Sustainable development:

What does it really mean?

- Christine Byrch
Kate Kearins
Markus J. Milne
Richard K. Morgan

Christine Byrch

Kate Kearins

Markus J. Milne

Richard K. Morgan

Sustainable Development:
What does it really mean?

Sustainable development means very different things to different people. But the diverse definitions and understandings of the term among the business community and business sustainability advisors may surprise even the most seasoned of sustainability advocates. This diversity of understanding does bring with it some dangers. As sustainable development rapidly goes mainstream in New Zealand, promoters of the concept to business should be concerned that it does not become so variously and loosely defined and 'practised' as to be meaningless. That said, a greater knowledge of sustainable development, and its many perspectives, will strengthen the sustainable development movement, protecting it, for example, from the fraudulent claims of businesses that purport to practice sustainable development, while in fact pursuing unsustainable practices.

Since the Brundtland Commission launched a popularised notion of sustainable development in 1987, the concept has attracted huge worldwide attention from all facets of society. New Zealand is no exception. New Zealand businesses have given considerable attention to sustainable development, as has government at both central and local levels. There is little doubt that sustainable development involves business working with other sectors of society to identify and progress toward sustainable futures.[1] Such a role was noted early by the then CEO of DuPont, Edgar Woolard, when he suggested: "Industry will have the primary role in making (sustainable development) work. We are the experts at development".[2] And, overall, the business response to the notion of sustainable development appears remarkably positive. Within New Zealand, we have business networks and associations, such as the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development (NZBCSD), The Natural Step (TNS), and the Sustainable Business Network (SBN), together with an "industry" of advisors, that have arisen over the last few years to assist business to move toward sustainable development.

Yet despite the role of business in the quest for sustainable development, and the burgeoning activity in its name, business is largely left to define sustainable development as it likes. Society gives business little firm guidance, for example in the form of legislation or regulation, as to what sustainable development is and how it should be achieved.[3] So while we might all agree with former Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon Helen Clark, when she states: "Business has a big contribution to make to improving New Zealand's overall sustainability performance", it is far from clear what this contribution entails.[4]

So how do the business community and their sustainability advisors view the term sustainable development and how did they reach their conclusions? The answer is important. Business — and especially large organisations — are among the most powerful forces in the modern world.[5] They are instrumental in determining what is achieved in the name of sustainable development. How sustainable development is understood reflects which problems are recognized, how problems are constructed, and how responses are conceived and enacted. The decisions and directions business takes in pursuing sustainable development have implications for all of society. For example, the NZBCSD has over 70 members (up from 20 in 1999) representing $44 billion of sales, and over a third of New Zealand's GDP. With members like Fonterra, Telecom, Vodafone, and The Warehouse, its claim to be able to reach every New Zealander through sales and service seems no idle boast.

Realising how influential business is in the pursuit of sustainable development, leads us to ask of those in the sustainable business arena: firstly, what does sustainable development mean to you? And secondly, where did you learn this meaning? In our research we adopted a multi-method design, combining questionnaire, cognitive mapping, semi-structured questioning, and Q Methodology. These methods were applied in individual face-to-face interviews between each of our 44 participants and the lead researcher, conducted over several months. Our purpose was

Christine Byrch is a recent doctoral graduate of the Geography Department, University of Otago.

Kate Kearins is a Professor of Management in the Faculty of Business at Auckland University of Technology.

Markus J. Milne is a Professor of Accounting and Information Systems, within the College of Business and Economics, University of Canterbury.

Richard Morgan is Professor of Geography, University of Otago.

THE UNIVERSITY
OF AUCKLAND
BUSINESS SCHOOL

to explore what people incorporating principles of sustainable development within the business arena think the term means. It was to those people prominent in and leading this movement in New Zealand that our enquiry was directed. The research methods are described in more detail at the end of this article.

Our findings

With regard to the question, "What does sustainable development mean to you?" perhaps the most pertinent finding is that each individual holds a unique understanding of sustainable development. Using Q Methodology, we were able to characterise five typical understandings of sustainable development that illustrate the most significant differences. We also highlight two further salient points: (1) each individual's understanding of sustainable development is both subjective and normative in that it describes how things should be and not how they necessarily are; (2) each individual's understanding of sustainable development prioritises certain dimensions and recognises particular problems.

