

Unlocking Hidden Value Through Mindfulness

Bloom Sustainability Applied Conference

Toronto

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Dr Bronwen Rees, Founder East West Sanctuary

INCUBATIO

Workshop programme



- Introductions and mindful meditation
- Making connections with sustainability at macro level
- Mindful body awareness
- Case studies
- Mindful communications
- Workings of mindfulness
- Incubatio and its offerings
- Closing practice: Introducing the field of awareness and connecting with the ancestors

Change of worldview



'In addition to its economic instability, the current form of global capitalism is ecologically and socially unsustainable, and hence not viable in the long run'

Capra, The Hidden Connections

'Business is the only mechanism on the planet today powerful enough to produce the changes necessary to reverse global environmental and social degradation.'

Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest

'There is a crucial difference between the ecological networks of nature and the corporate networks in human society. In an ecosystem, no being is excluded from the network'

Capra, The Hidden Connections

- The thinking and actions that created the current system have taken us out of relationship with the earth and natural cycles which actually nourish us
- System has gone out of balance and is bringing the capitalist system into question
- Nothing less than a deep evolutionary change of consciousness will transform the current institutional stasis (Magnuson, 2010)

Capitalism in transition or question?



- *‘Capitalism began as an anecdotal model and evolved, with institutional change and adaptation, into a fully-fledged economic system... We can learn from this historical precedent. In Mindful Economics we can see that economics can once again evolve. We see it evolving, step by step, away from the growth-oriented, profit-driven capitalist system to a community-based, sustainable system. This must necessarily involve mindful institutional development and change. And unlike a Utopia, which means “nowhere”, the alternatives are everywhere all around us’*

(Joel Magnuson, Mindful Economics, 2008 p. 410)

What is mindfulness?

- Emerged from earliest Buddhist meditation practices and recalibrated as a secular method of self-development and/or therapy
- Many different methods and approaches – can be a deep spiritual practice, or simply a tool for reducing stress
- Increasing importance in emergent businesses, and in health care and education as a technique for increasing creativity and care, and for sustainable transformation

Why mindfulness as tool of systemic change?

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- Brings outer and inner world into relationship through awareness
- Reestablishes connections between body, mind and spirit
- Reestablishes honest communication through values
- Helps individuals take responsibility for the consequences of their actions
- Brings systemic thinking into everyday actions
- Mindfulness has an inherent ethical element

Benefits for individuals – awareness of conditions

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- openness to novelty
- alertness to distinction
- sensitivity to different contexts
- awareness of multiple perspectives
- orientation in the present
- Less stress
- More compassion and empathy

Research established real organisational benefits

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Organisational Reliability

- Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001

Creativity

- Reilly et al, 2010

Reliability of information systems

- Butler & Gray, 2006

Customer orientation

- Ndubisi, 2011

Experience and habitual entrepreneurs

- Rerup, 2005

Relationship Quality

- Saavedra et al, 2010

Interpersonal Communication

- Burgoon et al, 2000

Sensitivity by individuals

- Eccles, 2009

Reliability and Conflict handling

- Ndubisi, 2011

Generic mindfulness programmes

- Mindfulness-based stress reduction, developed by Jon Kabat Zinn Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine and Mindfulness-based Cognitive therapy, developed by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale in Oxford
- Generic programme typically takes place of over 8 weeks includes a one-day retreat and a daily practice
- Training of teachers takes considerably longer

Economic paradigm modelled on Newtonian worldview

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- In this worldview, matter is paramount, and organisation is a machine
- Universe is objective 'out there' to be manipulated and used –resources are finite
- Survival of the fittest – competitive not collaborative
- Humans are treated as 'resources' to be allocated specific functions and measured in terms of 'competences' and 'outcomes'

Evolution of human being and institutions in 20th century

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- Human being became the creator and object of commodifying and homogenising forces ensuring growth of advanced capitalist societies
- Mechanisation lead to standardising of work and economic measurements.'What gets measured gets managed'
- Discipline and control the characteristic of the modern organisation, not empowerment
- What happens to that which does not get measured?

