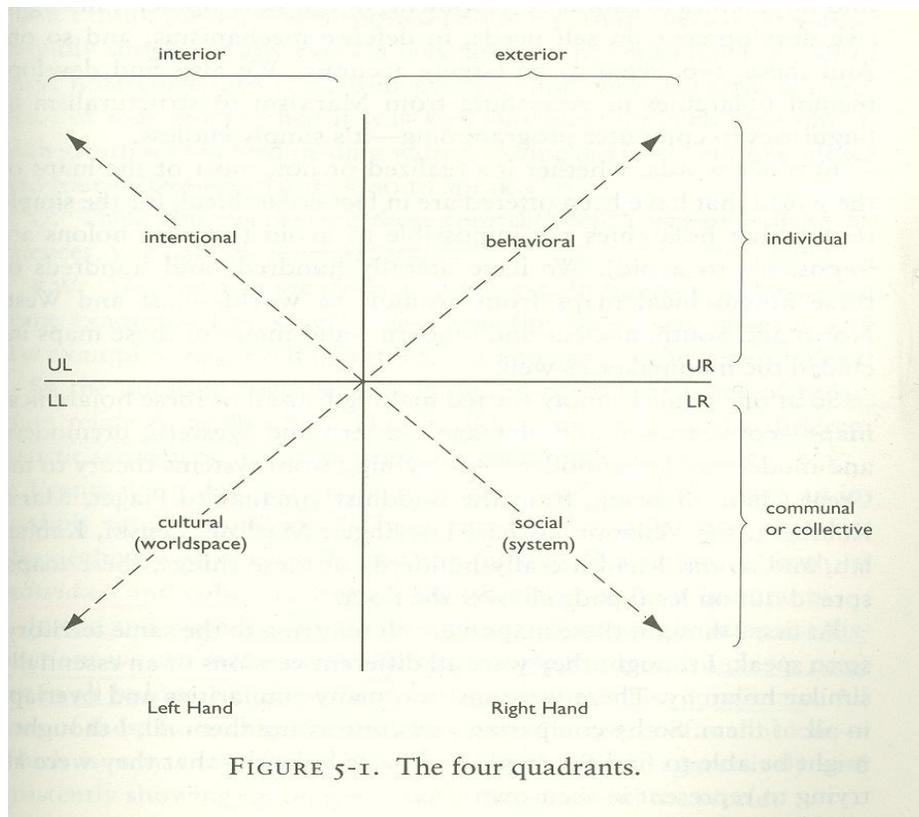
Now, since a “holon” is “any stable sub-whole in an organismic, cognitive, or social hierarchy which displays rule-governed behavior and/or structural Gestalt constancy” (Koestler as quoted in Goldsmith, 1998, p. 234) – that is, a semi-autonomous whole situated within a larger whole and composed of smaller wholes, each of these a holon in its own right – then a “holarchy” is simply a way to represent an assembly of holons. This method of representation invokes a different ontological order than that of a “hierarchy:”

[O]ne of the key characteristics of the organization of living [systems is] its hierarchical nature. Indeed, an outstanding property of all life is the tendency to form multileveled structures of systems within systems. Each of these forms a whole with respect to its parts while at the same time being a part of a larger whole...Since the early days of organismic biology these multileveled structures have been called hierarchies. However, this term can be rather misleading, since it is derived from human hierarchies, which are fairly rigid structures of domination and control, quite unlike the multileveled order found in nature...[Therefore] the important concept of the network...provides a new perspective on the so-called hierarchies of nature (Capra, 1996, p. 28).

A holarchy, then, is a representation of holons in a horizontally oriented *network* instead of in a vertically oriented hierarchy – so Wilber was attempting to frame his project explicitly within the language of living systems theory. Returning to his thought process:

[T]he more I looked at these various holarchies, the more it dawned on me that there were actually *four very different types* of holarchies, four very different types of holistic sequences...[O]nce I put all of these holarchies into these four groups – and they instantly fell into place at that point – than it was very obvious that each holarchy in each group was indeed dealing with the same territory, but overall we had four different territories, so to speak...So the question then became, how did these four types of holarchies relate to each other? They couldn't just be radically different holistic sequences. They had to touch each other somehow...Eventually it dawned on me that these four quadrants have an incredibly simple foundation. These four types of holarchies are actually dealing with the *inside* and the *outside* of a holon, in both its *individual* and *collective* forms – and that gives us the four quadrants. (Wilber, p. 73).

