

# Integral Human, Organization and Community Development: A Roadmap for SEKEM and Egypt in the 21st Century

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## Abstract:

The aim of the study was to explore how a social innovation like SEKEM could be functionally and structurally understood, designed and institutionalized, in order to move towards the integral phase of the organization as a living organism. The intention was to contribute to the renewal of SEKEM's<sup>1</sup> holistic approach to development and societal transformation.

It became evident that SEKEM's renewed approach to integral human development incorporates individual storytelling (grounding), consciousness level and complexity handling capacity evaluation (emerging), competence level mapping (navigating) and self-management (effecting). The corresponding rhythm of SEKEM's integral organizational development includes the dimensions of collective storytelling (grounding), arts and rituals (Cultura Activa) for stimulating consciousness development (emerging), knowledge creation via the integral project management framework (navigating), and the application of Holacracy as a complete system for self-organization (effecting). All the aforementioned elements on different levels build on and mutually reinforce each other and help SEKEM to actualize its potential to become a fully functional integral enterprise. Thus, there is need to actively take the social innovation agenda forward within and beyond SEKEM, and to work on integral human, organizational and community development. By following the emancipatory methodology of critical theory, new emancipatory knowledge was created, which leads to an integral human and organizational development approach to release the individual and collective GENE-ius.

**Keywords:** SEKEM, Integral Development, Social Innovation, Integral Enterprise, Egypt

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## 1 Introduction

The founder of SEKEM, Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish, who was a visionary and a pioneer, built SEKEM over a 40-year period, left behind a legacy of a unique institutional ecosystem that has been widely recognized as a development model for the 21st century<sup>2</sup>. This research, which represents a minor contribution to the founder's legacy, aims towards a necessary transition into a new organizational development phase of SEKEM. This reaffirms its

core purpose of human development and strives for the resilience of a truly living organism, where every part can act intelligently within the whole and is not dependent on a single leader.

The experience of SEKEM's leadership shows that not every person is ready to take on responsibility, and some need strong guidance and control. This creates energetic tension in the journey, where strong command and control, as well as autonomy and self-organization, have to find a synthesis.

<sup>1</sup> SEKEM was founded in Egypt in 1977 with the idea of sustainable development, a vision of Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish who dug the first well in the vast desert land still resounds in SEKEM's approach of conducting business.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.sekem.com/en/about/awards/>

For SEKEM's leadership it became apparent that the operations had to be scaled up, the greening of the desert must continue not only to overcome organizational financial challenges, but also societal challenges. The importance of learning lessons and making and sharing experiences and knowledge is one of the main objectives of this 'research-to-innovation' study and aligns to the future vision and mission. Through this study, the primary researcher highlights that to develop people does not only require adopting a holistic approach, but also to emphasize that organizational development is critical to be prepared for future challenges and opportunities, and to continue to develop SEKEM's larger community. In this way, this 'research-to-innovation' journey contributes to SEKEMsophia, which is the structural and functional framework for SEKEM's ongoing development efforts and renewal.

Against the above background, this research is an attempt to create opportunities (and space) for future development, invite others to contribute, and to enter consciously into a discussion on how to upscale and replicate SEKEM, as well as to sustainably develop, integrate and manage new leadership who will belong to the new generation.

After setting the scene by sketching the key challenges and the need for social innovation, as well as providing a short introduction on SEKEM, the researchers will follow the integral research-to-innovation framework of Lessem and Schieffer (2010) to provide the structure of this research journey.

## **2. Global and local challenges require a shift in consciousness**

According to the US sociologist Wallerstein (2004), who is well-known for his approach to World Systems Analysis, today's crises are part of a transition period that marks the end of the modern world system. Wallerstein (2004) claimed that we need to embrace a new paradigm of thinking that can be called science of complexity, as opposed to rational or positivistic science. Other influential integral thinkers such as Wilber (2006), and Beck and Cohan (2005), supported the emergence of the new integral paradigm, which aims at a new way of thinking, implying new forms of institutions and social systems that are also central to this study. While this is a global and universal dynamic, it is

very important, to look closely at the local context and to acknowledge the particularities. Hence, we turn to Egypt and examine how the need for an evolution of consciousness plays out in the country that is famous for its pyramids and pharaohs.

For centuries and even millennia, Egypt has mainly consisted of desert and just 6% of the land can be used for agriculture, with the majority of natural fertile soil being located along the Nile River (El-Nahrawy, 2011). Today, there is only 0.03 hectare/capita of agricultural land (World Bank, 2015a), while the global average is 0.195 ha. Egypt also suffers from water scarcity and has only around 622 m<sup>3</sup>/year/capita of fresh water. However, renewable water is available from the Nile, which is much lower than the acknowledged water scarcity line of 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>/year/capita. Simultaneously, the existing old Nile farmland is degrading and new land reclamation activities are often not sustainably managed (ENCC, 2010). The unemployment rate reached over 13% by the end of 2013, with two out of three young Egyptians aged between 20 to 34 years being unemployed (Mottaghi, 2014). In 2011, the World Bank ranked 25% of Egyptians as living below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2015b). The current education system does not solve basic needs and is facing severe structural issues, while 25% of the population is illiterate (CIA, 2015). Consequently, severe social and environmental challenges exist and the pressure on Egypt's growing population is increasing.