Evolutionary perspective: consilience across disciplines

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Findings in neuroscience, physics, molecular biology pointing to a new evolutionary paradigm which is collaborative and not competitive, where the universe is not a fixed machine.

Implications of new science for business

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- Evolution is a co-evolutionary process, and is relational, not survival.
- Need to look at systems, and organisations within systems – holarchies not hierarchies
- Working with relationships, and boundaries, and flow of energy through system
- Dealing with uncertainty, developing techniques for sensing into this evolutionary flow
- Strategic sensing as opposed to planning
- Working with current conditions and resources which brings about enhanced need for awareness skills

Autopoiesis (feedback loops) as the basis for life systems

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- Autopoiesis is a feedback process in which systems regularly 'makes itself'. Rather than running on autopilot, as a machine, which eventually grinds to a halt, feedback processes take in information from the environment, and the system reforms and shapes itself in response to this
- This is a process of 'cognition' such that system and cognition can be said to 'co-emerge'
- This process fundamental to every system, from the unicellular to the highest level of complexity

Mindfulness can be considered as most basic autopoiesis

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- *'... a kind of focussed attention that allows us to see the internal workings of our own minds (and that) enables us to get off the autopilot of ingrained behaviours and habitual responses'*
- *'a scalpel we can use to resculpt our neural pathways'*
(Siegel, 2010)
- Tracks the feedback process between inner world of individual and external material world
- Enables the surfacing of strong emotions and impulses which have become automatic which can become harnessed into more conscious evolution

Mindfulness feedback processes restore vital energy

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- Consciousness is a co-arising process of thoughts, feelings, sensations, emotions, impulses which are interlinked.
- Much of our consciousness is on 'autopilot' where these processes move through habitual neural pathways – our identity, who we think we are, is caught up and shaped by this.
- Mindfulness breaks the autopilot, and allows space for more choice to break into the moment – to enable us to see and acknowledge the arising process, even if we find it difficult or painful.
- This leads to broadening awareness of how things are, clearer perceptions and more focus in situations

Mindfulness as a tool of evolution of consciousness?

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We have reached an extraordinary moment in our history. The emergence of depth psychology and the tremendous intellectual-psychological-imaginative development that has taken place in the last century, and the larger development of the last several centuries that has resulted in the forging of the autonomous modern self, all this allows us not only to recover the anima mundi but to re-engage it in a new way, whereby we can co-creatively participate in its unfolding rather than simply deny it, try to control it, or be oppressed by it.

(Tarnas, 2006, p. 199)

A world in transition?

- Humanity has reached a turning point, a point of bifurcation, but this is one of an expansion of consciousness
- Last transition point in the Axial age around 500BC – Buddha, Confucius, Socrates
- It was also, an interregnum between empires
- Migration of scholars from country to country
 - Plato called this a period of ‘anamnesis’ – a remembering of things forgotten