With regard to the findings arising from the question "where did you learn your meaning of sustainable development?", we highlight three points: (1) no one entity is defining sustainable development for business; (2) many participants knew the concept before learning its name; (3) understanding of sustainable development arises from "life in general".

The meaning of sustainable development

Five typical views of sustainable development

Although each participant held his/her own unique view of sustainable development, similarities among individual views allowed us to describe commonly held or typical views. The titles chosen for the five typical views, revealed through Q Methodology and described below, are the Societalist, Realist, Ecologist, Futurist, and Individualist views. The Societalist view was most commonly held (18 participants). Next most commonly held were the Realist and Ecologist views. Least commonly held were the Futurist view (six participants) and the Individualist view (four participants).

Five typical views of sustainable development

Societalist — The essence of this view is of human society, operating within nature, in a fair and just manner. Humanity is not considered to be better or above other species, and certainly does not hold a special place in nature. Not accepting this understanding is seen to be the cause of many problems. The emphasis is on actions and solutions rather than debating the situation, representing a pragmatic rather than a philosophical way of thinking.

Realist — The distinguishing feature of this view of sustainable development is its grounding in the real world and the present. A "big picture" view of the world and its environmental problems considers how these could be remedied. There is a strong focus on issues and tangible solutions, and a firm belief that humanity can find solutions

if it tries. Continuous change and new solutions are seen as needed to respond to the issues and situations as they arise.

Ecologist — In this view, sustainable development is about maintaining a good quality of life for humanity by developing societal structures that recognise that humans are just one species living within and dependent on the environment. The focus is on preparing for a better future by recognising humanity's dependence on nature.

Futurist — This view of sustainable development is distinguished by a very long-term perspective that is almost evolutionary in its timescale. Humanity is seen as dependent on nature, and humans as just one species that may or may not survive into the distant future. The past will provide some guidance for the change required to establish a future, although there is seen to be no blueprint for today's situation.

Individualist - This view sees sustainable development as having to do with people and their wellbeing. There is little regard for the environment beyond being a resource to achieve quality of life. There is acceptance that some people will do better than others, and that humanity has the right to use the environment to achieve a better quality of life.

Although there are similarities between these typical views, there are fundamental differences. The issues, from most to least contentious, concerned:

- The worth of our economic system;
- The value of traditional knowledge;
- The value of science and technology;
- And consumerism.

Participants held opposing opinions on each of these four issues. The Ecologist and Futurist views strongly refuted the need for economic growth whereas the Individualist and Realist views, held predominantly by business-people, strongly supported it. Only the Societalist view saw value in indigenous knowledge. Only the Individualist view considered consumerism not to be a problem, and held great faith in science and technology to rectify environmental crises.

Understanding is subjective and normative

In describing their unique understanding of sustainable development, participants each described how they consider things should be and not how things are; they described a vision for the future. Understanding of sustainable development, then, was both normative and subjective. And perhaps it can be nothing else because, as Dryzek points out, "sustainable development is not proven or demonstrated, but, rather, asserted." And certainly:

> That sustainability is a normative concept should be obvious. It embodies a particular moral attitude to the future, expressing how much we care for and are willing to make sacrifices for our descendants and how, and to what degree, non-humans figure in this process.[7]

The "normative dimension" is typical of definitions of sustainable development, and is demonstrated by authors who choose a meaning of sustainable development that suits their point of view, and write from their own perspective, and from

their own nationality.[8] Similarly, the various criticisms of sustainable development and the debate as to its meaning, arise from differing visions of how the future should be.

