

Preface – A Guide to the Reader

This book is for everybody who shares a dream of moving from water professionalism to water stewardship. The book attempts to answer what that would mean and how that could come about and why it is important.

The content of this book is divided into ten chapters following the proportions of Fibonacci numbers, refound everywhere in nature. Overlaying the proportions on a shell as below illustrates how the book attempts to make a journey into the centre of the issue of water stewardship, taking steps forward and becoming briefer and more condensed on the way.

This means that Chapter 1 is the longest in this book and takes up a lot of space. It has been a difficult chapter to write, and it is also the most difficult chapter to read – my reviewers have told me. The chapter attempts to capture something that is ‘invisibly in plain view’. It describes a pervasive sense of ‘something is off’. Something that is so difficult to capture and describe because it is ingrained in the very way we think and interact with each other as well as the way we interact with the nature around us and within us. As in the movie *The Matrix*, it is like Neo’s sense of ‘something is wrong with this world’. It has taken time to decipher it, and it takes time pointing it out so that I understand it. And I hope this pointing out will resonate with something in you.

Chapter 2 provides a practical antidote to the first chapter’s difficulties. While one may wonder in the first chapter if these senses of worries lead anywhere, Chapter 2 explains how the emerging insights lead to practical changes in

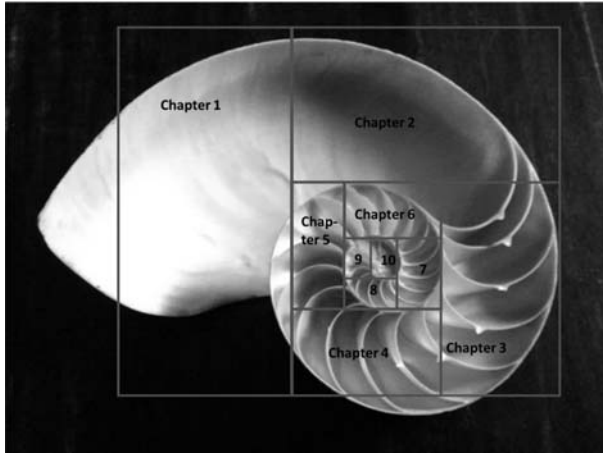


Figure 1 Illustration of the principle of Fibonacci numbers in nature (based on photo by Roan Lavery, Unsplash).

approach to the work with water, how it changes the way projects are led, and how water challenges are approached. It also explains how the practical work with water is a two-way street where the work informs the philosophical perspective and deepens understanding of the complexity of integration and a more respectful approach to water.

This developmental process is compared to the theoretical framework of spiral dynamics excavated in our changes of mindsets by Dr Clare W. Graves in Chapter 3; a model that explains how we have seen the world differently as we and our societies have developed through a human evolutionary process of thought and sense. His theory explains how we at this stage are standing in front of a major leap forward as we progress from first-tier stages to a new set of second-tier stages. A transition that makes sense in the struggle described in Chapters 1 and 2 to see the world of water differently. It becomes clear that the urge to change fundamentally is not a water urge but a global human urge to develop.

Looking back into the recent international development of concept like integrated water resource management (IWRM), the patterns identified by Graves in Chapter 3 are discernible in the development of our leading-edge understanding of how we must work with water. A number of approaches are described including the Sustainable Development Goals, the idea of water as a common good, water footprint, IWRM and the work by the Alliance for Water Stewardship in Chapter 4.

As it has become apparent that new models are required to think differently, to enable a kind of ‘thinking with the future’, such tools are presented in Chapter 5.

Models for collective collaboration as well as new models for personal practices are presented.

As we approach the latter chapters of the book, they become gradually shorter and shorter. Chapter 6 tries to elicit some blind spots and increases focus on the concept of blind spots; the ideas we take for granted and do not even identify as an entity in ourselves or our culture. As these invisible concepts appear in our thoughts as separate ideas rather than as part of our operating system, they open up new possibilities – and new worries. They open a space for possible change. I have seen only a few; please keep searching.

Chapter 7 describes an interesting example of a utopian vision, written a hundred years ago by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. She envisioned a sustainable society that was characterised by both development of human nature and the nature in which the society existed. A key feature was the focus on future generations, the beautiful upbringing of children being the core value. I like this vision because it does not have a sense of austerity or strong morality for succeeding, rather it has love in all dimensions; not ‘unicorn and rainbow’ love or romantic love, but real fundamental love as it can exist with gratitude, truth, compassion, intelligence and humbleness.

However, perhaps we can all work on and contribute to the sustainability vision. In Chapter 8, Donella Meadow in her potent speech ‘Down to earth’ teaches us important lessons about our innate abilities to visioning.

Chapters 9 and 10 are at the centre of the Fibonacci shell as illustrated above. Here, it is all wrapped up. I leave it to you to find out how it all ends.

A reviewer asked if this is a ‘self-help book for water professionals’. Perhaps it is kind of that. A book for reflecting on our role with water at this pivotal time in water history. Throughout the chapters I have included ‘questions for reflection’. These are meant as small breaks for reflection. I hope they can work as such. If they don’t work for you, skip them. The book contains a lot of literary quotes of authors who can express themselves much better than I. I hope these quotes will support the comprehension of the emotional fabric of the thinking.

In my work with this book Professor Gustaf Olsson and Mediator Tina Monberg have been my invaluable wise men and women. They have helped me merge the technical field with what I could call ‘the human aspirational field’. I hope it becomes apparent what I mean as you read through the book.

I hope this will all be of value to you.