

# Integral Leadership Review

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## Fresh Perspective

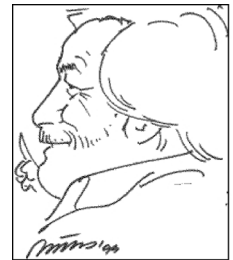
### Transdisciplinarity and Integral Leadership

#### A Conversation with Marc Lucas



Russ: I'm really delighted to have the chance to talk with you about Transdisciplinarity and I just want you to know I've already talked with Yehuda Elkana. Are you familiar with him?

Marc: No.



Russ: Well he was the president of Central European University and he's in Berlin now, and he recently had a conference there with people from the EU and from a couple of presidents of universities in Germany and some people from Arizona State University and from the United States educational bureaucracy, and so I don't remember what their roles were.

Marc: He's very interesting.

Russ: And essentially, what they were looking at was curriculum policy and the absence of curriculum policy in Europe compared to the United States and the implications for supporting research and things like that.

I also talked with Andreas Muhar. Do you know him?

Marc: No, I don't know him.

Russ: Well Andreas is at BOKU. I think that's what the initials are for the university. It's an agricultural university and they've been doing some transdisciplinary projects in rural areas as a part of their program there.

What I'm interested in learning from you is a bit about your own experience with transdisciplinary and how you're using it. What the institution is that you're involved with is doing around transdisciplinarity?

Marc: We're doing integral studies at the University of Cologne. We are exploring certain fields of the AQAL theory and are trying to find out whether we can validate what we find with some empirical data.

Russ: Tell us about the program at the University of Cologne.

Marc: Okay. First I have to say, at the moment, I'm engaged in two German universities. There is the "Distance" University of Hagen, which has the master degree course in integral leadership. Wendelin Küpers started the program and now Jürgen Deeg and I'm responsible for this program because he moved to New Zealand. We're developing this program further. It's a curriculum for people to do their master's degree in economics. They can learn about different interpretations of integral theory and we enhanced the original framework because we have to combine what he says to hard economic theories which we try to fit in there.

I'm also working at the University of Cologne. There's a Center for Integral Studies (CIS) there ([www.ineko-cologne.com](http://www.ineko-cologne.com)), which is related to the Department of Psychology. At this center, we are already doing research. We have, at the moment, several PhD theses underway. I can't tell too much about that because the research is not finished and we are, at the moment, trying to hand in some articles for quite important journals. I can tell you the topics of what our main aims are with this research project.

Russ: I would appreciate that.

Marc: One research project we're doing right now, which will also be a PhD thesis, is quite interdisciplinary, because we are working together with researchers from Neuro Sciences, from Psychology and Economics.

We're trying to re-establish, redefine, or redo an original approach by Clare Graves. He called it tachystoscopic research. He wanted to find out something about neurologic correlates of his theory of adult development, and of course, we have much more capacity nowadays than Graves had in the 80s when he started his research on that.

We first had the people do several pencil and paper tests. These were e.g. the sentence completion tests, the values test Don Beck put together and some personality tests. In the fMRI design, we were measuring what happened in the participants brains while they had to choose between sets of two words that were simultaneously shown to them. Those words were correlated to the different levels of development in the original theory, which you might know as Spiral Dynamics developed by Don Beck and Chris Cowan and Cook-Greuters Ego-Development. And by doing that, we could find out different neurological not structures but patterns in the brain which correlate to more individualistic choices and to more collective choices. We also saw different behavioral orientation in first and second tier in our groups.

Russ: Would it be fair to call the research effort a team effort?

Marc: It certainly is that, because no single researcher from one single field would have been able to do this research. There was a strong need to combine the knowledge of several fields of research on the theories and the methods of all these different fields in order to discover what we found. It would not have been possible otherwise.

Russ: Could you tell me what were the things that you as a group or you as a leader of this effort did to foster teamwork among the participants?

Marc: I'm not really sure if there was really a contribution by one single person to that. I think the most important thing for the whole group was to sit together, sometimes in smaller groups that we're working more intensely on the project, but the most important thing was communication. Sitting together, thinking together, being open for what the others have to contribute was critical.

My contribution to the process was that I was able to more speak generally, hold the vision for this research and to show how the research could contribute within a larger framework, which was in this case the integral framework.

Russ: Holding the vision was the leadership function that you were able to provide?

Marc: I would think so, yes. I had no formula right to do that, but I think it was supporting the other people.

Russ: From an integral point of view I think about leadership as an organic process.

Marc: Yes.

Russ: I think of leader as a role, as opposed to a person. In any kind of collective activity, people move in and out of that role, depending on the context and the circumstances. Did you see people exercising leadership at various times in different ways during the course of the project?

Marc: I think the other contributors to this research and the other researchers took over whenever their field of knowledge was needed. Sometimes, we had specialists who were more able to do some statistical procedures and use some statistical methods, for example. They were able to bring in their special knowledge and, at some point, they had to listen to what others were saying from a more theoretical standpoint. They would have to figure out which procedures we could use in order to test the hypothesis. So, there's always a change of someone stepping in front and someone moving to the back.