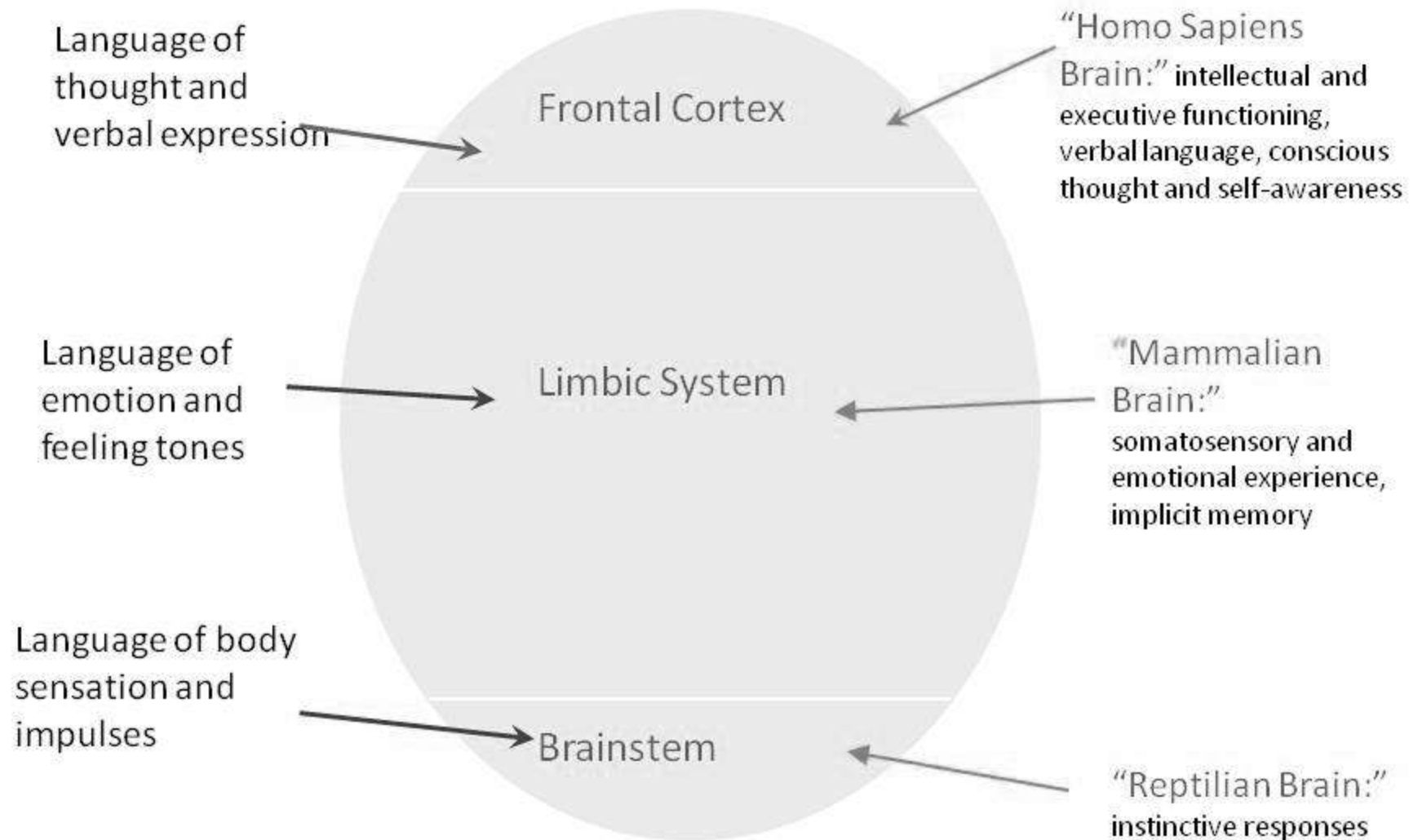
Evolution of consciousness at individual level

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- Mindful practice brings awareness to the mammalian (emotional) and reptilian (instinct) part of the brain acting as an evolutionary feedback process.
- Mindfulness recalibrated as a useful tool in this evolutionary process – both as expanded awareness and as a tool for healing in times of intense disruptive change