### **2.1 The need for social innovations**

The aforementioned challenges were the main drivers of what Western media termed the "Arab spring", in which Egypt turned out to be a major hotspot, especially in 2011 when ex-president Hosni Mubarak resigned after 30 years of a de-facto dictatorship. After a tumultuous transition period the former director of the intelligence services, General Fatah Al-Sisi took power and again, we saw a military general heading the Egyptian government. The question remains whether Al-Sisi can pave the way to implement the core demands of the Egyptian revolution: food, freedom, and social justice. Egypt, like most developing countries, imported its economic, political and education systems and institutions from the Western world with insufficient critical dialogue on how to emancipate the country from the current status quo,

which lacks proper connection to the cultural core and local context.

Scharmer (2013) argues that ‘our systems do exactly what they are designed to do, but this comes at the cost of the mentioned ecological, social and spiritual-cultural divides.’ According to the aforementioned, on the surface, the problems at the surface and the underlying structural disconnects arise from the same deep source, namely, a framework of economic thought or level of human consciousness that is stuck in the past. Scharmer (2013) saw a strong need for a more co-creative eco-system model, characterized by the rise of a fourth sector that creates platforms and holds a space for cross-sector innovation, engaging stakeholders from all sectors. These new platforms can be described synonymously as social innovations. I now turn to the central case study of this work, which can be seen as a social innovation born and bred in Egypt.

### 2.3 Introducing SEKEM

Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish, an Egyptian who studied and worked in Austria for 20 years and who was deeply immersed in European culture, took the decision to return to his beloved home country to ignite a new spark for development, which he called SEKEM (referring to the ancient Egyptian word for “vitality”), to address Egypt’s burning issues. His vision was to strive for “*sustainable development towards a future where every human being can unfold his or her individual potential; where mankind is living together in social forms reflecting human dignity; and where all economic activity is conducted in accordance with ecological and ethical principles*” (SEKEM, 2017).

SEKEM consists of several organizations in the field of agriculture, diverse businesses offering organic products, non-profit and community services, education and health. Since 2012, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development (HU) is an integrated part of the SEKEM umbrella.

It is against the above background, this paper explores how SEKEM as a social innovation can be scaled with sustainable succession and replicated in a similar form at a different location.

### 3 Research Methodology: The Integral Research-to-Innovation Framework

According to Lessem and Schieffer (2010), the underlying approach to research and innovation is built around the generic rhythm of social innovation, starting from grounding (South), to emerging (East), to navigating (North), and ending with effecting (West) – known as the GENE-rhythm. The underlying Integral World realities attribute metaphorically, different qualities to the cardinal directions that represent archetypes of human systems. The South represents nature and community; the East reflects spirituality and culture; the North stands for science, systems and technology; and the West embodies enterprise and economics. There is finally also the Centre, representing the moral core which is deeply connected to the local culture in a specific context.

Releasing the “GENE-ius” in the context of this work requires following a particular 4C (from call to contribution) structure. Every part builds on a particular method and methodology, which in our case reflects the Eastern Research-to-Innovation path of renewal and is applied on an individual and collective level. For the call, we use the narrative method to describe a deep pain about an issue that exists in reality and forms the intrinsic motivation to co-create a solution. The researchers’ individual call is linked to the call of SEKEM and Egypt.

The next step lies in understanding the calls more deeply, emerging into our context and building on existing knowledge using Hermeneutics as the underlying methodology. Here different cultural knowledge fields and worldview perspectives play an important role when looking at the burning issues from different angles. Ideally this opens the horizon for potential solutions and the inspiration is used to go into the next stage of co-creation. The aim of co-creation is to navigate through the different possible solutions and give more structure to what is really needed and realistic, based on the emancipatory momentum of Critical Theory. Ultimately, after conceptualizing adequate solutions for addressing the call, we enter into the final stage of contribution. This stage is about implementing concrete actions together with others that build on the previous steps and following action research methodology, in particular Co-operative Inquiry (Heron, 1996).

In order to add transformative action, in addition to new knowledge creation that is happening during

the 4C journey, this research-to-innovation path also has a so-called CARE trajectory (Lessem, 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c), which stands for Community activation (origination), Awakening integral consciousness (foundation), Institutionalizing innovation driven Research (emancipation), and Embodiment of transformation (transformation). This will make sure that the research-to-innovation journey emanates from the community and is finally embodied within the organization. The CARE trajectory complements the 4C structure of each research path..

## 4 Call and Community Activation

### 4.1 Individual Call for Integral Human Development

In this section, which uses the narrative method, the researcher will mainly recap the dynamics of the latest two development phases in his life, which started with his arrival in Egypt and how he continued to mature by working and living at SEKEM. From a narrative perspective, coming to Egypt was a decisive moment in the researcher's life, since it reflected an important step in a legendary journey, making his life story unique and novel. The researcher found a place where he felt that he could make a contribution to the world by serving SEKEM's vision of sustainable development. This was a place that was founded by a legend and the researcher became part of that bigger story as Randall's (1995) narrative key tenets suggest.

