A Warrior's Rest

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I hereby offer a preview of my book - A Warrior’s Rest - which I will be submitting for the award of Schumacher Society Research Fellow. I am making some last changes based on the reactions I have received after distributing 60 pre-publication copies to those who appear in the text and those who might be likely readers. I am actively looking for a publisher and hope to publish my work by October 2023.

A Warrior’s Rest is a nonfiction book. The scenes are real, the people portrayed in them are also real. Everyone in the book has consented to be named.

I would like to seize this occasion to thank my Research-in-Action peers and Patricia Shaw, Martin Daly and Luigi Russi for accompanying me as supervisors during this period.

In this preview I situate my work and I quote some of the reactions that marked me. In the videos I read out some passages and reflect on the work with Patricia whilst walking with through la foret du Campus de la Transition during our latest RinA gathering.
In answer to Patricia’s question:

I have intervened as a ‘transition expert’ in a large variety of social fields in the past twenty years. As I write in the prologue: “In the past I have woken up warriors. That was my job. I have encouraged and inspired them to act.” But now, I have taken time to explore and articulate what my professional practice is really about rather than what my clients, and often I myself, have said it was about. I just passed fifty, so it is a natural thing for me to do.

I have undertaken this writing endeavor to explore the process I call becoming a professional human, taking my own experience as an example. My inquiry starts with facing the disappointment of encountering the malfunctioning of systems, authorities, and institutions a designed and claiming to take care of the public good. I examined what I noticed, what I felt, and sensed, when I did not leap straight into being persuasively and energetically positive. With smaller steps, and moving carefully, a warrior can continue tirelessly.

I adopt a ‘phenomenological’ mode of inquiry. A word of clarification on what ‘phenomenological’ means, in relation to the way this book is written. I have, refrained from using societal change theories or organizational theories to frame my thoughts. To me, these professional rationalizations can alienate practitioners from the unruly reality they are immersed in, and serve to disconnect them from human sensing. I do not outsource the work of giving meaning to life onto frameworks or thought systems. Instead, I choose to engage in the slow exercise of relying on my own capacity to observe and to be radically honest about my responses: in my book I take care to go over the thoughts that visit me and try to put words to what I actually feel. There might be nothing new to my stories. Perhaps everything has already been described in more depth, with more precise wordings, somewhere else, by someone else. I offer as my original contribution, the aliveness with which I have sought to track and communicate my exploration. Pre-readers say the writing draws them in, it has
traction, it gives them a subtle hint of what is there to sense, without getting lost when it is not immediately framed conceptually.

-a human question-

In my work, I revisit several professional interventions undertaken within organizations and institutions serving the public good. My core activity falls in the realm of organizing trust. Knowing you can never really trust completely, I find ways to organize sufficient trust for people to work together when the way is uncertain and difficult. Trust to be prepared to see and feel what does and doesn’t work in the practice of an organization, and trust to explore new possible ways together.

I wrote this book with my peers in mind. Professionals outsiders, just like me, who bring something different into institutions such as the UN, national government, local government, public and semi-public organizations and NGOs. English is not my native language. With short sentences and simple words I try to bring scenes to life. My observations and reflections illuminate ‘how it is’ to take the lead and explore with others what could be possible and worthwhile to happen next.

The book might also be of value for professionals operating within these organizations. Bounded by their formal functions, following the logic of their organization, they might not feel the same freedom to sense and explore, the way outsiders do. Whilst reading the book, these professionals might feel encouraged to engage in their own monologue without disciplining themselves to be professionally positive whilst making sense of their professional practice.

The book starts intimately, in the boredom of my winter holidays in the Czech republic -All Inclusive-. It ends privately, with my close brush with death on my sailing boat -Finding Grace-. My stories are actual, lived-through experiences. You do not have to be familiar with any of the societal fields covered in this book (dental
care and biodiversity - *Getting In* - youth care  *Preparation* - animal testing in biomedical research - *Exploring dead ends* - local politics  - *Handling the knife* - as the writing invites you to get in and find your own way… that is, if you find the time and the mind to read actively. All these scenes provide a focus for the work of articulating what I sense and think, which I lay out in the open in these pages.

This book also benefited from a pre-release with selected readers, to gather feedback from people named in the book and a variety of different possible audiences. This is what some of these pre-readers had to say.

‘ *Usually when I come across concepts in a book I am taken out. I have to stop reading and think it through. I didn’t come across any concepts.* ’ - transition expert (pre reader)

‘ *Sometimes I can feel your ego popping up. That bothers me. I might be sensitive to this, I work with big ego’s.* ’ - Swimming neighbor (Handling the knife)

‘ *Just as it did not suit Shell, it will also not be the case with aldermen, political parties and management positions. Do what you do best: in creating an atmosphere of trust.* ’ - father (pre reader)

‘ *The world is rather dark and unfair, and we try to find our way in it. Actually by the time we have gotten sufficient life experience to be a good professional, we die.* ’ - Kathelijne (Exploring dead ends)

‘ *When I read your book I hear a different voice* ’ - Friend (pre reader)  - ‘ *I know this voice, it was always there* ’ - Another friend (pre reader)

‘ *Nice this getting in, getting out and being in tune. And I can feel the presence of a wild animal. It is invisible but it’s there.* ’ - RinA researcher (pre reader)