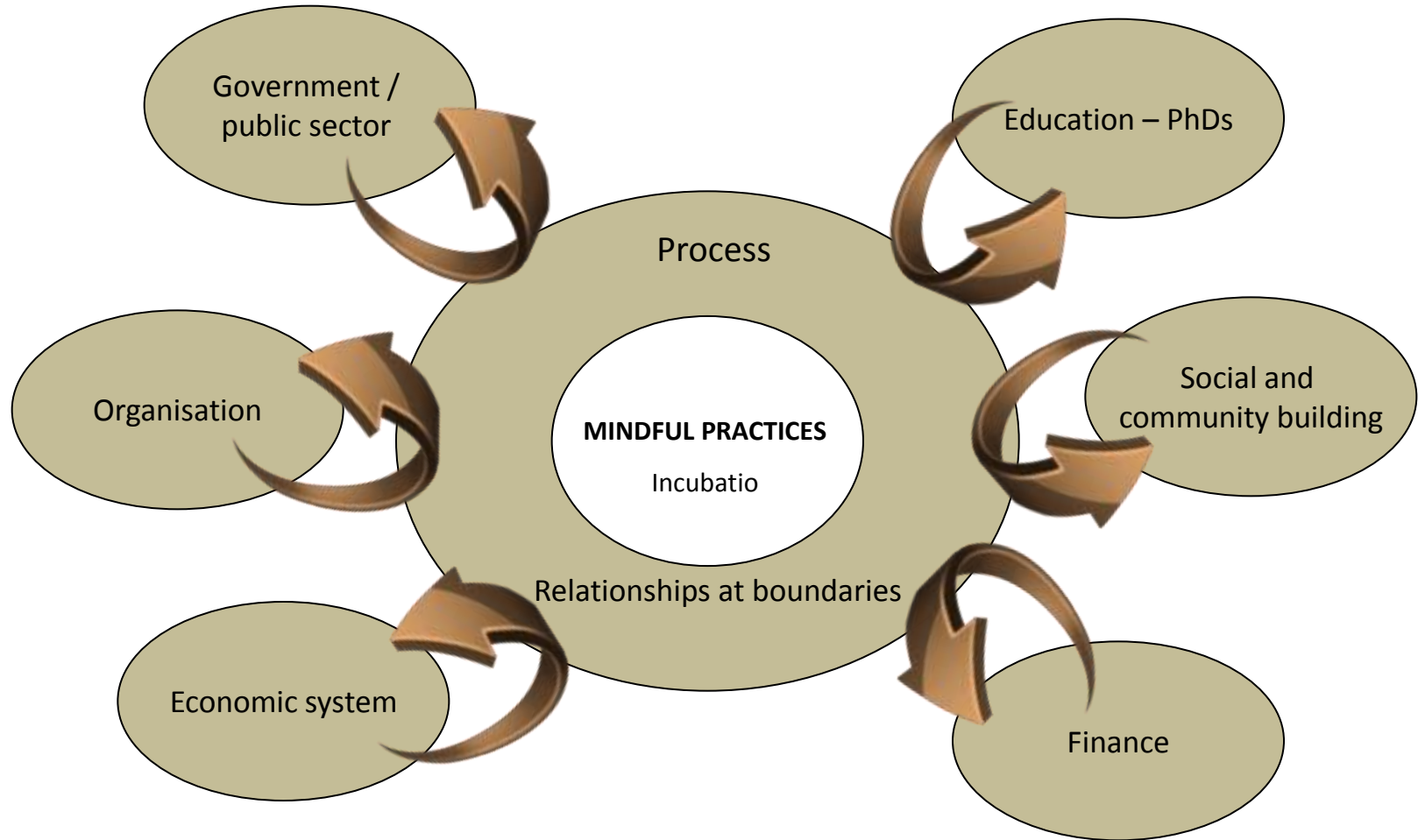
“The Triune Brain:”

One Mind, Three Brains [McLean, 1967]



Systemic use of mindfulness leads to increasingly conscious decisions

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Case Study 1: Google

- Interview Rich Fernandez, Head of People Development at Google, formerly ebay in Interconnections, Issue 9
- Wisdom and mindfulness have always been a personal practices, as a core way in which I understand myself in the world. But its also what you might call a sort of ‘practised well-being’ since I always found it to be extremely grounding and just very helpful in many different domains of life. Not just from a calmness, clarity and a peace of mind perspective, but also because it can lead to creative insights. I’ve often found that when I could relax a little bit more, entering different modalities such as thinking or acting meant that different aspects of my character would emerge that I did not really utilise previously, such as courage and risk taking. So mindfulness can also be a key to insightful innovation.
- His personal vision statement: ‘The full integration of consciousness in all domains of life.’



