

1 **Sustainability without the I-sense is Nonsense:**

2 **Inner ‘technologies’ for a viable future and the inner dimension of sustainability**

3
4
5 Published in:

6 ***Personal sustainability: Exploring the far side of sustainable development* [ISBN:**
7 **9781138065086] / edited by Oliver Parodi, Kaidi Tamm (Routledge, 2018).**

8
9
10 **Shelly Sacks, Oxford Brookes University**

11
12 **Introduction**

13 This article presents a *social sculpture-connective practice* methodology that depends on
14 the I-sense¹ in the context of the movement toward personal sustainability or sustainability
15 in transition explored in this book.

16
17 The term social sculpture (“Soziale Plastik” in German) was developed in the 1970s by
18 Joseph Beuys, German interdisciplinary artist, to highlight our role as artists of our own
19 lives and of the social sphere. Beuys argued that we do not need to feed an outmoded
20 social-economic system and create the great suffering of nature that causes all beings to
21 suffer (Beuys (Kunst und Staat), Tisdall). The *I-sense* is an important concept in the field
22 of contemporary social sculpture². As one of the social senses in Rudolf Steiner’s “12
23 Senses” it enables the encounter both with oneself and with the being of another (Steiner,
24 *Die Twolfe Sinne*.

25
26 Social sculpture as an experiential-knowing methodology highlights 1) the nature of the
27 imaginal process in our everyday thought, 2) the inner atelier or rent-free inner
28 workspace³ in which this imaginal work⁴ takes place, and 3) the role of imaginal work in
29 enabling the encounter with myself, the other and the world. In so doing this chapter also
30 seeks to open up awareness of personal sustainability and the largely ignored inner
31 dimension of sustainability – a frame predominantly used in this article. This article
32 argues that both these dimensions of sustainability are central for raising awareness of the
33 relevance of inner technologies alongside the outer technologies and for developing new
34 imaginaries for transitioning from the dualistic mindsets of the anthropocene era to the
35 ecological age. Thomas Berry described this ecological age as “the ecozoic era”, which
36 “seeks ultimately is to bring the human activities on the Earth into alignment with the
37 other forces functioning throughout the planet so that a creative balance will be
38 achieved.” (Berry, Swimme 1992: 261)

39
40
41

¹ The I-sense is an important aspect of the field of contemporary social sculpture. One of the social senses in Rudolf Steiner’s ‘12 Senses’ it enables the encounter both with oneself and with the being of another. The phrase is part of the social sculpture process: “Sustainability without the I-Sense is nonsense”, that I developed in 2011, for the *Überlebenskunst Festival*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.

² The phrase “Sustainability without the I-Sense is nonsense” is part of the social sculpture process I developed in 2011, for the *Überlebenskunst Festival*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.

³ I developed this term for the Earth Forum process in 2010 and it is discussed in more detail in Sacks *et al.*, 2013.

⁴ James Hillman, Paul Klee and Joseph Beuys all use the term “imaginal thought” (*bildhaftes Denken* in German). “Imaginal work” is my term for the processes that involve imaginal thought.

42 **The role and responsibility of the human being**

43 This recognition of both *personal sustainability* and the *inner dimension of sustainability*
44 in the sustainability discourse has several, important implications. It foregrounds the role
45 and responsibility of the human being in sustainable development, and as a being in-the-
46 state-of-becoming, which, in turn, creates an additional arena in the field of sustainability.
47 This includes an understanding of the connection between inner and outer human action:
48 of the I-sense. This activating of the inner field, with the kind of strategies of disruption
49 and alienation that Bertolt Brecht speaks of (Brecht, 1961), enables forms of *internal*
50 *mobilization*, which in turn gives a particular tone and meaning to our perception of
51 human agency. For, although there is much evidence that other life forms have agency, it
52 is only human beings that can take responsibility for the human value systems and habits
53 of mind⁵ informing human actions of the past, present and future. Accepting and
54 recognizing this responsibility for how we think, perceive and relate to the world,
55 illuminates the need for a dimension of sustainable development that engages actively
56 with the world “in here” – our mindsets⁶, values and attitudes – as much as with the world
57 “out there”. If human beings are to face the sustainability challenges of living more
58 carefully, consciously and cooperatively with each other and all life forms, in a fragile
59 biosphere, understanding these personal and inner dimensions of sustainability is essential.

60
61 Working with these sustainability dimensions also means learning to work with the
62 *invisible materials*⁷ of our values, attitudes, perceptions and ways of thinking, in order to
63 reconfigure our relationship to the world, and to develop a mindset based on
64 interdependence as the only sound basis for a viable future. This perspective that
65 highlights the role of consciousness, imagination and aesthetic, enlivened thinking in
66 which the human being and the interconnective I-sense are central. This, however, is quite
67 different from hierarchical anthropocentrism. Rather it is about experiencing with this
68 enlivened I-sense and recognizing, in all humility, that how we think and act *is* our
69 responsibility. This focus on creative consciousness as a primary ‘means of production’ -
70 of self-production and societal production - is based on a phenomenological reflective
71 practice. This inner creative practice that depends on ‘*imaginal thinking*’ enables the
72 distillation of experience through ‘connective distance’ (Sacks and Zumdick, 2013) and
73 underpins the process of ‘making sense’. It is this capacity to ‘see what we see, feel and

⁵ ‘Habit of mind’ and ‘mindset’ in this text and in the field of contemporary social sculpture, refers not only to ideas, forms of reasoning and intellectual frameworks, but includes longings, attitudes, feelings and perceptions – which also contribute to prejudices, habits of perception and habits of responding. This is the significance of Beuys and others notion of *imaginal thought*. It enables us to get to the habit level described in many forms of phenomenological reframing, therapy and mindfulness work, and to begin to experience – at least on a personal level - what I now describe as ‘paradigm shift’ in practice.