The founding father Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish, built bridges between the occident and the orient and orchestrated a symphony of different spheres of life. He formed a group of legendary people serving a powerful vision. Representing a new generation, the researcher have joined this heroic journey of development with his authentic voice and the stories are still unfolding. "I feel the collective call and the urge to continuously reinvent ourselves. I also want to build bridges between the old and the new, between Europe and the Arab world, between urban and rural spaces, integrating the masculine with feminine leadership principles. I want to become a social leader; a leader who makes others become leaders. This can create a social fabric out of which a truly living organism can rise."

### 4.2 Collective Call for Organizational and Societal Development at SEKEM

Egypt as a country and SEKEM as an organization are in phases of transition. In fact, a focus on educating people and raising more awareness of sustainable development is needed. Strong patriarchal and military-style top-down leadership on a societal level may create stability in the short run, in particular in times of outer crisis, at the expense of violating human rights. But this does not seem to represent the right solutions for the future and is not conducive to starting a new era of development that purposefully reconnects Egypt with its rich cultural heritage. Egypt's story is in the middle of its struggle to find its own way towards a brighter and peaceful future. Its legendary past carries the hints for an authentic origination because the wisdom of harmony and balance is deeply rooted in Egypt's culture and it just needed to be highlighted.

A unique fusion of European and Arabian culture has contributed strongly to SEKEM's success and an example of transformation. SEKEM's natural evolution after the passing on of its founder and the economic pressure to upscale desert farms, requires more capable people and a strong succession plan for key roles. Recognizing that each human life is unique implies that a key challenge for SEKEM's development journey has always been to deal with different consciousness levels and capacities.

The first step of the CARE trajectory will now be discussed with reference to community activation, in order to show how people are mobilized around the researcher to embark on the collective journey and renew the story of SEKEM.

### 4.3 Originating a Call Through Activating the SEKEM Community

It is important that the personal call as well as the organizational and societal calls are not only relevant in theory, but are also borne out of the practical situation together with people in and around SEKEM. It starts with the researcher's family, which meets regularly in the family council where organizational and human development needs are discussed. The researcher's main ally is his father in law, because without him there would not be any real leverage in SEKEM because he is now the sole power holder. In addition to him, the SEKEM core community is a very important part of the researcher's activation efforts, because these



people are catalytic for SEKEM's development. Thus, any change needs to be carried with and through them.

The researcher uses the weekly SEKEM Future Council meetings for sharing his ideas and co-creating organizational and human development. In the professional context of SEKEM Holdings and its subsidiary Naturetex, the researcher takes the lead on the merchandise function. There are two major groups from the broader network of SEKEM that the researcher deemed relevant for community activation. Firstly, we have the long-standing business partners and inspirational entrepreneurs and pioneers of the organic movement, who share common goals for human and organizational development and are aware and in constructive dialogue, about the SEKEM journey as well as their own journey. Secondly, there is the new generation Egyptians or change agents who dream of sustainable communities in the desert with a shared call, that still needs to find ways to implement and upscale their efforts by learning from SEKEM.

Thus, a wide range of stakeholders, are part of the community and are actively involved in, and aware of the efforts for integral human and organizational development. There are still imbalances that hinder development towards the next evolutionary stage that will be analyzed subsequently on a deeper level.

## **5 Awakening Consciousness**

### **5.1 Individual Context of Integral Human Development at SEKEM**

This section aims to build a deeper understanding of the local, social and historical contexts, which help to reveal existing imbalances underlying individual and collective burning issues, namely, transformational, transcultural, transdisciplinary, and transpersonal imbalances.

Transformational imbalances on an individual level address the dynamics that underlie personal development. Psychological boxes, i.e. perceptions of what is right and wrong, limit our thinking and undermine human freedom in further development. Boxes are framed by collective culture and structures, which cannot be altered by an individual. In an environment that is conducive for human development people can distinguish that their psychological box does not need to determine their

life story and emancipate from prevailing patterns of thinking.

By recognizing the soul development stages according to Steiner (2008), or using Spiral Dynamic levels (Beck and Cohan, 2005), can help to gain clarity on what a person needs for development.

Transcultural imbalances reveal what creative sources within and around oneself can provide insights into one's development. According to Callahan (2007), feelings can be seen as important development opportunities. Dealing with feelings is not valued in the modern Western world and often seen as 'irrational' behavior. In the organizational context an overemphasis on rationality and pragmatism prevails.

Transdisciplinary imbalances are about the question of how people address personal development needs with relevant new knowledge. Body, mind, soul, and spirit and related disciplines are not equally taken into consideration when looking at human development. If taken into consideration these disciplines reveal human development needs that can be addressed with different means and formats. The challenge lies in integrating subtle and gross development elements into work life and Story-telling is one of these tools.