Here is the graphic display of Wilber's four quadrants, a holarchical method of representation (scanned from p. 71):



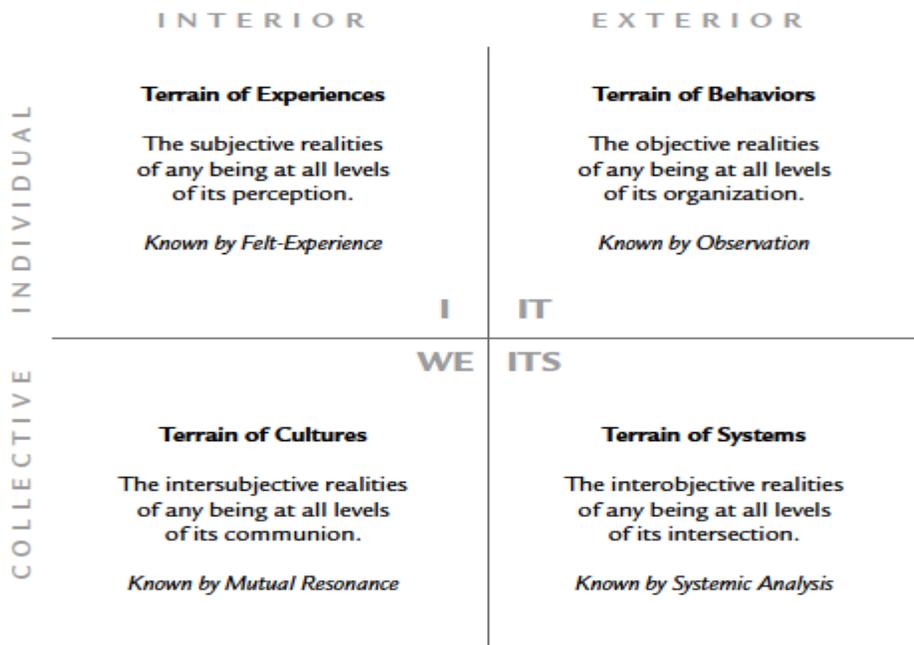
We see here that Wilber has devised a very useful domain-space in which to plot the characteristics or components – I hesitate to say coordinates – of complex systemic reality. A few pages later, he plots the hierarchies of each quadrant of his world system – his Four Corners of the Kosmos – as they proceed outwardly from the center along each vector. I mention that only in reference, for although his world system is very interesting to contemplate, it will unnecessarily complicate the purpose here of diagramming the lessons from the sustainability Intensive. Interested readers are referred to page 74 of *A Brief History of Everything*.

Associates Sean Esbjorn-Hargens Ph.D. and Michael E. Zimmerman Ph.D., from the Integral Institute in Massachusetts, have adapted Wilber’s basic framework so that it may be applied to what they call “Integral Ecology:”

Integral Ecology is a comprehensive framework for characterizing ecological dynamics and resolving environmental problems. It is comprehensive in that it both draws upon and provides a theoretical scheme for showing the relations among a variety of different methods, including those at work in the natural and social sciences, as well as in the arts and humanities. Integral Ecology unites, coordinates, and mutually enriches knowledge generated from different major disciplines and approaches. Integral Ecology can be: a) applied within a discipline (e.g., by integrating various schools of ecology); b) applied as a *multidisciplinary* approach (e.g., by investigating ecological problems from several

disciplines); c) applied as an *interdisciplinary* approach (e.g., by using social science methods to shed light on economic or political aspects of environmental values); and d) applied as a *transdisciplinary* approach (e.g., by helping numerous approaches and their methodologies interface through a well grounded meta-framework).<sup>1</sup>