⁶ As the work in ‘the inner atelier’ and the Earth Forum process described in this text highlight, the field of mind includes the imagination and ‘imaginal work’. The notion of ‘imaginal thought’ [bildhaftes Denken] refers to phenomenological mode of perception, which is central in the interdisciplinary pedagogies of Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Joseph Beuys. In Beuys this is intimately connected to his theory of Social Sculpture, referring to forms of aesthetic and intuitive thinking, inspired by Goethe’s explorations concerning the intuitive mode of thinking (Bortoft, Schiller’s understanding of aesthetic thought. Matthias Bunge’s *Zwischen Intuition und Ratio: Pole Des Bildnerischen Denkens Bei Kandinsky, Klee Und Beuys* (1996) describes this field of aesthetic thought or mind which foregrounds non-intellectual thought that includes feelings and perceptions. The methodologies of the *Social Sculpture Research Unit* incorporate and relate the work of psychologist James Hillman on ‘imaginal thought’ to the ‘plastik theorie’ of Joseph Beuys. This is why ‘mindset’ as used in everyday parlance usually includes non-intellectual, embodied awareness such as feelings and perceptions. These root methodologies are referred to on the Social Sculpture Research Unit website (<http://www.social-sculpture.org/category/our-focus/our-methodologies>), in ATLAS of the Poetic Continent (Sacks and Zumdick, 2013) and in my keynote paper for conference on socially engaged practice and the field of transformation (Sacks, 2017)

⁷ “Invisible materials” is a phrase Beuys used regularly, describing the invisible materials of social sculpture as speech, discussion and thought. Over the years I have added attitudes, questions, values, habits of thought.

74 think' that creates the conditions for becoming free, self-determining beings. Such
75 experiential perception might therefore enable us to confront our values, attitudes and
76 habits of thought, and make choices informed by holistic thinking and a perception of
77 interdependence. For this we need to develop our capacities of understanding and using
78 inner technologies and appreciate why enhancing our subtle potential and capacity for
79 connective thinking is essential for working toward a viable future.

80
81

82 **What is being sustained and from whose perspective?**

83 One of the weaknesses of the concepts of "sustainability" and "sustainable development"
84 is reflected in the ease with which these terms have been co-opted. For although both
85 terms can signify radical changes in lifestyle, non-destructive technologies, and, ways of
86 approaching situations whose goal is a material, economic and socially viable future, in
87 the current system of growth economics, they can have a limiting view of what
88 'sustaining' means, what is being sustained and whose interests this is in.

89

90 Even if 'sustainable' was originally intended to mean development that is *viable in an*
91 *ongoing way* that protects and sustains the biosphere for all life forms, sustainability has in
92 many instances, local and global, been confused with a particular growth agenda to the
93 point where its priority is to increase corporate dividends, with environmental benefits as a
94 secondary factor. These gains in the name of sustainability are often made possible by the
95 green washing of destructive practices and intentions, and through complex forms of
96 mitigation. One only has to look at the carbon credits and biofuel industries. The term
97 sustainability has in fact got so stretched that an ecologically suspect, exploitative business
98 could be deemed 'sustainable' if its profitmaking trajectory is good, and it has growing
99 markets.

100

101 'Sustainable development' is an even more problematic term. The distorted interpretations
102 of sustainability are compounded by notions of 'development' deriving from the capitalist
103 extractive agenda, from a western idea of what 'developed' means, and from Gross
104 National Product as a primary measure of 'wealth' and 'progress'. In this agenda
105 'sustainable development' could mean that members of a subsistence economy become
106 'stakeholders' in a corporate deal to ensure a more 'sustainable' yield, without being in a
107 position to consider the long-term effects to their lifestyle and the land. And this can
108 happen even when an environmental impact study has been done but has overlooked the
109 human issues. One example of this is in central Africa, where the declaration of eco-
110 conservation areas, 'job creation' eco-lodges and game parks, have resulted in hundreds of
111 thousands of people being displaced from the rainforest, and almost forced into becoming
112 'poachers'. 'Participatory mapping' approaches⁸ in the Congo River basin engage
113 rainforest communities in imaginal work toward future scenarios, which begins to link
114 inner and outer forms of sustainability.

115

116 Despite such issues with 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development', their widespread
117 currency makes it strategic to use them to keep expanding the sustainability discourse and
118 reach the world of the corporations, science and policy making in which they now hold
119 sway. Although not resolving issues with 'sustainability' or 'development' the terms

⁸ George Thierry Hanja of the Rainforest Foundation who has been using such methods for almost a decade, is now beginning to link this work to the field of social sculpture.

120 'personal sustainability' and the 'inner dimension of sustainability, begin to redress
121 something of what is missing,

122

123 In the field of contemporary social sculpture and connective practice I nevertheless find it
124 more appropriate to think in terms of a just and ecologically *viable* future for all life
125 forms. The German word 'zukunftsfähig' – sometimes used to replace 'sustainable
126 development' and 'sustainability' – is not open to the same kind of distortions. This is
127 partly because in the word 'zukunftsfähig', 'viable' and 'future' are interconnected. In
128 addition, the term 'viable' is clearly a value judgment that requires criteria and discussion.
129 It does not pass for neutral as easily 'sustainable development'.

130

131 *Taking responsibility and shifting responsibility*

132 The other frame that is legitimately questioned is the 'anthropocene era'. Amidst much
133 controversy, scientific bodies nevertheless agreed in 2016, that a new descriptor was
134 needed to differentiate between the Holocene age and the recent period in which human
135 actions have caused far-reaching changes to the earth and its biosphere. What they did not
136 adequately consider was that these anthropogenic changes result from the actions of a
137 minority of cultures and countries. To overcome this distortion it has been suggested that
138 this period of extreme human impact might more appropriately be termed the
139 "Capitalocene" (Kunkel 2017).