Transpersonal imbalances focus on the question of how an individual meaningfully contributes to his or her team or organization. Unclear expectations often produce what Callahan (2007) calls 'lower drama', i.e. unhealthy power dynamics between people. Thus, clarifying expectations at the workplace avoids lower drama and helps people to go into adult ways of communication that can integrate feedback loops that unleash learning and development potential.

### **5.2 Collective Context of Integral Organisational and Societal Development at SEKEM**

Transformational imbalances on a collective level focus on the question 'where do we come from and where are we going as an organization and as a society.' According to Spiral Dynamics (2005) the Arab world's and Egypt's development are socially tied by PURPLE clan and family structures, RED nationalism, and BLUE Islamic tradition.

Environmental core principles of Islam and genuine Arab social competence form good predisposition to enter into healthy GREEN values. What is missing is that forms of ORANGE capitalism do not benefit the broad population. Egypt is still trapped in the ORANGE, capitalistic pitfalls of economic development coupled with social and environmental decay. The potential of the Egyptian revolution as a step from BLUE to ORANGE to GREEN has not been reached. SEKEM's development story can be shared as a pioneering organization tapping into healthy ORANGE and GREEN values. The inherent challenge is the necessity for YELLOW leadership dealing with multiple value MEMES.

Transcultural imbalances are about creative sources that underlie the development of organizations, and 'neopatriarchal' (Sharabi, 1993) structures trigger unhealthy power dynamics stemming from cultural differences present in Egypt. Existing cultural differences between SEKEM's Egyptian and German-speaking community risk to create a social gap. Translating best practices of work and responsibilities into competencies and roles would help to overcome cultural bias because it would make the role-fit of people more clear and transparent. In general, role fit is a question of consciousness development stage, not of nationality.

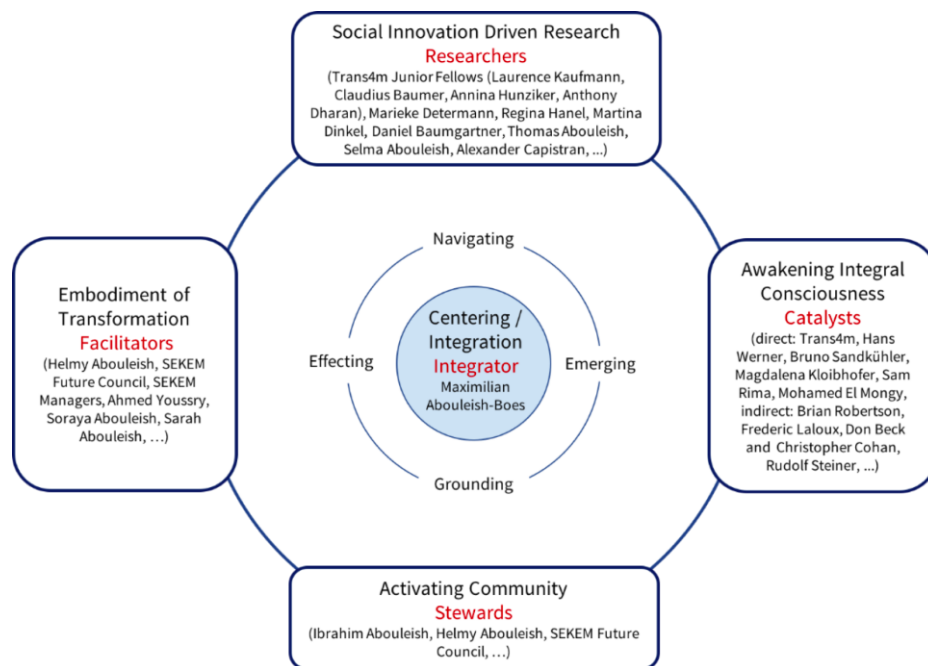
Transdisciplinary imbalances help to find out how we become a knowledge-creating organization to adequately respond to the development issues we face. Using Glasl's and Lievegoed (2014) perspective on organizational development, the cultural subsystem of SEKEM is very complex, driven by a TURQUOISE vision. Such a strong vision needs to be broken down and translated to different company levels. The social subsystem is strongly influenced by heterogenic education and consciousness level from employees and community members. People relationships need to be revitalized and employees empowered to take more responsibility and engage in knowledge creation. Besides that, there is a prevailing dominant story of resource shortages in the technological-instrumental subsystem. It is important to make knowledge from the other subsystems explicit in the technological-instrument subsystem and this requires overcoming financial pressure and freeing resources for experimentation and learning.

On a transpersonal level, the kind of governance forms we build that meaningfully contribute to the sustainable development of the organization and society needs to be explored. According to Glasl and Lievegoed (2014) governance structures evolve over time with increasing maturity of the organization. SEKEM risks being stuck in its pioneering phase that has increasing difficulties to manage complexity, but still relies on its strength from the conscious (YELLOW) leadership of the founding generation. The subsequent differentiation phase elements exist, but get undermined by informal organization. The integral phase that strongly builds on entrepreneurial initiative on a decentralized level is already on the rise but only at the German-speaking core community. A more mature social subsystem can free the potential of the integral phase. Still, SEKEM strongly depends on centralized decision making.