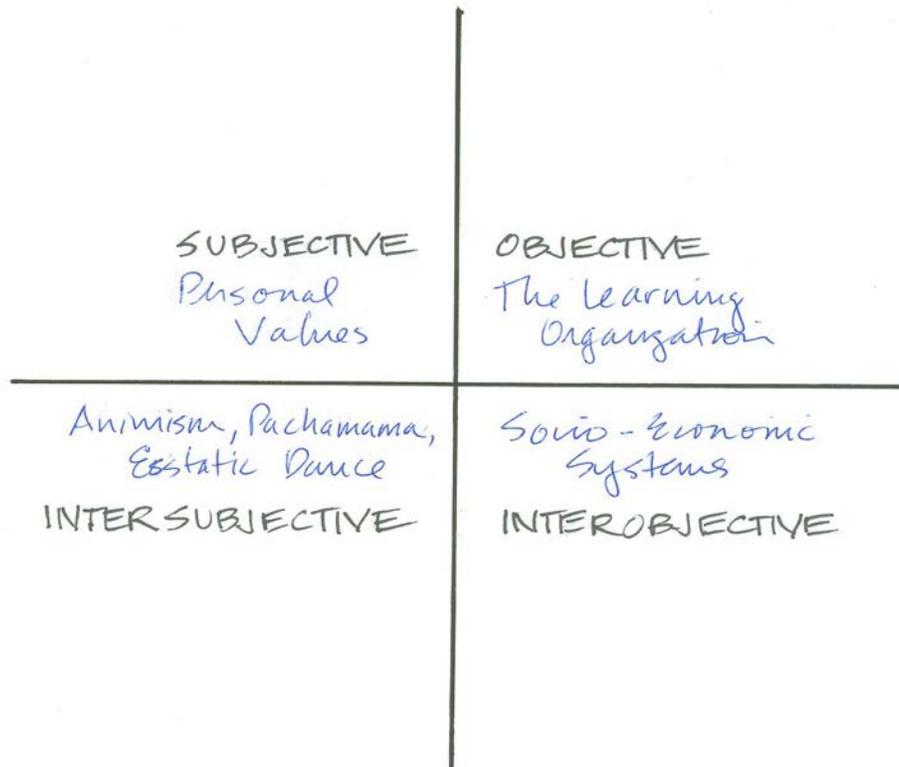
According to this description, Integral Ecology could be adapted very well to diagramming the lessons that arose from the sustainability Intensive. Here is Esbjorn-Hargens' and Zimmerman's expanded framework, what they call "The Four Terrains:"



**Figure 6.1: The Four Terrains**

<sup>1</sup> From Mare, E.C., editor (2010) *The Ecological Key of the Ecovillage Design Education*. Permanent Publications; East Meon, Hampshire, UK (in print)

Especially useful for our interpretation is that the four quadrants have now been associated with four dimensions of *being*: subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective. Using this new framework, I found it quite easy to insert the categories that arose from our sustainability Intensive:



In this interpretation (please refer to the four terrains), “the subjective realities of any being at all levels of its perception” are defined by personal values. Personal values are “known by felt experience.” “The intersubjective realities of any being at all levels of its communion” could be a paraphrase for the experience and knowing of Animism – and rightly could apply as well to the intentions of Pachamama and Ecstatic Dance, which are to reawaken a deep sense of communion with all life. The insights of these practices are “known by mutual resonance.” The interobjective quadrant, the “terrain of systems,” is the intersection of the “collective” and the “exterior,” and so is represented accurately by the most global of our concerns: socio-economic systems, “known by systemic analysis.”

My choice for the fourth and final quadrant deserves a little more explanation, for this did not arise spontaneously during the Intensive nor as a consequence of the extended dialogue afterward. Yet, since most of the participants were associated with a Human and Organization Development doctoral program, I thought the choice of “The Learning Organization” could be justified. Peter Senge describes learning organizations as “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where

new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (1990, p. 3). This certainly is *not* the description of a typical organization, which we might expect to belong in the Terrain of Systems, a collective-exterior manifestation. Instead, the Learning Organization sounds more like an opportunity to extend and enhance individual abilities through purposeful association with others; thus it becomes the “exterior” domain of the “individual.” This more enlightened, person-centered approach to the organization could be described as “the objective realities of any being at all levels of its *organization*” (emphasis added).

## Conclusion

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fielding Village Gathering was conceived and convened for the purpose of giving focused attention to the ever more pressing concerns of sustainability within a doctoral level conversation. An interdisciplinary team self-organized so as to provide multiple perspectives on this issue. While each of these perspectives was valuable in its own right – and conceivably could be considered its own rewarding avenue of research – it was through an Integral framework that the essential relationships among these perspectives could be revealed as a systemic whole. Thus, sustainability as defined by a free-lance doctoral Intensive would suggest that the issue is a multidimensional problem requiring multidimensional solutions.

## Selected Bibliography

It is beyond the scope of this Report to provide a comprehensive bibliography relevant to all four quadrants or terrains of sustainability. Instead, I will focus on those references that were introduced in the course of the Intensive and the extended dialogue afterward, as well as those that I believe are especially useful for ascertaining what was earlier proposed as “the essence:” the triad ‘environment-ecology-systems’ (though, in future iterations I probably will omit ‘environment,’ as that terminology tends to externalize or objectify ‘ecology.’

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