140

141 On the other hand, the 'anthropocene' does provide a larger frame for the anthropogenic
142 destruction in the countless ill-considered human interactions with the world and their
143 often, unintended consequences. Many who use it as a signifier, seek to develop
144 integrative systems of living, including production and consumption, which reduce further
145 destruction of the climate, the forests, the rivers, the oceans, the soil and the myriad
146 creatures that enliven this world. But sustainability as a *modus operandi* – despite the
147 1990's more 'integrative, multidimensional approach to sustainability' (Kopfmüller 2011
148 as cited by Banse, Parodi 2012) – has concerned itself largely with the environment 'out
149 there', even if it now includes the social and cultural dimensions (Parodi 2015).

150 Sustainability, one could say, has not engaged sufficiently with the forms of thinking that
151 have created this exploitative juggernaut; or with the dominant mindset, whose self-
152 interest and alienating attitudes shape how we relate to persons, cultures and the other-
153 than-human world. By paying insufficient attention to *the inner dimension of*
154 *sustainability* in the transition from the 'anthropocene' to a more humane and ecologically
155 viable world, 'sustainable development' – even when includes the economic, social and
156 cultural dimensions alongside the environmental – threatens to eclipse the human being:
157 the very source of its transformative agenda.

158

159 *Personal and inner dimensions of sustainability*

160 Although 'personal sustainability' with its focus on values and mindsets, is significant in
161 addressing this partial eclipse of human agency, the term, if used alone, can suggest that
162 its concern is primarily with individuals. It therefore seems more appropriate for me to use
163 'inner dimension of sustainability' for framing integrative social sculpture methodologies,
164 which seek to enable connective action based on both individual transformation and
165 through empathic engagement and exchange between individuals, groups and cultures.

166

167 Imagination also serves – individually and collectively – to connect us emotionally,
168 aesthetically and morally with what otherwise can remain conceptual understandings. By

169 enabling new personal and collective imaginaries to arise, which mobilize us internally,
170 ‘responsibility’ instead of being an externally driven, moral imperative becomes an
171 internally motivated ‘ability-to-respond’⁹. By reclaiming the ‘aesthetic’ as that which
172 enlivens our being, in contrast to the ‘anesthetic’ or numbness, we can begin to see the
173 connection between the enlivening aesthetic process and the *ability-to-respond* (Sacks
174 1998, 2006, 2013, 2017). The way such connective practices enable the enlivening of both
175 individual and social processes shows why ‘inner dimension of sustainability’ is more
176 appropriate than ‘personal sustainability’.

177

178 Until fairly recently however, both ‘personal sustainability’ and ‘the inner dimension of
179 sustainability’ have largely been overlooked, at least in practice. Even the *Sustainable*
180 *Development Goals* for 2015-2030, which give substantial consideration to the economic,
181 social and cultural dimensions of sustainability, largely bypass its *inner* dimension. This
182 eclipse of the inner dimension of external transformation and action begins way back in
183 western culture in the division between *technê* (*skill*) and *epistêmê* (*knowledge*), as well
184 as *technê* (outer craft) and *psyche* (inner work).

185

186 *Eclipse of the inner dimension*

187 ‘Technê’ is a concept from ancient Greek philosophy from which our ‘technosphere’
188 derives. Although related primarily to art, skill and craft and seen mostly as a lower form
189 of knowledge, philosophers like Aristotle included in *technê*, the arts of speaking,
190 discussion and thinking¹⁰, whilst the Stoics regarded ‘virtue’ to be a kind of *technê* to do
191 with the art of life (Parry 2014). Over the centuries the differences between *technê* (skill)
192 and *epistêmê* (knowledge), between practice and theory, widened into a seemingly
193 unbridgeable chasm. By the time of the Enlightenment the separation was complete.
194 Doing and thinking, subject and object, inner and outer fields were binaries. Even though
195 these oppositions were theoretically overcome in Einstein’s unified field thinking, and
196 then in quantum physics, the legacy of this ancient western division is still visible. It
197 manifests in the separation between literalness and the poetic, objective ‘fact’ and
198 subjective ‘fiction’, and in the emphasis on tools, prosthetics, devices and data for solving
199 all manner of problems and enhancing human agency. A key problem with this is that the
200 source of many eco-social problems – the consciousness and mindsets of individuals,
201 groups and cultures – is not adequately engaged with by focusing on solving the external
202 problems.

203

204 The introduction of the “noosphere” by Teilhard de Chardin and Vladimir Vernadsky in
205 1925 (Fuchs-Kittowski, Krüger 1997) aimed to complement their notion of the
206 “biosphere” and offered a counterpoint to the growing “technosphere”. Noosphere¹¹ was
207 the missing sphere of consciousness. The noosphere refers to the mental envelope or
208 sphere of thought they saw as encompassing the earth. Since then many Western
209 philosophers and scientists – amongst them David Bohm, David Peat, Rupert Sheldrake,
210 Jon Kabatt Zinn, Francisco Varela and Arthur Zajonc, who have also engaged with

⁹ Redefining responsibility as ‘an ability-to-respond’ in my unpublished presentation for the UNESCO *Summit on Culture and Development* in Stockholm 1998 was a breakthrough in my work that enabled me to connect it to the way I was rethinking ‘aesthetic’ as the opposite of numbness.

¹⁰ It is interesting that Beuys, who read Aristotle quite closely, used the same three terms (discussion, speaking and thinking) to refer to the invisible materials of social sculpture.

¹¹ Related to the Greek “nous” for mind – from which we derive “noumena”, the invisible forms of the inner sphere, and “phenomena”, the perceptible forms of the outer world.