The key moment in reaching the next organizational level for SEKEM lies in a shift from overemphasis on leadership (pioneering phase), to a transpersonal leadership embedded in transparent and agile organizational structures that break down complexity and clarify expectations for people from different consciousness levels (integration phase).

### **5.3 Establishing an Innovation Ecosystem at SEKEM for Awakening Integral Consciousness (cAre)**

In the past decades, SEKEM's research-to-innovation ecosystem was orchestrated by Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish as an integrator, and now has to increasingly rely on the active initiative of community members filling the ecosystem roles. According to Lessem (2017a), the key roles of an innovation ecosystem reach from the steward, representing the grounding quality of community activation, to the catalysts standing for emergence and awakening integral consciousness, to the researchers navigating through theories and systems to create new knowledge and conduct (social) research, to the facilitators implementing actions and effecting reality in a transformative way. The additional role of the integrator ensures that all roles coordinate well and build on each other. Figure 1 below clarifies this further.



**Figure 1:** The innovation ecosystem

Source: Adapted by the author from Lessem (2017a, p. 86)

The innovation ecosystem is the force that creates new development and social innovation, brings the four dimensions of sustainable development to life again and enables SEKEM to flourish in the desert. With reference to the Hermeneutic tenets, this could be characterized as “reconnecting with the source”, in this case, the primal source that creates and supports life.

## 6 Co-creation and Institutionalization of Social Innovation driven research at SEKEM

### 6.1 Individual Co-creation of Integral Human Development at SEKEM

The different dimensions of integral human development (IHD) presented below are embedded in the Integral Worlds theory of Schieffer and Lessem (2014).

*Individual storytelling (South):* Individual storytelling refers to the ability to relate to life and to others and individual stories allow someone to be recognized, as a start for development. It is authentically to the local context because storytelling builds on local Arab and Islamic tradition. Furthermore, individual stories help to design human development efforts, since dominant consciousness level become clearer by the way people tell a story. Storytelling addresses subtler areas of knowledge creation, since feelings can be

shared and later transformed into development potentials as shown in the context.

*Consciousness and capacity level (East):* As shown above, Spiral Dynamics levels (from BEIGE to TURQUOISE) are an essential tool for designing human development interventions. The basic motivation and behavioral patterns become much clearer through different Spiral stages and allow leaders to better cope with people. Different Spiral levels can be also translated in cognitive handling capacity described by Elliot Jaques (Jaques and Clement, 1994) who defined distinct time horizons (from 0 to 3 months up to more than 50 years) that people can cope with depending.

*Competence level (North):* To foster human development at work roles that need to be filled can be described with ca. 1-3 core competencies attributed for a specific role that are needed to accomplish the role's purpose. Competence definition on different maturity levels provide clarity for an individual. Expectations are defined as qualitative drivers and not as quantitative outcomes, which reduces over-rationalization. Competence evaluation avoids lower drama by making leaders responsible in framing clearly their expectations. Development needs are naturally derived from the next levels to be achieved.

*Self-management (West):* A trusted system for self-management based on adapted categories and

defined individual contexts are supportive for human development as well. People's improved self-management reduces lower drama and irresponsible communication drastically. Vertical and horizontal control from actions to purpose in life are relevant. It is a very healthy ORANGE tool to pull people up from RED/BLUE value mems and build a strong foundation for a GREEN transition. Weekly reviews of a trusted system should be performed to reinforce practice. This forces people to think about "what means something for me" and hence creates a link to the personal story. Building a trusted system created a great ability to coach people and build healthy routines and habits.

The IHD approach is by far not the standard approach yet, and is also not applied at SEKEM in a structured way. The aim was to create a holistic frame for and to embed human development from the beginning in the context of work as a basis for deep dialogue between a responsible leader and employees. This means that the individual is always seen in relation to his or her organizational roles.

## 6.2 Collective Co-creation of Integral Organizational Development at SEKEM

Following the basic GENE-rhythm and mirroring the four dimensions of IHD, the following four dimensions constitute the Integral Organizational Development (IOD) approach.

*Collective storytelling (South):* This element is about sharing individual and collective SEKEM stories to a wider community. Spreading the image of a YELLOW organization / ecosystem, able to deal with value systems from BEIGE to GREEN, following a TURQUOISE vision helps in the macro transition of Egypt towards more GREEN value systems. At Heliopolis University and SEKEM the core program staff uses theatre and other art forms for conveying these stories, since stories can showcase best practices that enter into collective field of awareness. Collective storytelling is supporting individual storytelling, and thereby helping to overcome respective individual imbalances.

*Cultura Activa (arts & rituals) (East):* Using different art forms, such as fine arts, movement arts (eurythmy), speech, acting and poetry with employees is a central part of SEKEM's human development efforts. This allows employees to experience some core competencies (e.g.

teamwork) in a playful way. Individual stories are sometimes taken as input for the arts program to develop content. Arts provides a safe space to experience GREEN values, for example, standing in a circle together with men and women, managers and workers. The bi-annual SEKEM Festival is a major container for Cultura Activa and provides development impulses for SEKEM employees that regularly perform on stage. In addition to that, other routines such as daily morning circle practice, company circles, and vision meetings comprise the human development elements from the Eastern Realm.

