Integral Without Borders

IWB celebrated its 5th year of being by holding a small gathering in Istanbul followed by the Directors’ meeting on the Island of Cunda in the Aegean.
We are now working on how we can make the concept of integral international development more real in praxis and how to support others in this adventure.
Below Gail and Emine have written briefly about both the gathering and the meeting.
We will discuss more of the outcome of these in a future newsletter; for now see the last page for further planned events

Impressions Of The IWB3 Gathering

Again we gathered as Integral Without Borders, the Integral International Development Center. Our third meeting was held at Emine Kiray’s house in Istanbul with eight invited participants. This form and arrangement was different from the 50+ gathering in Istanbul two years earlier or the 30-person gathering in Perpignan, France in 2006. Each meeting to date has had a different character and feel, perhaps co-arising with each new social holon of participants as well as co-arising with who we, as Directors, are in each unfolding moment. Nevertheless, the thread that connects was clearly felt, and was finely articulated by Ken Wilber over Skype, as he fielded an illuminating discussion from across the Atlantic:

“While utilitarian view points to ‘the greatest happiness for the greatest number,’ the basic moral intuition described by integral theory orients us to the greatest depth for the greatest span. [So the question becomes:] What’s the most I can do, for the least amount of time, with the gifts I’ve been given?”

In a certain way, this is the deep structure to IWB. Each person, then, surfaces that in diverse, unique ways.

This universality and uniqueness is the AQAL framework’s enduring strength in situations of complexity, allowing us to be nimble and also wise in our actions.

And so, a seemingly unlikely group gathered around this central thread—‘unlikely’, that is, only in a conventional context, but quite natural in an integral one. Eight integral practitioners: one working in water management projects in the Inter-American Development Bank, another creating sustainable value chains in the corporate sector in USA, a third promoting community development in World Vision’s projects worldwide, a fourth engaging community resilience in Scotland, a fifth developing further nuances to social theory in changing societies such as Turkey, a couple fostering leadership development in the civil society organizations in Nigeria, and finally the eighth contributing to transforming educational systems in the Middle East. Each indeed unique!

To explore this dialectic of the unique and universal, we began with an inquiry on ‘how we are creating an AQAL context’ in our work. How do we enter into a worldspace, and dynamically make sense of it, as we become ‘context-holders’ for development? It was a good way to begin and it held its presence throughout the remainder of our days together: like hitting a meditation bell and hearing the resonance for some time afterward. And, my personal sense is that this opening session only just began an inquiry, which will continue to work psychoactively in us as we draw out explicitly what resides implicit to our praxis and fabric of being.
The design was to keep the meeting intimate so to enable greater depth of discussion. Each person ‘seeded’ a topic and hosted discussion on it, both to illumine aspects of their own seeing and praxis, as well as for all others to deepen understanding and learn. As one person put it, “I feel like there is a paper bag over my head and I can’t see what I can’t see; in coming to this meeting, you are all helping me see around the paper bag, perhaps helping me to lift the bag entirely.” (paraphrased). In hosting a discussion in this form, often participants found an insight that was entirely not what they expected they were coming to the meeting for: “I have realized what I thought I wanted out of this is actually not what I needed!”

On Sunday evening, we had a Skype call with Ken Wilber, who fielded questions and answers from each participant. Hilariously, and tragically, the Skype line kept breaking at the most engaging moments of the discussion! But, again and again, we’d call him back and he would steadfastly take up the discussion precisely where we left off. My sense was that this reflects his own deep commitment to the basic moral intuition, embodying a giving of his gifts, unwaveringly, in a way that was both humbling and inspirational.

This time together—in discussion, over meals, in Q&A with Wilber, taking strolls along the Bosporus Sea, in meditation—all this helped to shift our focus back to our own integral practice, by whatever name or form. Taking in that deep structure, working for the greatest depth for the greatest span, and asking ourselves, “What’s the most I can do, for the least amount of time, with the gifts I’ve been given?”

I close with an excerpt from some reflections from one of the participants, Nick Wilding:

“I’d like to dedicate these moments to the wonderful hospitality offered to us, as well as the many more uncaptured moments of inspiration, challenge, mutual recognition and inquiry into the depths and spans of our collective and individual work together across sectors, continents, worldviews etc. etc.. For the eight of us to have managed to prioritise coming together for this work, at this time, feels like a special gift to all our futures and those of many more who we are yet to meet.”