211 Eastern and Indigenous Knowledge traditions – have tackled this subtle field. Through
212 their work they have shown that what seems insubstantial interacts with the visible world
213 and has consequences. This noosphere is the arena of ‘collective intelligence’¹² and
214 ‘subtle activism’ (Nicol 2015) in which forms of meditation, mindfulness, prayer and
215 other subtle processes are practiced to contribute to shifts in consciousness. In the past few
216 decades, proposals have been put forward that consider the Internet (Nicol 2015: p. 166)
217 to be part of this sphere of collective intelligence enveloping the planet.

218
219 But even if we can cause shifts in consciousness in this noosphere, this is somewhat
220 different from the imaginal work done with the connective practice methodology as an
221 individual in a group, which enables a *direct experience of agency* and with it new
222 creative strategies for developing an integrative relationship to ourselves, to each other
223 and to the planet. This has certain parallels with Thich Nhat Hahn’s ‘meditation in action’
224 methods and the Dalai Lama’s emphasis through the Mind & Life Institute¹³ on the need
225 to bring forms of contemplative thinking from the spiritual traditions into the secular field.

226 227 **Examples of connective practice methodology: imaginal work in inner atelier and the** 228 **development of the Earth Forum**

229
230 James Hillman, Paul Klee and Joseph Beuys all use the term “imaginal thought”
231 (*bildhaftes Denken* in German) (+references!). Imaginal work is my term for the processes
232 that involve imaginal thought.

233 The imaginal work in the inner workspace or atelier includes contemplative, intuitive,
234 discursive and imaginal thinking and can be understood as a form of inner sculpting that is
235 central to Beuys’ ‘expanded conception of art’. This inner sculpting gives rise to external
236 forms that are not confined to the art-world. Beuys regularly emphasized that it is the
237 context and the need that determines the type and appropriateness of the form (Beuys in
238 Harlan/Sacks). Examples of the external forms resulting from inner sculpting in the inner
239 atelier include dialogue processes, participatory actions, educational forms, direct action
240 practices, and socio-economic forms like unconditional basic income. Beuys clarified the
241 term “social sculpture” by emphasizing both the inner sculpting process and “the invisible
242 materials of thought, speech and discussion” (Beuys in Tisdall, 1979). Over the years, I
243 have widened these invisible materials to include also questions, attitudes, values, habits
244 of mind and forms of experiential knowing. This makes it easier to see the relationship
245 between the inner and outer field: how attitudes become form and questions lead to
246 responses and actions.

247

248 ***The imaginal practice and the development of the Earth Forum methodology***

249

250 The imaginal practice in the inner atelier is one example of what the inner dimension of
251 sustainability can involve. It includes a set of creative strategies¹⁴, integral to several
252 social sculpture instruments of consciousness.

¹² Ken Wilber’s concept is discussed in Gunnlaugson and Moze (2012).

¹³ The Mind & Life Institute (www.mindandlife.org) was formed by Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, Adam Engle, a lawyer and entrepreneur; and Francisco Varela, a neuroscientist in 1987. Arthur Zajonc, professor of physics at Amherst College, Buddhist and anthroposophic meditation practitioner was President of the Mind-Life Institute from 2012 and Director of the Centre for Contemplative Mind in Society (www.contemplativemind.org).

¹⁴ This set of strategies has been developed by the author over the past three decades since Beuys’ death and underpins both the Masters and Doctoral Programmes in Social Sculpture and Connective Practice at Oxford Brookes University, UK (www.social-sculpture.org) as well as the work via the University of the Trees: Lab for an Eco-Social Future (UOT,

253 One of the stand-alone, scalable and more widely known of these social sculpture
254 instruments of consciousness is Earth Forum¹⁵. In the Earth Forum methodology the
255 participants are introduced to their inner ateliers and an imaginal thought practice. In this
256 inner atelier each person explores the inner images that arise from their experiential walk
257 on the planet in Phase 1 of the Earth Forum process. Re-entering these images enables
258 participants to experience how they think, how they see and how they could change the
259 lenses through which they see, what is emerging in them and in the group, and what
260 possibilities exist for inner and outer connective action. This enhances ones sense of
261 agency for personal, social and system change. Through such instruments of
262 consciousness the aesthetic, enlivening process can be understood as a connective process
263 that enhances our ‘ability-to-respond’ by mobilising us internally in both inner and outer
264 field of action. This ability-to-respond is a term I developed to signify the ethical and
265 moral responsiveness that can be activated through connective strategies and is completely
266 different to responsibility as duty and a moral imperative that comes from the outside.
267
268

269 The following narrative sections introduce core elements of the inner atelier practice
270 through describing a few key situations of its evolution into *Earth Forum methodology*.
271 This will introduce the special character of the practice, and provide a sense of the
272 potential in such practices and strategies as instruments of consciousness.
273

274 *Situation 1: Conflicting visions of sustainability around the table*

275 The roots of *Earth Forum* lie in a frustrating situation from 1999 to 2002, which was
276 triggered by a generous donation I received to do something innovative in the field of
277 sustainability. Although there were no strings attached, I wanted the donor to also
278 participate in the exploratory process. We decided to involve people we each respected for
279 their involvement in the field of sustainability. After 18 months of regular meetings,
280 events and experiments, I realised why we were struggling to develop a way forward.
281 Despite using the same phrase “sustainability” each of the eight people at the table, had
282 different perspectives, priorities and even values – each person’s take on sustainability
283 valued a somewhat different future. Instead of giving up, I realised that these different
284 takes on a sustainable future were in fact a microcosm of the macro situation. If we could
285 not find a way to work with our conflicting worldviews and different sustainable
286 development perspectives, then how could we hope others might succeed? We agreed to
287 articulate the worldviews at the table and try to live into our different pictures. This
288 process although productive was never completed, due to differences in priorities and
289 modes of engagement At that point I had not yet developed the appropriate creative
290 strategies to adequately engage people in this inner image-making process.
291
292
293

www.universityofthetrees.org) with organisations beyond the academic institutions.

