

SECTION V: ANALYSIS AND REFLECTIONS

In the previous section I sought to describe an ecology of relational experiences - those involving Shell and Living Earth and also myself in the context of participatory and collaborative attempts to catalyse a transition towards sustainability. I ended with a suggestion that whilst all of the issues seemed to be disparate and perhaps confusing it may be possible to make sense of them together in some way. In this section then I move into a more formal academic mode of writing and thinking as a way of orienting towards and making sense of the two empirical tracks of relational practices in my inquiry.

First, in chapter 10, I consider the situations and experiences from the angle of the pragmatics of human communication and the concept of the double-bind developed most famously by Gregory Bateson and his colleagues at the Palo Alto Institute. In chapter 11 I take a slightly different perspective upon the praxis, using the theories of system-lifeworld and communicative action forwarded by Jurgen Habermas from the Frankfurt School of critical theorists. These two chapters contain a considerable amount of presentation and description of the original theoretical developments of double-bind and communicative action.

The use of these two theories is predicated upon the orientation taken in both towards “communication” as a multi-level and multi-form phenomenon. That is to say that both theories tend to regard the phenomenon of communication in more than just a single dimension/level at one time. In the context of my explorations of change, power and participation at personal, organisational and social system levels this seems to be a powerful way to bring these disparate praxes and discourses together. The multi-level perspectives also reflect back upon the organic/holographic metaphor that has been weaving its way along the course of this inquiry.

In chapters 10 and 11 I consecutively and rather separately take the two theoretical lenses of double-bind and communicative action to look at the empirical tracks in the thesis. While chapter 10 is quite specific and localised in the sense that the double-bind analysis reflects upon the specific praxes explored in section IV, chapter 11 takes a more generalised perspective of collaborative engagement through the theory of communicative action. Throughout the thesis I have been concerned with problems of disembodied voice as opening the door to objectification and thus control of the “other”; in an analysis section where I begin to make sense of the diverse range of experiences the danger of reification lurks perhaps more

proximally than elsewhere. Hopefully, the combined effect of chapters 10 and 11 is to provide a multiple analytical “mooring” that, whilst helping to mitigate against objectification, allows us to enter and engage with these experiences by exercising a range of sensing faculties that can retain some of the phenomenal richness and contribute to the construction of a point from which to re-embark and move forward.

In the final chapter (12) I forge a connection between the two theories and two empirical tracks and make a final twist of the participatory kaleidoscope to reveal some intimations of a different image of relational praxis in transition towards sustainability.