Google's belief in evolutionary shift and role of mindfulness



- I think this is such a time as well, because of the unparalleled connectivity, science and insight that we have. I think that's why you're seeing the popularity of things like mindfulness at a place like Google. Quite simply, the way I position it when I talk about it is that we have an evidence-based form of mental conditioning that promotes well-being, calmness, clarity, insight, innovation, well-being, compassion. There's lots of science now that irrefutably says this is beneficial on multiple fronts. Whether they be time trials or randomised control studies or MRI brain imaging, brainwaves studies – there's just instance after instance of evidence for this.
- I think we're taking an evolutionary leap which parallels the evolutionary leap we're taking in technology and global connectivity. This is apparent through a growth in the critical mass of population and in terms of our interdependencies globally. Clearly, monumental shifts are happening.
- Well I would say that, to use the words of our CEO and founder Larry Page, we have a healthy disregard for the impossible. We believe we can change the world and we show up to work every day with that intent.

Current programmes



- Mindfulness-based emotional intelligence (7 weeks, plus one day retreat)
- Video conference meditation group ‘ Hang-outs’
- Rooms set aside for meditation or prayer
- Informal weekly meditation meetings
- Engineers developed own programme ‘ Neural self-hacking’ and ‘The Software Engineering of the Mind’
- Senior meditation teachers regularly visit
- Over 4000 employees have been on mindfulness programmes and there are long waiting lists

Case Study 2: Connecting with values at Mental Health Trust, UK

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- *Pilot study ran introducing 8-week programme for 35 employees over a 2-month period in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Trust of 2500 employees*
- *Initiated by Chief Executive, Dr Attila Vegh exploring whether a mindfulness programme could help employees connect with their values even within stressful conditions:*
 - Specific individual performance benefits which might arise from a Trust-wide initiative
 - Specific organisational benefits which might arise from a Trust-wide initiative
 - The on-going support needed to embed the practice within the organisation
- Evaluation provided by Dr Bronwen Rees, Incubatio



Overall improvements in employee performance as recorded by participants

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- creating space for more measured response so that situations do not get enflamed
- helping create greater empathy and ability to others, thereby improving team work
- creating greater self-acceptance, leading to enhanced performance
- greater focus
- broader awareness
- ability to set realistic work goals and priorities
- greater job satisfaction

Improvement in productivity and well-being



- Between 93% and 100% of participants reported that **mindfulness had in some way helped them to improve their performance at work**, with between 45% and 59% reporting a great or significant increase in performance.
- A **decrease in depression, anxiety and stress**, with some participants decreasing their levels of depression, anxiety and stress from severe to normal.
- An **increase in self-compassion** from moderate to high, and a slight increase in compassion for others.
- 83% of participants completed their courses with an average attendance rate on the training days of 84%. The online course had the lowest completion rate at 60%.
- 93% of **participants plan to continue practising mindfulness**, with 93% agreeing it was a good use of their time.
- The average time participants spent practicing mindfulness each day was 15 minutes
- This data, although based on a relatively small sample number **suggests that mindfulness training not only has a significant impact on staff well-being, it can also help staff find new ways of working and thinking about work that increase their productivity.**

Reducing work tension

- *'My relationship with my work has improved as through the mindfulness I have realised that I have a choice about how I approach work.... This has had a direct impact on work relationships with colleagues in the shared office space and with staff that I line manage. I now feel that I am regaining being able to lead with hope.'*
- *'...in recent years pressure to do very solution-focussed assessments with rigid time restraints have become the norm. In being more relaxed in just accepting of my own problems I have been able to do this with service users and contrary to my expectations I have found that my assessments do not last longer and I feel that they are more effective and also therapeutic (I work in A and E assessing people in mental health crisis.)'*

Enhanced team work

- *'Where I feel there is a lack of communication with a colleague I now feel I have more tools to improve our relationship i.e. using empathy and understanding rather than accepting we have a poor relationship and hopefully in time will improve our working relationship.'*
- *'Team meetings with colleagues but also when meeting with patients. I have noticed I can listen to others and better hear and understand what they are saying. Colleagues have remarked on this also.'*

