

Integral Leadership Review

Volume X, No.4

August 2010



Notes from the Field

The Institute for Integral Studies: A New Initiative to Enhance the Integral Research Communities

Marcus Molz



In September 2008 a dozen researchers from various disciplines¹ and applied fields² sharing a non-dogmatic spirit of integral research met in Freiburg/Germany to found the *Institute for Integral Studies* (IFIS) as a registered not-for-profit organization. The Institute has set itself the mission to catalyze the recognition and further development of integral³ and likeminded approaches⁴ in academic research, higher education and research-based practice. IFIS is focusing on the connections between i) disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields of academic study, ii) neglected or dismissed fields, iii) the development of integral (meta)studies, iv) real-life challenges in our age of global crises, and v) research into desirable futures and into conditions to bring them about.

The joint commitment of the members of the Institute is to develop, share and help to make use of integral knowledge and wisdom with the sole purpose of contributing to the common good and to the well-being and sustainable development of the greatest number of sentient beings and their socio-cultural and natural habitats. The work carried out by the Institute is based on values and principles that inspire a broad, pluralistic, dialogical, critical, self-reflective and dynamic understanding and practice of integral studies.⁵

Most of the Institute's full members are affiliated with higher education or research institutions and generally have a background in integral studies for many years. IFIS is a unique community of research and learning that is committed to quality processes. The results to be achieved comply with and go beyond common scientific standards. Special attention is paid to organic growth of the community and to the cultivation of inner coherence and collective intelligence in the sense of practicing what is preached.

In the first year of its existence IFIS has been busy setting up its organizational backbone: its general assembly, its governance board composed by seven of the most active founding members, and its international advisory board uniting major contemporary voices of advanced integral theorizing across streams.⁶ On this basis the international network of researchers inspired by integral and likeminded approaches connected to the Institute has started to grow. The Institute has also begun to pursue research, establish development projects, organize academic and educational events and produce high-level publications.

Two major events were held in 2009: first, an intimate workshop on the foundations of integral research with contributions and discussions on the variety of integral streams, on the necessary methodological

foundations, and on the horizon of integral meta-studies; second, a conference on integral economics at the University of Freiburg. As a timely contribution to the debates on the worldwide economic and financial crisis this conference attracted more than 100 attendees.

Through their life work, several contemporary vanguard researchers have attempted to cross and transcend some of the deep-seated splits between disciplines, cultures, individuals and collectives, facts and values, theory and practice, science and spirituality etc. To date little cross-connection, however, has been established between these researchers and their scholarly work. On this background more than 30 world-class boundary-crossing scholars worldwide have accepted IFIS' invitation to dialogue with each other for the first time on their respective approaches in order to discover similarities and differences, to offer mutual criticism, and to join forces regarding shared interests.

One of the development projects successfully launched by IFIS is about building a collective repository on integral and likeminded research worldwide making use of the latest Web 2.0 technology.

The steadily growing repository is covering information pertaining to various interconnected categories, like historical and contemporary researchers and their publications, academic journals and book series, projects, events and funding opportunities, initiatives, institutions, and post-secondary educational programmes.

IFIS invites interested researchers and organizations to connect with its vision and practice of integral studies. This can happen in many ways: from occasional to committed, from informal to formal, from online to face-to-face, from informational to transformational.

Different membership types are available and these include full, affiliated, and advisory board membership, as well as sponsorship. Donations to IFIS are tax-deductable⁷ and they will speed up the further development of the Institute by augmenting the volunteer work of its members and friends.

For more information see: www.integral-studies.org .