¹⁵ Earth Forum is part of the UOT, initiated by the author in 2006. Its instruments of consciousness include enquiry labs, methodologies and practices designed to facilitate new ways of thinking together, agendas for transformation and developing new forms of creative action in response to the huge challenges facing us all. Earth Forum aims to enliven ways of thinking and doing, which enable positive [r]evolutionary change (see also www.social-sculpture.org).

¹⁵ Earth Forum is part of the UOT, initiated by the author in 2006. Its instruments of consciousness include enquiry labs, methodologies and practices designed to facilitate new ways of thinking together, agendas for transformation and developing new forms of creative action in response to the huge challenges facing us all. Earth Forum aims to enliven ways of thinking and doing, which enable positive [r]evolutionary change (see also www.social-sculpture.org).

294 *Situation 2: Conflicting visions of the future in a South African village*

295 A few months later in 2002, arising out my involvement in the World Summit for
296 Sustainable Development in Johannesburg¹⁶, I got a request to come to a village deep in
297 the bush, near the north-western boundary of South Africa. I was told there was a conflict
298 about a ‘sustainable development’ proposal. Although it was not entirely clear why I was
299 being invited, I agreed to go and listen. I discovered that the conflict had arisen because a
300 car manufacturer wanted to create a ‘sustainable development’ project in the area where
301 the traditional healers gathered their plants. The new young and politically progressive
302 mayor who had recently moved in from one of the big cities had welcomed this because it
303 would boost employment. She had set aside new land, double the size, where the healers
304 could plant their sacred medicines. She thought they could even produce more to sell in
305 the town. The healers were shocked and had refused: sacred plants were found and
306 gathered, not planted. Furthermore, the elders were concerned that the project might
307 poison the river.

308
309 Upon arrival in the Mayor’s hot concrete office I was introduced to six men, ranging in
310 age from 25 to 80, representing different interest groups involved in the conflict. There
311 were the local church leader, the youth leader, a representative of the traditional healers, a
312 young representative from the car company and two elders from the village committee.
313 All looked rather stern and bothered. It emerged that the Mayor had invited me at the
314 suggestion from her friends, but as she was not that popular I was in a rather awkward
315 situation. And, to make it worse, she had introduced me as coming to help solve their
316 problems! To ease the initial setting of mistrust I re-introduced myself as an artist who
317 explored things together with people and that I was there, not to solve problems, but to
318 hear about the situation if they wanted to share it. So this was the setting. Mistrust,
319 deadlock *and* different worldviews!

320
321 In response to their questions about me, I described the *Exchange Values* project and its
322 social sculpture process with small producers in the Caribbean and consumers in Europe
323 and how we had worked exploring inner pictures of the external situation. The church
324 leader said this sounded very interesting and asked why I did not do the same with them.
325 Suddenly what had been a 3-month long social sculpture process with banana farmers in
326 the Caribbean was about to become an unprepared 2-hour imaginal process in this village.

327
328 Before asking everyone to close their eyes, I introduced the rent-free inner
329 atelier/workspace that we each carry with us: the space in which we can see our memories
330 and our dreams, and even experience past feelings. I asked everyone to make a picture in
331 this inner space of the contested area by the river: to hold it, look at it very carefully, and
332 also try to see the things that were not directly there, like the village upstream and the
333 village downstream, and the seasons. After 10 minutes with everyone absorbed in their
334 inner space I asked them to re-enter their picture, trying to imagine the car factory as well
335 and see how the picture changed and how they felt about it. Next I asked them to imagine
336 how they hoped this area would look in 100 years. After a few more minutes in their inner
337 space, everyone was invited to share their experience in the setting of active listening.
338 This meant listening carefully to each other’s pictures, without discussion, simply trying
339 to see the different pictures in our own inner space, without liking or disliking what the
340 person was describing. At this point the company representative left. The process of

¹⁶ I was working there on my *Exchange Values* producers-consumers project (www.exchange-values.org).

341 sharing the inner pictures was intense and significant. I realised that people were not only
342 hearing each individual person's picture, but also experiencing all the pictures together.
343 The pictures hung in the atmosphere, speaking volumes, not only about the outer situation,
344 but also carrying people's fears, hopes, dilemmas and feelings. Despite the difficulties
345 embodied in some of the pictures, there was also more energy in the room. Everyone
346 seemed intrigued about the inner space and energised by what we had just done. The
347 participants felt that this was a real outcome – to see each person's picture and the pictures
348 altogether – and that they could now continue to explore with some respect for each
349 other's views, what progress and sustainability might mean for this village and the
350 surrounding area. For me it confirmed the huge difference between trying to resolve things
351 by debating and arguing, in contrast to doing it in a mode that enables collective imaginal
352 engagement. Unsurprisingly the car company dropped the project. The gain seemed to be
353 that key people in the village had experienced a process that enabled them to work with
354 differences, and engendered some enthusiasm for thinking together about the future.

355

356 Having been involved in cultural activism and alternative development in South Africa in
357 the 1980s, and working with Paulo Freire's methodology, I recognised that what had taken
358 place was an example of real capacity building, and a confirmation that people could
359 experience this kind of imaginal work with invisible materials as an outcome. Analysing
360 this largely unplanned session I realised there was a whole set of interconnected strategies
361 that could enable people to engage with their own and each other's attitudes, worldviews
362 and perceptions of sustainable development.

363

364 *Situation 3: A process to engage people with the climate crisis*

365 In 2010 I was invited to develop a practice for communities and citizens in South Africa,
366 in the run up to the 2011 Climate Summit. Convinced by then of the mobilising,
367 connective value of the inner atelier/workspace process, I proposed a new version of this
368 process titled Earth Forum, aiming to enable people to relate to the climate crisis
369 individually and as communities, with the potential to be scaled out to an unlimited
370 number of people.