Russ: Yes. Was there any exploration of the developmental levels of the members of the team?

Marc: No, we didn't do that at all. (Laughter) It was more important to me to honour the expertise of experts and the contributing achievements of achievers, than to figure out who is most integral or who's center of gravity is later in the spiral. So we had some members of the team taking the same tests, but anonymous.

Russ: In the process of the project, were you aware of different developmental levels showing up?

Marc: Yes, I think so. It was an interesting interplay among most of the researchers, mostly speaking and acting from a point of view that you would label as, I think, orange within the Spiral Dynamics framework. But at some point, we had other meme working within them and showing up as we discussed our findings.

Russ: Did the team look at those self-consciously or did they just ignore it? Were you observing that?

Marc: Sometimes I brought this point in. I think the smaller teams in which they were more open to speak about these topics. Whenever the professors from some fields were in the group, we weren't able to do that at all.

Russ: It sounds like it's an interesting project. Perhaps, we can talk a little bit about the masters program in leadership that Wendelin Kupers initiated and that you've been working with. Could you tell us a little bit about that program?

Marc: This is a formal master's course, which is called Integral Leadership. You can take this within the economics master program at the Distance University of Hagen. So we have students from several countries. Of course, most of them, are from Germany, but we also have students from Canada and the United States. Many are from Austria or Hungary or from Switzerland.

In this course, which is the final course of an economics study or MBA study masters program, you get to know the integral framework. In the program before that, you don't hear anything about integral.

We teach about integral theory. It takes at least one year to do the course completely. There are several projects for home work, seminar work learners have to do. At the end, there is a test on what they have learned. There's also class study material that is more than 500 pages. We also have a book that is published in German. It is called "Integrale Steuerung". It's about integral leadership and organization. After that, learners write their masters project, an integral project.

Russ: How long has this program been going on?

Marc: This program started in 2004.

Russ: How many students do you have in the current program?

Marc: We have more than 50 new students each semester.

Russ: It's a year-long program, is that right? It takes two semesters?

Marc: Yes, we began with only one semester, but we now have decided to expand the course, as the program is quite a challenge to our students.

Russ: And 50. I'm impressed. That's quite a large number. Is the program conducted in German?

Marc: It is conducted in German.

Russ: That's important. What are some of the key readings that you have people do? I'm assuming there are books or articles that...

Marc: Yeah, but we have here our own book and course material that is more than 500 pages long. And there's also the book on Integral Leadership and Organization.

Russ: Do you have them read Ken Wilber's work?

Marc: No. They only have to read these two books.

Russ: I see.

Marc: There are a large number of further readings they can study more, but there's no requirement to do that.

Russ: I also teach integral leadership. I've been teaching it in two different PhD programs and one masters program. I try and cover some basics around the integral theory and the ways integral theory has been applied in leadership studies. We also look at adult development material so I'm drawing on Spiral Dynamics, Torbert and Cook-Greuter, as well as Kegan.

Marc: Yes.

Russ: I also deal with leader development and draw on David V. Day's *Integrated Approach to Leader Development*, basically trying to look at the whole developmental process for the individual as something more than the 5-day course in leadership that you get at a workshop. We look at leadership development as being about not just the development of the individual, but the development of the collective culture and systems within which the individual is operating in a leader role. We also look at integral methodological pluralism. These students are getting ready to do their dissertations and I want them to be familiar with integral methodological pluralism before they do that.

So I'm curious about the themes that you cover in the masters course.

Marc: It's quite similar to what you described. What we are doing right now is we are filling in some more content which is related to the developmental approaches, and most of what we have is at the moment quite centered to the quadrants and not so much on levels of development, but we're working on it at the moment. We are filling in on leadership theories like transformational leadership and so on, and we are looking at these theories from a more integral framework.

Russ: So you're using the 4-quadrant model as an organizing device for looking at how these theories address their different quadrants? Is that correct?

Marc: Yes, as well as how certain leadership phenomena such as paradoxes, pathologies, and things like that can be addressed better within an integral framework, which not only looks at one quadrant, but also sees how the four quadrants interrelate.

Russ: You said that when you talk about integral you're not just focused on Ken Wilber's work, but do you have other theories of integral that you draw on?

Marc: Most of it, of course, has really led me to Ken Wilber's and Mark Edwards work, but right now, for example, with these developmental approaches, we also look a little bit more to Grave's work. We're also looking at the developmental theories that are considered in the Integral Institute. For example, what Cook-Greuter did when she further developed what Loevinger did with her original theories and approaches; we are also working with Kegan's developmental approach. This is one of my tasks at the moment.

Russ: It's fun work. Well, so do you find that in the course of the program you're working not just at the level of theory, but at the level of practice?

Marc: Yes. There are two special ways in which we can do this. First of all, every semester, there are some days when the students have to come together and they can have a seminar in Hagen. Sometimes, we're going to other cities. We work usually for three days together. This sometimes has been more practical practice oriented. Sometimes, we also do case studies and things like that.

And the practical application can always be found in a class material and the tests the students have to take. There they have to show in which way they would apply what they learned to a certain problem they find.

