From a Sustainability to a ThriveAbility Charter

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On December 16, 2015, I attended a meeting at the University of Melbourne about the development of its Sustainability Charter.

Perhaps riding a rising tide of new possibilities for more appropriate action on climate change coming out of the recent Paris conference, some people were excited about the draft Sustainability Charter, whereas others were much less enthusiastic. So much so, that one group had already created an alternative Sustainability Charter.

Unsurprisingly, neither the draft nor the alternative Sustainability Charter is acceptable in the context of Integral Meta-Theory. Both documents need to be criticised due to many important absences, some of which will be introduced below.


Here is his abstract from his conference paper:

Abstract: Measurement infrastructures come in many forms and impact our lives in many ways, from the intimacy of psychometrics and biometrics, to the anonymity of econometrics and global climate change indicators. This paper explores the need for meta-theoretical approaches that address measurement infrastructures in terms of the ethical, political, and metaphysical aspects of our current global crises of measurement. This term—global crises of measurement—is meant to convey the fact that, despite appearances, the majority of our global challenges revolve around measurement infrastructures. For example, the recent economic crisis was largely the result of inadequate and deceptive econometric practices (e.g., the ratings applied to collateralized debt obligations), while the ecological crisis continues to revolve around disputes over, and innovations in, measurement (e.g., calculations of global temperature changes). Measurement infrastructures function to generate (and impose) a shared understanding of the world, and in so doing literally create realities; whether these realities are true, good, and beautiful is another matter. Measures and their related standards also facilitate complexly coordinated social actions and set the terms by which a wide range of evaluative judgments are made, from those about the self (bathroom scale; IQ) to those about whole countries (GDP). Recent decades have brought a rapid proliferation of measurement infrastructures and related forms of standardization, which impact the most intimate details of our lives and the most significant planetary initiatives. A meta-theoretical approach is needed that can expose the false realities created by inadequate and oppressive measurement practices as well as inform the creation of new approaches to the representation of complex global realities, including transactions involving non-monetary value, psychological interiority, and non-linear dynamical systems. This paper takes the first steps toward
outlining just such a meta-theory of measurement, drawing heavily on the work of Ken Wilber and Roy Bhaskar.

Stein in his aforementioned blog provides an overview of six crises:

1. **Economic crisis**: poverty, inequality, and econometrics
2. **Ecological crisis**: the politics of measurement and complex systems
3. **Educational crisis**: testing, standards, and marketization
4. **Political crisis**: voting, polling, and the representation of interiors
5. **Health care crisis**: biometrics, diagnostic categories, and the future of medicine
6. **Personality crisis**: the hyper-reality and hyper-reflectivity of the over-measured lifestyle

![Diagram of Developmental Stages and Meanings](image_url)
Taking on board the sub-title of Stein’s blog, I ask in our global interconnecting crises, whose sustainability, whose measures, whose futures?

Stein recently completed his Doctor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is deeply versed in the dynamics of adult development.

Robert Kegan, Harvard Graduate School of Education, describes five orders of consciousness in his theory of adult development:

Looks like both draft and alternative Sustainability Charters are not products of 5th Order: Self-Transforming Minds.

Both documents are ideological. Neither considers the dialectic of ideologies.

The draft Sustainability Charter champions scientific materialism with no indication of the importance of consciousness studies. Nor is there any mention of 2nd Order tribal cultures, nor 3rd Order law and order conservative societies, nor 5th Order communities of inquiry into timely action.

The alternative Sustainability Charter describes our socio-environmental emergency. There is no mention of adult development. Nor is there any meta-theoretical understanding of our multiple crises and our questionable uses of metrics.

Just as Australia is a clear laggard in dealing with climate change, the draft Sustainability Charter is a clear laggard in dealing with sustainability, or better said, thriveability.


With all of that onboard, the next iteration of UoM’s Sustainability Charter, I hope, will be much better attuned to emerging living conditions in the 21st century than the current document.

In an Action Inquiry community,

“We commit to enacting a vision of ThriveAbility:

**TIMELY ACTION INQUIRY** that grows **Personal INTEGRITY, Relational MUTUALITY** & mutually-transforming power, as well as **non-violent, ecological SUSTAINABILITY** across generations.”