371

372 Since the first explorations with the inner atelier/workspace process in 1996 with the
373 farmers in the Caribbean and in 2002 in the South African village the method had
374 developed significantly. In 2007 and 2011 in Switzerland – in the GOethenum cultural
375 centre near Basel and the Voegele Kulturzentrum, Zurich – I had experimented with this
376 process working with citizens and producer-consumer groups in the Exchange Values
377 project. This opportunity to engage in a very different context with many hundreds of
378 people over an extended 5-month period helped me to refine the imaginal work practice. It
379 had also enabled a much closer look at the transformative potential of this expanded
380 aesthetic process and the opportunity to reflect on aesthetic as enlivened being and its
381 relationship to the ability to respond.

382

383 Working with organisations and groups of 20-30 individuals in this three-hour process, I
384 introduced people to their inner atelier/workspace. The imaginal work and active listening
385 process was now focused on issues in the global economy, relating them to oneself as a
386 producer and consumer, and exploring different dimensions of one's agency. The process
387 was initiated by three questions: *In what sense am I an artist? What do I produce? What*
388 *helps or hinders this?* These questions enabled the participants to uncover their own
389 conceptions of work and productivity, and connect imaginatively to their position in the

390 global economy. To enable this I encouraged people to see images of their daily life and
391 actions in their inner workspace, instead of trying to *think about* the questions. Then,
392 avoiding judging what had emerged, to see it all carefully, with generous eyes, and from
393 as many different angles as possible. This process of letting images come, re-entering and
394 mining them for new perspectives, and of gathering substance through the active listening
395 to each person’s discoveries enabled collective insights to emerge that went beyond the
396 individual contributions. What had been gathered was often more than the sum of the
397 parts. It was as if a kind of ‘social substance’ had been generated. It was also clear that the
398 whole process inspired a great many participants, enabling a new sense of agency that
399 encouraged and surprised them.

400
401 Over the months it also became clear that several people wanted to try and guide the
402 process, which led me to develop an informal manual¹⁷. Participating in a process that
403 someone else was guiding, I noticed certain things that greatly diluted the focus. One of
404 these had to do with the role of facilitator who is outside of the process. Instead of
405 facilitator, I experimented with responsible participant who was fully engaged and on an
406 equal level. It changed the character of the process significantly. It meant that no one was
407 outside of the process. This echoed a phrase that we use to speak about social sculpture:
408 “*There is only one field of transformation, and no one is outside*”. With each new element
409 added, and more people wanting to guide the process, it became clear that in addition to a
410 manual some kind of training was needed.

411
412 Based on the insights and success of the imaginal practice in the *Exchange Values* project
413 I decided to design a similar but completely mobile process that would create an aesthetic
414 arena without a complex installation. The *Earth Forum* was the outcome: an arena in
415 which people can encounter themselves, one another, and their relationship to the planet.

416
417 *Earth Forum: its components and principles*

418 Earth Forum was developed for the 2011 Climate Summit in South Africa as an
419 ‘instrument of consciousness’ that creates an arena for working imaginatively together on
420 the personal and collective past, present and future¹⁸. Its in-depth, accessible capacity-
421 building process gives people a real sense of being artists sculpting with ‘invisible
422 materials’ and creates the conditions for an emergent social process and exploring new
423 social processes and imaginaries. . Designed for six to twelve participants as individuals or
424 members of organisations, it can be adapted to need and used in different contexts and
425 situations. The minimum duration is around three hours, whilst to come to specific actions
426 and ways forward, it is best as a full, 2-day process. A round oiled cloth, placed on the
427 ground, serves as a portable arena. It creates a place to gather and to hold the traces of the
428 “planet” brought to the cloth by each participant, after their short “walk on the planet”.
429 Being infused with plant oil lifts it from the everyday, incorporating the Brechtian strategy
430 of “making strange” (Brecht, 1961). This oiled cloth on the ground, no longer simply a
431 cloth, now takes people out of literalness into an imaginal, perceptive mode of making
432 sense. It is a strategy used in many social sculpture practices – that enable the instances of

¹⁷ In dialogue with Social Sculpture Research Unit collaborators Prof. Alex Arteaga, James Reed and Nicolas Stronczyk.

¹⁸ Since the Climate Summit thousands of people have taken part in the *Earth Forum* process in collaboration with many initiatives including Citizen’s Art Days, Berlin; the Ueberlebenskunst programme at the Haus der Kultural der Welt; the Art and Social Practice Group, Mumbai, CSR workshops and the Pune Biennale, India; Boell Stiftung, Berlin workshops and conferences; Green Party congress, Dusseldorf; Creative Challenge, London; the ‘Earth Conference’ in Ireland, and the Making a Difference-Asia event in Hong Kong for hundreds of young ‘change-makers’.

433 the everyday to open up and become spaces for meaning and transformation. Perhaps the
434 power of the oiled cloth has something to do with the mystery embodied in the oil: in the
435 transformation of sunlight through the plant into oil that is central to the life sustaining
436 process.

437

438 The *Earth Forum* process consists of four phases and two capacities that run through all
439 phases: the capacity for imaginal thought and the capacity for active listening. Phase 1
440 involves going for a short ten- minute “walk on the planet”. This takes place after a guided
441 process in the inner atelier/workspace, in which participants experience their capacity for
442 imaginal thought: for seeing images of the past, present and future as well as being able to
443 re-enter them. This provides the basis for seeing what one sees and how one sees. Without
444 any explanation participants experience directly the taken for granted but profound
445 epistemological process of making-sense. Most participants are quite astonished by this
446 process. This inner space process has several other valuable attributes. Since everyone has
447 this space and is able to call up images from the past, i.e. have memories, a certain
448 equality of human capacity is starkly apparent. The second advantage is the tone of awe
449 and respect for the absolutely ordinary process of perception that most people have never
450 thought about before. So, again without talking about respect for the gifts and capacities
451 every participant has been given, like the rent-free space, the wonder and respect is
452 engendered through the doing.