*Knowledge Creation (Integral Project Management) (North):* Integral Project Management (IMP) (Hunziker, 2014) builds around five core roles (from the innovation ecosystem), the GENE-process, and holistic impact visualization. The IPM process is integrating full knowledge circles from implicit to explicit knowledge. The SEKEM Sustainability Flower is used as a holistic reporting tool to provide feedback for learning and setting priorities. Because IPM builds on cross-institutional collaboration it fosters the integral phase of SEKEM.

*Self-Organization (Holacracy) (West):* An important element for human development is Holacracy invented by Brian Robertson (2015), which empowers people to self-organize, thereby supporting the transition towards the integral phase of SEKEM. Holacracy is supporting all IOD elements and thereby helping to overcome individual imbalances. It comes with special meeting formats and decision making processes that foster a healthy relationship to power. Holacracy builds on operational circles that break down SEKEM's overall purpose into a digestible degree of complexity, adequate for employees on different levels. Alignment of people with priorities can happen through making objectives and key results (OKR) explicit, which allows to create dialogue and give constant feedback for learning.

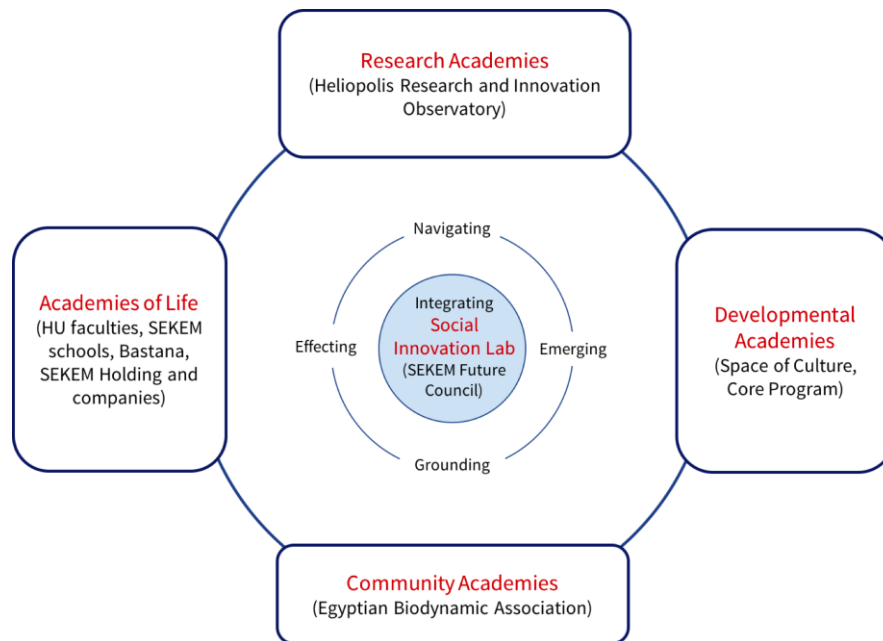
In total, the IHD and IOD approaches of SEKEM are strongly liberating in nature, because they initiate an emancipation from existing and often dysfunctional conventional management functions. In this way SEKEM is becoming an Integral Enterprise (Lessem and Schieffer, 2009) and an engine for social transformation or liberation from existing imbalances adhering to the key tenets of Critical Theory.



### 6.3 Institutionalizing Social Innovation Driven Research at SEKEM (caRe)

The inter-institutional ecology of SEKEM and the different types of academies according to Lessem (2017c) are the driving force behind the continuous

development and implementation of the above mentioned IHD and IOD elements. Figure 2 depicts the ideal structure of such an inter-institutional ecology at SEKEM.



**Figure 2:** Overview of SEKEM's inter-institutional ecology  
Source: Adapted by the author from Lessem (2017c)

A Community Academy (South) for institutionalized community activation is embodied by SEKEM's supplying farmers, namely the Egyptian Biodynamic Association (EBDA).

A Developmental Academy (East) for awakened integral consciousness applied to enterprise, economy and development, is represented by the Space of Culture at HU.

A Research Academy (North) for innovation driven, institutionalized research, is formed by the HU faculties and the Core Program.

An Academy of Life (West) for fully embodied integral development, is represented by the SEKEM schools, Bastana (an informal environmental learning space for youth), as well as the educational programs at HU.

The SEKEM Future Council is an important entity to drive the overall integration of all the different academies (Centre). By doing so, the Future Council will reflect the quality of the GENE-

rhythm, enabling SEKEM's inter-institutional ecology to research, innovate and develop together. Thereby, the SEKEM Future Council can be seen as the locus of the liberation struggle from SEKEM to fully arrive at its integral phase and become an Integral Enterprise.