NOTES

1. From psychology to sociology to economics to history to physics etc.
2. From education to intercultural communication to architecture to health to yoga etc.
3. Within IFIS integral approaches are considered in their actual plurality as they have emerged at different points of time in different locations, domains, streams and communities.
4. Like some of those labeled as transdisciplinary, transmodern, critical realist, cosmopolitan, (neo-)humanist, meta-paradigmatic, meta-theoretical, unity-in-diversity, complexity, quantum etc.
5. Accordingly, at the Institute integral and likeminded approaches are not only considered as helpful frameworks for conducting research of a more comprehensive type but as well as objects of research. As objects of research they need to be better understood in their particular focus, in their conceptual structures and in their biographical, sociocultural and ideational context and trajectories. In these respects different approaches can be beneficially contrasted with each other. This is opening up a new research agenda of crucial importance for the future of integral studies.
In the first year of its existence IFIS has been busy setting up its organizational backbone: its general assembly, its governance board composed by seven of the most active founding members, and its international advisory board uniting major contemporary voices of advanced integral theorizing across streams. On this basis the international network of researchers inspired by integral

and likeminded approaches connected to the Institute has started to grow. The Institute has also begun to pursue research, establish development projects, organize academic and educational events and produce high-level publications.

Two major events were held in 2009: first, an intimate workshop on the foundations of integral research with contributions and discussions on the variety of integral streams, on the necessary methodological foundations, and on the horizon of integral meta-studies; second, a conference on integral economics at the University of Freiburg. As a timely contribution to the debates on the worldwide economic and financial crisis this conference attracted more than 100 attendees.

The next major event conceived by IFIS will be the international symposium “Research across boundaries—Advances in Theory-building” scheduled in June 2010 at the University of Luxembourg. Through their life work, several contemporary vanguard researchers have attempted to cross and transcend some of the deep-seated splits between disciplines, cultures, individuals and collectives, facts and values, theory and practice, science and spirituality etc. To date little cross-connection, however, has been established between these researchers and their scholarly work. On this background more than 30 world-class boundary-crossing scholars worldwide have accepted IFIS’ invitation to dialogue with each other for the first time on their respective approaches in order to discover similarities and differences, to offer mutual criticism, and to join forces regarding shared interests.

One of the development projects successfully launched by IFIS is about building a collective repository on integral and likeminded research worldwide making use of the latest Web 2.0 technology. The steadily growing repository is covering information pertaining to various interconnected categories, like historical and contemporary researchers and their publications, academic journals and book series, projects, events and funding opportunities, initiatives, institutions, and post-secondary educational programmes.

IFIS invites interested researchers and organizations to connect with its vision and practice of integral studies. This can happen in many ways: from occasional to committed, from informal to formal, from online to face-to-face, from informational to transformational. Different membership types are available and these include full, affiliated, and advisory board membership, as well as sponsorship. Donations to IFIS are tax-deductible and they will speed up the further development of the Institute by augmenting the volunteer work of its members and friends. For more information see: www.integral-studies.org.

6 Among them contributors to Integral Review like Mark Edwards, Jenny Gidley, Wendelin Küpers and Jonathan Reams.

7 At least in several European countries.

About the Author

Marcus Molz, after studying psychology, social sciences and cultural studies, has been working as assistant researcher and research fellow in several multi-year European research and inquiry projects at different universities in Germany, France and Luxembourg. For 15 years he has been active in transdisciplinary fields like intercultural relations and diversity issues, technologically-enhanced environments for learning and work, cross-border education, and quality development in higher education programmes. In all these fields he has been teaching undergraduates and graduates from different disciplines and cultures simultaneously in transdisciplinary and multilingual courses. In order to transform the challenge of diversity into an asset he is continually developing and implementing innovative boundary-crossing pedagogical approaches. Markus has, as well, gained experience as a freelance consultant for transnational non-profit organizations, and as co-founder of two start-up companies.

His life-course across cultures and sectors, and his broad interests across disciplinary boundaries and across the theory-practice divide stimulated his long-standing interest in integral, transdisciplinary and meta-theoretical approaches. Along these lines he is currently finalizing his PhD dissertation called “Beyond Fragmentation—Toward an Integral Pluralism in Sociocultural Research” at the University of Luxembourg.

Markus is founding and board member of the Institute for Integral Studies (IFIS) and initiator, organiser and facilitator of the international symposium on “Research across Boundaries”.