453

454 After their short ‘walk on the planet’, and before sharing their experiences, participants are
455 introduced to the second *capacity for active listening*. They experience how this
456 disciplined, phenomenological process of ‘staying with what is’, enables one to enter
457 one’s own perceptions and thoughts, as well as another’s. *Phase 2* begins after participants
458 have each shared something, often an object or some soil, that reflects their short journey
459 on the planet. The ‘gesture’ of the whole process is also significant. Having ‘gone out’ in
460 *Phase 1* onto the planet and the world of experience, to then ‘come in’ to oneself and each
461 other, *Phase 2* takes one ‘out into the future’. The invitation here is to use the inner space
462 to explore how one would like the world to look in 5, 50 or 500 years. After sharing
463 something of their experiences, *Phase 3* begins with a process of ‘coming in’ back to the
464 present. Now each participant gathers images and perceptions of their daily life to reflect
465 on in relation to their *Phase 2* images of a desired future. It is made clear that seeing what
466 one is doing in the present could involve a spectrum of actions: personal, collective, outer
467 and inner. This frees people to discover much more about their current ‘actions’ and
468 creates a new multidimensional awareness of agency. The substance gathered in these 3
469 phases is then re-entered and explored in *Phase 4*. Having heard not only ones own but all
470 the experiences together, we are invited to try and perceive, as Goethe did in looking at
471 the plant, the whole that is more than the sum of the parts, and the invisible potential that
472 is waiting to be recognised and come to life.

473

474 The image offered at this point, to inspire the process of emergent understandings is one
475 of ‘making social honey’. Just as bees bring all their individual streams of nectar back to
476 the hive, but together must work to transform it into honey, so too do we have to work
477 intensively together to transform our individual perceptions into social substance and
478 imaginaries of a viable future.

479

480 Through re-entering their experience as the basis of the process, *Earth Forum* enables an
481 experience of *thinking together*¹⁹ as well as creative processes of evaluation, that enhances
482 and values our individual and collective experience. It is also meaningful in bringing
483 together stakeholders from a shared context or geographic area with very different ‘takes’
484 on what progress or sustainable development might mean. Surprisingly it also works well
485 with groups of disparate individuals. In Berlin in 2012, 110 individuals participated in
486 Earth Forums over a week. Although most were strangers at the start, many of them went
487 on to work as groups and scaling out the *Earth Forum* process. The organizers said that
488 through the *Earth Forum* “a small movement” had come into being. In and around the
489 German city of Kassel, *Earth Forum* has been used extensively since 2012, in all these
490 different ways: for deepening and clarifying personal and inter-organizational agendas; as
491 a process of strengthening collective and individual will; for connecting individuals and
492 for opening up new shared vision.

493

494 Like many other socially engaged art practices *Earth Forum* creates opportunities for
495 insights through participation in processes that have a strong experiential-sensuous
496 component and activate the imagination. But being a social sculpture process *Earth Forum*
497 is also about enabling a direct experience of our inner means of production: the inner
498 technologies and capacities for making sense and imagining a viable future. *Earth Forum*
499 in this sense is an experience of “theory of knowledge” in practice, an epistemic process
500 and a process of self-awareness. In illuminating that we can ‘see *what* we see’ as well as
501 ‘*how* we see’, this ‘Erkenntnispraxis’ or ‘practice of knowledge’, makes tangible that we
502 can also *rethink what we think!* In this sense it is a practice-based version of ‘the
503 philosophy of inner freedom’, which, drawing on the ‘social senses’ work of Joseph Beuys
504 and Rudolf Steiner, foregrounds the I-sense in transformative process. Other elements and
505 strategies in this much used and valued²⁰ instrument of consciousness, help to scale out
506 the process. They are detailed in the *Earth Forum* handbook used in training new
507 responsible participants.

508

509 **In conclusion**

510

511 **Inner technologies and the field of freedom**

512 Although recent developments in technology, in particular artificial intelligence, have
513 called into question the all-knowing human agent, the extent of our human responsibility
514 for how things are in the world should not be overlooked. The more the agency of external
515 technology grows, the more we have to face the consequences of this and the extent to
516 which we are allowing this to shape the world (Grunwald, 2013). Unless we engage with
517 this and the questions it poses, humanity runs the risk of losing both the freedom to
518 imagine and working toward a viable future, and the responsibility that is the other side of
519 this freedom.

520

521 Trying to move beyond anthropogenic destructiveness toward an ecological era should not
522 be conflated with devaluing of the human being, the diminishing of human agency and

¹⁹ ‘Thinking’ is here used in the expanded sense in which Paul Klee, Kandinsky, Schiller, Goethe, Hillman and Beuys use it – which depends on phenomenological close noticing... a process in which perceptions, awareness and feelings are integral.

²⁰ ‘Reflexionfeld’, ‘Journalling for Change’ and Dialogue with Oneself: Dialogue with the World’ are examples of specifically designed social sculpture processes of evaluation that enable participants to re-enter and distil the value their experience, whilst enabling us to sense the powerful impact that instruments of consciousness like Earth Forum have on individual lives, organisations and social processes.

523 privileging outer technologies to save us. Inner technologies, that enhance the
524 connective-reflective dialogue with oneself and with the world and increase the
525 human ability to respond, are also an essential aspect of the work toward a viable
526 future.