Self-acceptance

- *‘Mindfulness has helped me very generally to recognise and better put into perspective (with kindness towards myself) feelings of inadequacy and performance anxiety in my new role. But more specifically it has helped me realise how much my mind has so easily remained preoccupied by anger at the way I felt I was treated by colleagues.’*
- *Also – because the Trust has acknowledged our need for mental health support - having the course at all helped me to feel more of a person at work and not just an employee. I assume much less about what my colleagues think or do now – I ask more. I also feel less stressed when people ask me to do things – not seeing it as such an imposition on my time. I say ‘no’ more, when appropriate, and I give more realistic timeframes to people for completing a task when I agree to do it.’*

Greater focus

- ‘Taking the three minutes of mindfulness break away from my job gave me a new focus when I returned to situations.’
- ‘I have more focus, less panic at referrals piling-up.’
- ‘Responding to email – I’ve been able to deal with them more effectively by approaching rather than avoiding them. I also feel my concentration and productivity have improved in the afternoons.’
- ‘Since practising the exercises on a regular basis and choosing to see my thoughts as mental processes, I am far less stressed. I am approaching work more pragmatically and I am no longer dreading coming into work.’

Broader awareness

- ‘I work in a very stressful environment and I have become more conscious about how this impacts my physical state – the importance of listening to my internal cues taking breaks etc. It has also improved my ‘situational awareness’ of where I work so that I do not act on auto pilot and am more compassionate to others. *At times I had found,(prior to the course) that I could ignore patients who I was not working with or had any responsibility for, and something which when I first started working, I would never have done. During the mindfulness course I became more aware of those around me rather than just rushing in blinkered.*
- ‘I am able to focus on my responsibilities and see the bigger picture more clearly. I am less likely to take on others problems as my own. My work life balance has improved (mentally). I feel I have more control and power in the work environment – at least over myself and how I chose to respond to situations – both difficulties and successes.’

Ability to prioritise

- ‘Not trying to multi-task quite so much, so able to complete tasks better and realising that being able to complete a task myself is more satisfying.’
- ‘I attend to tasks singly and similar to the beginning of the week, feeling panicky and stressed thinking about all the tasks ahead, but now I reflect at the end of the week on all I have completed and feel reassured.’
- ‘I am less prone to avoid/procrastinate when there are specific pieces of work that need to be done, especially when it comes to writing reports etc. I am more mindful of my difficulties at times in focusing my concentration (partly because of anxiety of what I should be doing) and thereby I think I’m becoming (slowly) more efficient in my new role.’
- ‘I prioritise my workload much more efficiently and spend much less time worrying about or attending to things I don’t need to.’

Greater job satisfaction



- ‘I have been enjoying my job more and getting more satisfaction from it. I am much more aware of the valuable contribution I make and my limitations. I feel less stressed at work which makes me more productive and useful I think.’
- ‘My work life balance has improved (mentally). I feel I have more control and power in the work environment – at least over myself and how I choose to respond to situations – both difficulties and successes.’

CASE Study 3: Mindfulness In higher education for business



- Youth in action workshops funded by EU took place in Tenerife, August 2011
- Identification, creation and implementation of projects within AWF (volunteer) context, based on millennium UN goals
- Led by Bronwen Rees (ethical inquiry) and Ed Bentham (social enterprise)
- Programme of ethical inquiry working on level of consciousness

Content of Social enterprise aspect of workshop

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- Global issues in the context of the UN's millennium goals
- Project management
- Fund raising
- Risk evaluation
- Mode of learning was self learning through discussion, presentations, internet research, case study materials, each project critically examined on a daily basis. Groups take responsibility for learning and the ideas that they developed

'Ethical inquiry' programme

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- Day 1 – set up reflective space, and participants asked to reflect on a moment which had really moved them
- Day 2 – participants asked to examine their own personal, mental, spiritual, practical and emotional resources
- Day 3 – asked to reflect on their own actions in the world, and to deeply consider the consequences of it and then to prepare their own action plans to bring more awareness into the intention and nature of their actions
- Day 4 – worked in groups on their individual understandings of ethical life
- Day 5 – Asked to reflect on the ethical nature of their own projects

Centre for Transformational Management Practice

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- 10 –year programme researching connections between ancient wisdom and organisational change.
- Developing programme called ‘ethical inquiry’
- Examining use of this in schools, spiritual settings, in organisational and cross-national settings
- Creation of East West Sanctuary in Hungary to run seminars and programmes
- Creation of journal *Interconnections*