Gail Hochachka Istanbul September 2010
IWB Directors’ Retreat: Cunda on the Aegean

After the conference, the organizing group went to Cunda, “pronounced Djunda” as I seem always to be compulsively pointing out, it is a small island off the coast of the Northern Aegean in Turkey where I have a summer house—a glorious place surrounded by pines, olive trees, wild sage and the incredible blue that is the Aegean; part of an archipelago that is now a national park. The idea was to rest, relax and figure out the future of IWB.

While we are frequently on Skype and emails are almost a part of daily life, we had never spent much time with each other. We all met during the Perpignan conference in 2006 and spent another intense week in Istanbul during the 2008 conference. While Gail and I crossed paths in the US (II gatherings, ITC, a meeting with Ken at the Loft), this was only the third time I was actually face to face with Mike, Paul and Barbara. It is a testament to the resilience of the emerging Integral LL that I felt I knew these folks quite well; felt so at home and well loved in their company.

I must admit the Cunda IWB meetings are embedded in a haze of R&R for me: an incredible plate of kebab accompanying wine and personal stories; a boat trip around the island and a monastery under renovation; a rooster on the next island that crows at all hours of the day, except the mornings; an improbable spread of cheap chachkes (trinkets to the rest of us), including a “holarchy” of turtles made from sea-shells; at least 40 types of olives to taste at the farmer’s market; and relaxing on the busy Cunda waterfront with mastic flavored Turkish coffee at the Tash Café.

Interpersed with all this, we formally (with wine, of course) welcomed Mike Simpson, the executive director of One Sky, as a co-director of IWB. We talked about how to structure our formal relationship with the Integral Institute and the IWB LR in general. We fine tuned our mission, vision and core values, something we had worked on over Skype and email. We were delighted to find not only that we were in full agreement, but that IWB was unfolding in line with those ideals.

We planned two events for 2011: another small, intimate gathering in Vancouver, Canada with a focus on “self as instrument” and a larger meeting in Cusco, Peru focused on “working with cultures, societies, and systems.” The latter will include field experiences, community visits, and integral analyses of One Sky’s projects with the Amazon Conservation Association. I love how were are trying out new approaches, looking for formats that are most conducive to integral learning, breaking the typical conference mold.

We also came up with a plan for writing projects: case studies and papers for the website, worksheets that practitioners can use in the field and a longer manuscript on integral international development to be completed within the year, all tucked safely under Gail’s supervision, as well as this newsletter under Paul’s guidance.

Emine Kirey Cundu Turkey Sept. 2010
We are happy to announce that Mike Simpson has joined IWB as a Director. Mike is currently the Executive Director of One Sky – The Canadian Institute of Sustainable Living. Simpson is a former award winning documentary producer who has worked with many different groups on human rights, environment and development. A founder of the GAIA Project of the Sierra Club of B.C., he has also worked on appropriate technology projects in Latin America and Africa. Currently he represents the Western region for the Canadian Environmental Network International Program. With One Sky he is spearheading innovations in applying integral theory to global sustainable development, particularly in One Sky’s projects in Peru on developing capacity for Amazon rainforest conservation, and in Nigeria on integral leadership development for sustainability.

A number of gatherings both regional and international are planned for the future; amongst these will be the following:

IWB 4: will be held in May 2011 in Vancouver with the theme “Self as Instrument”. This will be a regional gathering for those with in easy access to the area. It will be by invitation and application. More details will follow.

IWB 5: will be held in September 2011 in Peru with the theme “Working with Cultures, Societies, and Systems”. This will be an international gathering. It will also be by invitation and application only.

IWB 6: it is anticipated that this will be a regional gathering probably to be held in Cape Town in 2012.

See the next newsletter on these gatherings for more details as they become more contextualised.

As IWB moves into a more sustainable position, bearing in mind that for the past five years it has been run purely on a voluntary basis, it is important that the objectives of this centre be restated so that people are aware of what it can and cannot do. Some of these objectives are already in place, others are being developed as time and funds become available.

Objectives:
To consult and mentor practitioners who are seeking an integrative way forward in their work in global development.
To provide resources to support practitioners working at the innovative edge of international development praxis; to provide AQAL training ‘resources’, tools, articles and papers that can support their further enactment of integral development and praxis.
To ignite and sustain a ‘community of practice’ where practitioners can find a community and a discourse that truly ‘meets’ and receives them, and with whom they can develop their ideas.

Your support of this community of practice is important to its emergence and growth – a network that is as great as those involved in it.

Directors:
Gail Hochachka, Emine Kiray, Mike Simpson, and Paul van Schaik