Russ: What might be an example of that?

Marc: One example might be that we present them a case of a change project in the pharmaceutical industry. We get them the data, what the consultants did, and what's known about the company. Then the students would try to find some other way. For example, they take into account findings from the other quadrants and try to find out how these could be better addressed in such approach.

Or, for example, they're presented a health management project within a company. Students have to find out how these different things that the company already does can be combined in order to show that there's a better way of finding how this health project will work out. Things like that are done in our process.

Russ: What have you seen or what have you heard from students who have gone through the program that they have found to be valuable about having done this work?

Marc: They almost always say that the program is very, very intense; very difficult for them. Some students think that as we are not that statistically, but only empirically, oriented that our courses would be the easy option to chose as combined e.g. to "finance", but after they did our program, they will say this was very, very...

Russ: Challenging?

Marc: Challenging, yes. Actually challenging to them. Then they say, "This has been so mind opening to me. I have a much broader view on what has happened in our organization. When I have a problem that I have to address as a leader, then I can see more aspects of what happens. I can address that better and I can find better solutions to the problems I find in my daily surroundings."

I'm also doing some master theses with our students. They always say that it's the most interesting thing they have ever done. Some would say that they found in a new way that economics not only can be challenging, but can also be a great way to express oneself and work with others. This is what I really, really like when they report these things, because I'm constantly trying to find new topics that would help them, special topics for their thesis.

They have to choose between different topics we give them. They can tell us what they want to do, but we have to find certain topics for them in the beginning and then they work on it. And while doing this, I constantly try to find actual problems and integrate this. We find ways in which we can do this within the integral framework and find perspectives on the topics within this framework.

Russ: What would be an example of one of those topics?

Marc: Okay, well I have three on my table.

The first one is quite simple. It's leadership from the perspective of a personality development model. The students have to tell us about the constructive development framework and to show how this framework relates to findings from other personality-oriented leadership models.

The second one is about pathologic effects and inter-effects between transformational leadership and organization with regards to the development of a cultic corporate culture.

The third one is about paradoxical effects of organizational models on individual health of leaders. There, we're speaking about interested self risk-taking and endangerment, which is an actual German and Swiss research field.

Russ: So that would be related to issues of stress and things like that?

Marc: Yes. It's not only about stress. It's about other quadrants influence on individual consciousness of leaders.

Russ: You've indicated that you use several different adult development theory approaches for the lines. I'm wondering if you have found that any one of those models seems to be more valuable for the students compared to the others?

Marc: I have no response from the students which I could say that they prefer one over the other. We are just beginning to develop this material for the students. They are already in the program, but we're trying to bring in our findings from the Cologne studies.

Russ: Good. And then what about type in the masters program? Do you introduce the concepts of type?

Marc: No, not at all at the moment. We have it in our research project in Cologne because we have the NEO-FFI, which is related to the Big 5 personality type concept, so we have it in there, but not in the class material in Hagen yet.

Russ: It seems like the primary focus of the use of integral in the program is on the use of the four quadrant model as a lens with which to view individual and organizational phenomena in relationship to leadership change. Is that right?

Marc: Yes.

Russ: In your position in your two programs that you're involved with, do you have much of an opportunity to see what is going on in the world of organizations and business or the introduction of integral ideas out in those worlds?

Marc: Yes, at the University of Cologne where we are doing research, including research on people from companies who are in the leadership positions. When we speak with them, sometimes I can hear about what the problems are right now.

Of course, at the University of Hagen, we have people who are already working as leaders in companies.. But I think the most important point for me is that I'm also working as a consultant. I am a coach. So I'm not only in the academic position. I'm also working with people from companies. I've also been in a leading position myself within the pharmaceutical industry at Novartis where I was head of HR development. So, I think, at least to a certain degree, I know what is going on there.

Russ: Good. And do you see any evidence of integral ideas beginning to show up out in those worlds?

Marc: A little bit like it is in academia. People are still, in the beginning, quite reserved and think of this as some kind of esoteric view of things, or that this is just the next management theory which will be gone in two years or so. But when people get in contact with it a little bit more and they overcome these problems they have worked with the integral approach, then they find that they really can see more of what is happening in their companies and within the teams while using this framework. Most of the people are very convinced of this.

Russ: And among your clients, could you give an example of how that has happened?

Marc: For example, when I work as a coach for persons in a leadership position in the pharmaceutical industry, sometimes they come to me and speak about the problems they have with the employees that don't listen to their arguments. While working with them, when these persons have some confidence in what we do together, then they sometimes find they can open up to listen a little bit more to what the real motives and values of the people working for them are. We can work on, for example, some ways of communicating with them in a different way than they did before. Understanding this is important for leaders, and so they can have another way of interacting with the employees and thereby experience some degree of self-development.

Russ: I've really appreciated talking with you, and I think it's really exciting the work you're doing, and the research sounds like it's going to be a very important contribution...

Marc: Hopefully.

Russ: ...and working with students is always exciting, I think.

Marc: Yes, it is good. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Russ: My pleasure. Thank you so much.