527

528 Imaginal work in the inner atelier, as used in the Earth Forum method, is one of these
529 inner technologies. The inner atelier is the space from which the radical social artist in
530 everyone can take a hard look at what is going on and reflect on its implications. It is also
531 the sphere in which the inner space is activated and new social imaginaries can arise and
532 be explored. To balance the disproportionate emphasis on enhancing human beings from
533 the outside I argue that it is time to take the inner space and the inner field seriously: to
534 explore the cognitive-imaginal capacities of the human being as profound inner
535 technologies and integrate *technê* and *epistêmê*, and *technê* and *psyche*.

536

537 One of our key interfaces with the world is imagination: the imagination that encounters,
538 the imagination that enables us to re-enter sensuous experience and information to ‘make
539 sense’. It is this understanding of imagination as an integrative process that is central to
540 connective thought. This imaginal reflective-connective capacity derives from and
541 enhances the I-sense and has the potential of becoming a new kind of differentiated yet
542 interdependent “we”: thinking and imagining together in ways that might allow a viable
543 future to emerge.

544

545 **Sustainability without the I-sense is nonsense**

546 The shorthand language used in certain leadership for sustainability programmes [REF]
547 that describe the way forward as ‘eco-centric not ego-centric’ might unintentionally
548 encourage a devaluation of the role of individual consciousness and agency. On the other
549 hand, foregrounding the I-sense might seem to reinforce the anthropocentric worldview
550 that privileges human desires above the needs and rights of other beings. However, if one
551 understands the I-sense as the sense with which we are able to recognize the being and
552 integrity of all life forms, this will help us to recognize its value as a sense through which
553 the other-than-human-world as well as fellow human beings can be appreciated and
554 properly respected. Without strengthening the capacities of the inner human being to
555 enable shifts in how we see, feel and think about interdependence and interrelatedness,
556 discussed in this book as the personal and inner dimension of sustainability, we cannot
557 hope to shape a viable, eco-social future. Building these capacities for connective
558 imagination through instruments of consciousness like the Earth Forum and the inner
559 atelier practice needs to be understood as a global civic project. Only this kind of
560 consciousness work which parallels the work in the outer field can enable the
561 transformation towards a more viable future.

562

563 **REFERENCES**

564

565 Berry, T.;Swimme, B. (1992): *The Universe Story*. San Francisco: Harper.

566

567 Bortoft, H. (1996): *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*. Edinburgh: Floris
568 Books.

569

570 Brecht, B. (1961): On Chinese Acting. In *The Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.
571 130-136.

572
573 Brown, M.; Macy, J. (2004): Teaching Sustainability: Whole Systems Learning. In C.
574 Galea (Ed.) *Teaching Business Sustainability: From Theory to Practice*, pp. 218 -228
575 Saltaire: Greenleaf.
576
577 Bunge, M. (1996): *Zwischen Intuition und Ratio*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
578
579 Fuchs-Kittowski, K.; Krüger, P. (1997): The noosphere vision of Pierre Teilhard de
580 Chardin and Vladimir I. Vernadsky in the perspective of information and of world-wide
581 communication. In *World Futures* Vol. 50, Issue 1-4.
582
583 Gunnlaugson, O.; Moze, M. B. G. (2012): Surrendering Into Witnessing: A Foundational
584 Practice for Building Collective Intelligence Capacity in Groups. In *Journal of Integral*
585 *Theory and Practice*, 7(3), pp. 105-115.
586
587 Grunwald, A. (Hrsg.) *Handbuch Technikethik*. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 2013
588
589 Banse, G.; Parodi, O. (2012): *Sustainability and Culture: An Expanded View*. In *Periodica*
590 *Oeconomica*, 26, pp.17–27.
591
592 Kunkel, B. (2017): The Capitalocene. In *London Review of Books*. Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 22-
593 28.
594
595 Nicol, D. (2015): *Subtle Activism: The Inner Dimension of Social and Planetary*
596 *Transformation*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
597
598 Parry, R. (2014): Episteme and Techne. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of*
599 *Philosophy*. Retrieved 14 March 2017, from
600 <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/episteme-techne>.
601
602 Parodi, O. (2015): The missing aspect of culture in sustainability concepts. In J.C. Enders,
603 M. Remig (Eds.): *Theories of sustainable development*, pp. 169-187. London New York:
604 Routledge (Routledge Studies in Sustainable Development).
605
606 Sacks, S. (1998): *Warmth Work: An Expanded Conception of Art for the 21st Century*,
607 Stockholm: UNESCO Summit for Culture and Development [unpublished presentation,
608 31 March 1998], as part of ‘The World Beyond 2000: Shaping Histories - Imagining
609 Futures’. See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002223/222322eo.pdf> for timetable
610 and <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001139/113935fo.pdf> p. 112 listing members
611 of *The World Beyond 2000* group.
612
613 Sacks, S. (2011): Social Sculpture and New Organs of Perception: New practices and new
614 pedagogy for a humane and ecologically viable future. In Mia Christa Lerm-Hayes and
615 Victoria Walters *Beuysian Legacies in Ireland*. pp. 80-97. Münster: LIT Verlag.
616
617 Sacks, S.; Zumdick, W. (2013): *Atlas of the Poetic Continent: Pathways to Ecological*
618 *Citizenship*. Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publications.
619

- 620 Sacks, S.; Kurt, H. (2013): *Die rote Blume: Ästhetische Praxis in Zeiten des Wandels*.
621 Berlin: Think OYA.
622
623 Sacks, S.; Kirchgaesser, A.; Stefan, M. (2013): *Earth Forum Handbook*. Oxford:
624 University of the Trees. [available only for trained practitioners].
625
626 Sacks, S. (2017): *Contemporary Social Sculpture and the Field of Transformation*
627 Oberhausen: Athena.
628
629 Tisdall, C. (1979): *Joseph Beuys*. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum/Thames
630 and Hudson.