## 7 Embodiment of Integral Human, Organisational, and Community Development at SEKEM

### 7.1 Individual Contribution to Integral Human Development at SEKEM

The Southern dimension of storytelling has turned out to be a very good tool for human development at SEKEM. This is combined with a new method of sharing stories from employees together with the arts program of the Heliopolis University Core Program.

Dealing with Spiral Dynamics in the Eastern realm has become part of community life and increasingly enters into the SEKEM company life as well, at least on the level of management. The analyses of stratified systems at SEKEM Holding revealed that

generally, healthy set of levels, i.e. different strata exist.

The Northern sphere of mapping competencies for roles allows people to gain clarity and transparency on human development needs in the context of work. This is an important element for healthy power dynamics and a fruitful dialogue between leaders and employees and has been piloted at the merchandising team at Naturetex, one of SEKEM's subsidiaries.

Getting Things Done (GTD), from the Western realm as a method for organization and time management has proven to be a successful method for empowering people in their daily lives, not only at work. People are quickly convinced about the method but it takes time to really implement it well. After a first round of enthusiasm, people tend to drop the system. This is not a surprise, because it requires profound changes in human behavior that can only be expected to materialize over years. This has to become the central part of human development at SEKEM, bringing in a healthy ORANGE energy.

Concerning the application of Co-operative Inquiry (Heron, 1996), it can be concluded that the researcher has been engaged in a politically-oriented process. Engaging in IHD is the basis for empowering people in order to shift the power from a centralized system into a more decentralized governance structure. The IHD approach has been developed over the past four years with the input of many parties, including the employees themselves. Many parties are engaged in a knowledge-oriented process, where deliberately action-reflection cycles are built in via Holacracy governance meetings.

## **7.2 Collective Contribution to Integral Organizational Development at SEKEM**

Under the Southern community building functions it became clear that storytelling is already an existing reality at SEKEM, especially when it comes to sharing stories to the external community via SEKEM news and the biannual SEKEM festival. Storytelling within the internal community can be strengthened, but valuable experiences in the form of special workshops dedicated to individual and collective story sharing has been collected. The social meetings have been identified as a potential place for collecting individual stories and feeding them into the arts program of Holacracy University (HU).

Concerning the Eastern realm of consciousness evolution, the ongoing efforts from applying Cultura Activa to SEKEM employees have been shared. This builds on the collaboration from the Human Development circle and HU's core program adapted to the context and consciousness level of employees.

In the Northern sphere of knowledge creation, the application of the genuine IPM approach was difficult in reality. Marked by the dynamics of SEKEM's dominant pioneering phase, projects still tend to be top-down driven and based on ad-hoc instructions from top management. With growing self-organization and awareness for integral development, the implementation of the IPM approach can be improved.

In the Western domain, good progress could be made with the introduction of Holacracy to strengthen the self-organization of SEKEM, in particular at Naturetex. It became clear that the degree of Holacracy implementation depends strongly on the capacity level of employees. In general, it helps to build healthy BLUE and ORANGE structures that naturally lead towards SEKEM's integral phase, actualizing its potential to become an Integral Enterprise. Holacracy has the potential to be much more than just a technocratic method, since it represents the engine for breaking patriarchal patterns and structures that ultimately liberate employees in an authentic and transformational process of inquiry.

The classical, successive action-reflection cycles have not been realized, but a participatory form of inquiry has been established. With Holacracy meetings an ongoing inquiry format has been established that, tactically and structurally via governance, engages circle members in informative and transformative inquiries.

## **7.3 Economics of Love and Transformative Education with SEKEM (carE)**

SEKEM as an Integral Enterprise is surrounded by its inter-institutional ecology which represents the nucleus for a new economic model relevant for Egypt's societal renewal that Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish called an 'Economy of Love'. Historically, during the last 40 years, SEKEM has built up an institutional ecosystem that laid the foundation for the fourfold commonwealth that is at the heart of SEKEM's Economics of Love.

The key tenets for Economics of Love can be summarized as follows:

- Encourage mankind to take responsibility for the holistic development of the earth (ecological stewardship).
- Impel and enable people to unfold their individual potential and develop their full consciousness to embrace the material and spiritual world (human development).
- Foster people to live and work together in dignity, mutual respect and tolerance (social relationships).
- Produce wholesome and healthy food and other products that are of high quality and nourish body, soul and spirit (Economic Value Creation).

## 8 Conclusion

With reference to the research objective, it can be stated that this work has helped SEKEM to build a foundation to sustainably manage succession and integrate the leadership of a new generation. The main elements of SEKEM's approach to development were made explicit and new concepts, theories and practices that go beyond the prevailing anthroposophical approach were added. By stressing the need to incorporate human development in the context of work pathways for renewing SEKEM's leadership culture, an alternative to the dominant pioneering phase-related patriarchal leadership style was presented. While the aforementioned leadership style adequately addresses the observable consciousness structures, it risks to possibility to miss the opportunity to unlock further human development potential. Furthermore, together with the research ecosystem, awareness about social innovation structure and function to the members of the SEKEM Future Council was highlighted.