Crucible Research project

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- Set up by Dr Bronwen Rees to see if Buddhist meditation (mindfulness) could break through the systems of power
- Team of 4 meditators and therapists, trialled different methods in organisations, communities, spiritual settings and international groups
- Developed method called 'ethical inquiry'
- (See Inner Peace, Global Impact: Tibetan Buddhism Leadership and Work, ed. Kathryn Goldman Schuyler for full account of this 10 year project)



CRUCIBLE RESEARCH

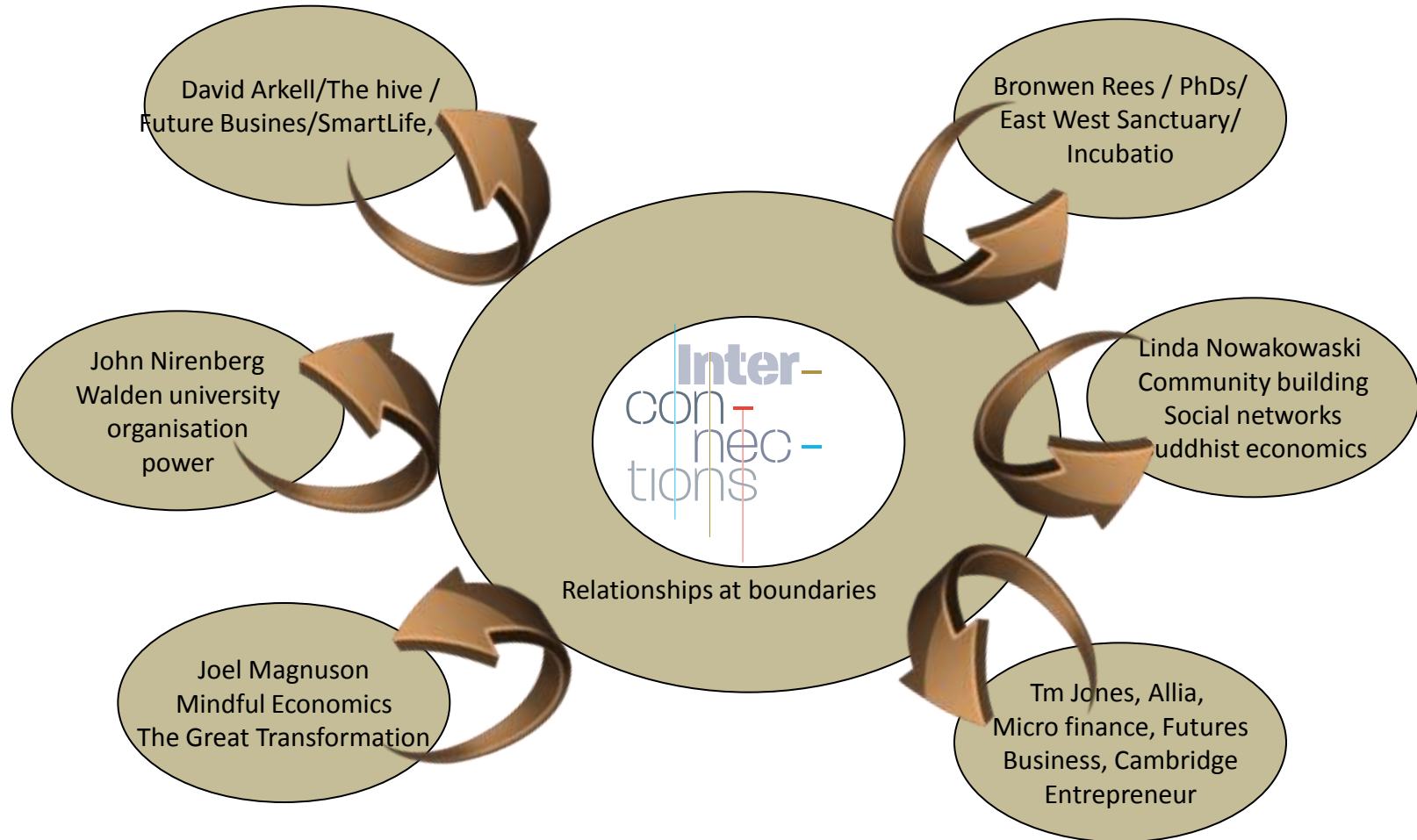
Ph.D projects



- The Ontology of Inquiry – bringing together wisdom from the east and west and their implications for business
- Chaos and emergence in organisations – reflective action in leadership
- The Emotions of Finding Out – how one senior level manager in public service reflected on the nature of emotional energy to create a multi-million enterprise and education park in Cambridge
- Transformational educational practices and their relationship to sustainability
- The traumatic effect of unmindful higher education practices: a case study in UK
- Educational practices in Nigeria
- Islamic management practices in Arabian countries
- Relationship between sustainability, macroeconomics and social enterprise – action-based project in partnership with The Hive in Cambridge

The strategic microcosm: multi-levelled emotional, practical and intellectual relationships

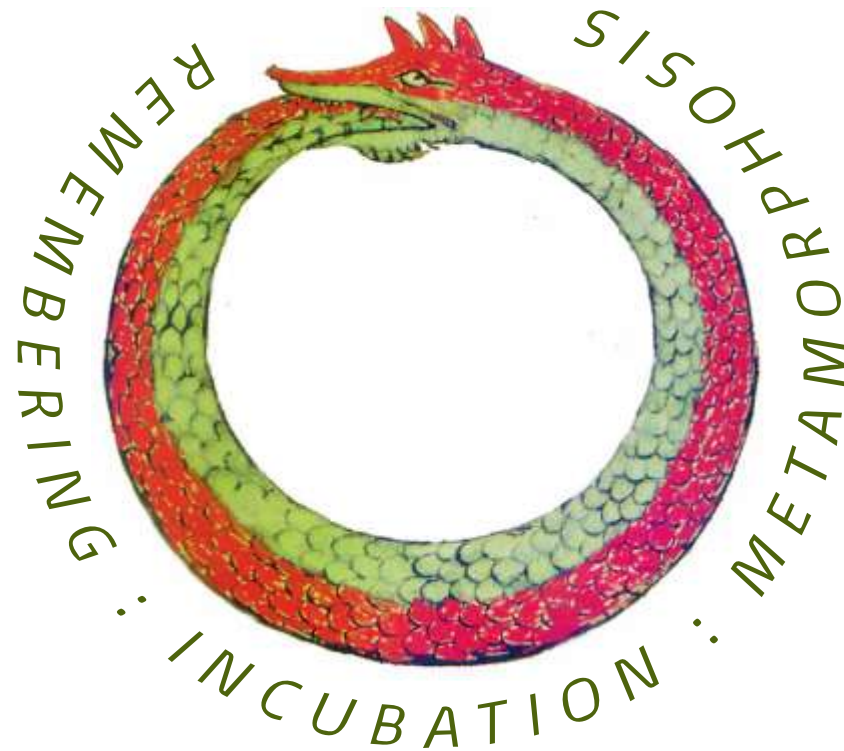
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Connecting the Cambridge Phenomenon and ecosystem with US
and international communities: systemic connection and transformation

The evolutionary transformation process

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Sustainable business strategy: an underpinning evolutionary mechanism must include processing the past to remember the future

- Design of strategic mindful programmes for sustainable change
- Connecting with value – leadership training in mindful practice
- Research and evaluation of mindfulness projects
- Individual mentoring and tuition
- Therapeutic interventions
- Resources and networks across the globe creating strategic microcosms
- Publications and dissemination

Contact Details

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- Please contact me for further information
 - www.incubatio.co.uk
 - www.eastwestsanctuary.co.uk
 - www.eastwestinterconnect.co.uk
 - dr.bronwenrees@gmail.com

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SUPPORTING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Mindful inquiry · Embodied dialogue · Sustainable action