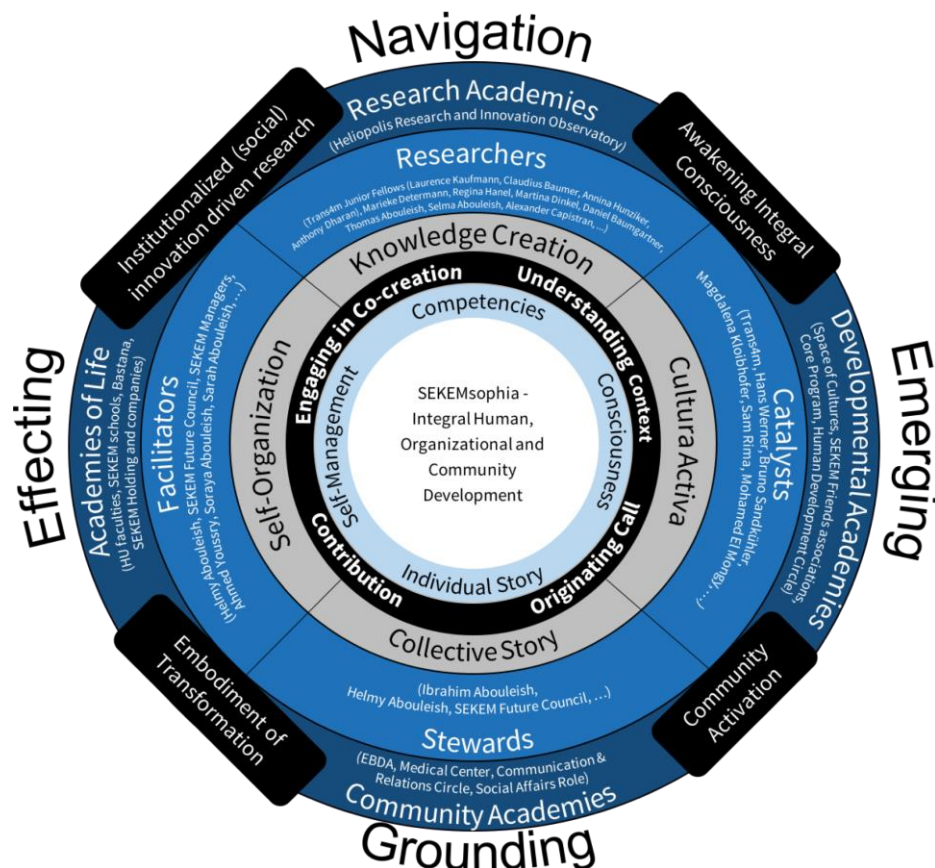
It became apparent that most of the members are still immersed in the pioneering phase culture, where action and improvisation are valued higher than reflection and structure, and hence there is a need to counter the prevailing *modus operandi*. Nevertheless, as stressed, the balanced combination of both sides is necessary in order to reap the benefits of an integral phase. Particularly, the concept of Holacracy can help the new generation of leaders to achieve the right mix of an agile structure that allows for entrepreneurial initiative. In order to support the momentum, a series of workshops about SEKEMsophia, a synonym for IHD and IOD, has been established and will be continued in the future in order to work on SEKEM's Vision Goals for the year 2057<sup>3</sup>.

Through the application of Holacracy as a self-organizing system, SEKEM's actual governance structure and related knowledge has been made visible and explicit. All institutions of SEKEM have been mapped in in a software tool called GlassFrog<sup>4</sup> as circles, including a first or even second level of sub-circles and defined roles filled by people. By further introducing Holacracy meeting practices and translating other IHD and IOD elements into Holacracy governance designs, a transition towards SEKEM's integral phase is actively supported. The level of transparency and clarity on how SEKEM structurally serves its purpose, allows people to increasingly take responsibility for their respective roles and act intelligently as parts in the whole. To make the more implicit knowledge of SEKEM's employees and leaders explicit, the Integral Project Management approach was created, which builds on SEKEM's entire inter-institutional ecology. The success of up-scaling and replication is surely driven by the integration of and collaboration between the different entities under the larger SEKEM umbrella, in collaboration with Heliopolis University, which, in the long-run, will lead towards an embodiment of an Economy of Love serving the holistic vision of sustainable development in Egypt and beyond.

Figure 3 summarizes the entire 4C and CARE journey to provide a visual overview.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.sekem.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SEKEM-Vision-2057\\_20180615-3.pdf](https://www.sekem.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SEKEM-Vision-2057_20180615-3.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.glassfrog.com/>



**Figure 3:** Overview of the function and structure of SEKEM's approach to Integral Human, Organizational and Community Development

Source: Developed by the author based on: Schieffer and Lessem (2014a), Lessem (2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), and Lessem and Schieffer (2010a)

In the next 40 years, SEKEM has to concentrate on building the micro dimension of the Economy of Love. The IHD and IOD approaches presented in this work are an essential element to consciously energize SEKEM's Integral Enterprise capacity to drive societal transformation. The SEKEM Future Council is an essential part that needs to vitalize the existing inter-institutional ecology.

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