For example, consider the points of view of prominent New Zealand commentators on sustainable development. Dr. Morgan Williams, the former Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, considers that sustainable development means living within ecological limits and fundamentally redesigning how we live.[9] Roger Kerr, Chief Executive of one of the nation's most influential business lobby groups, the New Zealand Business Roundtable, on the other hand, equates the goal of sustainable development with the goal of economics, which is "to maximise the value to society of the use of scarce resources".[10] And our government has adopted an abridged form of the Brundtland definition that: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[11]

Prioritised dimensions and problems

The typology of five typical views of sustainable development revealed that sustainable development is a complex concept combining several dimensions. A key but unsurprising insight is that not all dimensions are relevant to each view, and that the dimensions that are relevant to a particular point of view hold various priorities. And perhaps this should be expected if the five typical views represent visions of the future, encompassing what is considered to be most important in life. For example, environmental and social goals were awarded priority over economic goals in the Societalist, Ecologist, and Futurist views, whereas economic goals were given priority in the Individualist and Realist views. It seems very unlikely that an individual would adopt all three dimensions simultaneously and with equal importance. This is an interesting supposition given that sustainable development is often interpreted in a business context as a triple bottom line of environmental, social, and economic concerns, suggesting equal priority is given to each domain. This study suggests this equal weighting within individual schemas (let alone when it comes to enactment) is not the case.

Similarly, each of the five typical views reflected different problems. It seems that how sustainable development is interpreted does influence which problems are recognized and acted on (see Table 1). For example, for those participants who considered nature as a resource for humanity (typified by the Individualist view), the problem was one of how to continue to provide resources for people to use. For others, such as those expressing the Realist and Futurist views, the problem was in providing an environment for humanity's survival.

Where meaning is learnt

Who is defining sustainable development for New Zealand business

Participants were asked who they considered was defining sustainable development for business in New Zealand: who has the loudest voice? The clearest aspect of the response was that no one individual or organisation was looked to for definition.

About one quarter of participants thought that no one in particular was defining exactly what sustainable development meant. They saw both business-people and those promoting sustainable development to business as attempting to provide definitions: "We are all trying to work it out for ourselves, what exactly it might mean". Another quarter of participants thought that the organisations promoting sustainable development to business were defining the term, with variable success, and each with its own interpretation of what comprised a sustainable business. A further quarter of participants thought that it was down to individual businesses to define sustainable development for themselves. Indeed, some went so far as to suggest that there were already sustainable businesses in the country. Yet others were adamant that currently there were no sustainable businesses in New Zealand. Participants also suggested a hodge-podge of business organisations, government agencies, and individuals were defining sustainable business in New Zealand. Somewhat cynically, two participants expressed the view that it was mainstream business that was defining sustainable business in New Zealand, and that it was the large and powerful mainstream business lobbies like the Business Roundtable and Federated Farmers, that had the loudest voice.[12]

The lack of one clear vision, for some, was of concern as it created confusion, while some accepted the lack of definition as a necessary step in the transition to sustainable development. For others it indicated a lack of understanding: "If it's multiple answers with sustainable development then it clearly is something you don't understand or we can't define well enough to make it a realistic option." Many participants expressed concern or frustration that a lack of definition allowed what they regarded as fraudulent claims by businesses purporting to be practising sustainable development.

Table 1. The proper relationship of humanity and nature and actions required by the five typical views of sustainable development

Typical View	Proper Relationship of Humanity and Nature	Actions
Socialist	Humanity is just one part of, and completely dependent on nature	Take responsibility for and care for the planet and its health
Ecologist	Humans are just one species living within and dependent on the environment	Realise humanity's place within the greater universe
Realist	Humanity is totally dependent on nature, and has a responsibility to manage nature	Take responsibility for remedying environmental problems
Futurist	Humanity is totally dependent on nature	Take long term responsibility for the wellbeing of the planet to ensure survival of humanity
Individualist	Nature is a resource to achieve quality of life for humanity	Maintain supply of resources

Learning meaning before learning the term

We asked participants when they first came across the idea of sustainable development and there appears to be a fascinating distinction between learning the term and learning its meaning. By far the majority of participants were introduced to the concept of sustainable development "at work", most commonly by an organisation promoting sustainable development to business. But despite being introduced to the term in a formal work context, most participants added that their understanding of sustainable development was derived from a personal context.

A little over half of all respondents volunteered that being introduced to the term sustainable development simply provided a name for a concept that they already subscribed to, or were aware of. This is surprising given the term sustainable development did not exist in many of the participants' childhoods. For some, it was a concept that they had been brought up with and so had always been conscious of and believed in. For others it was to do with values and how they viewed the world, or something familiar that they felt an immediate affinity with, although they could not have articulated it previously. Many participants expressed the view that this innate knowledge was common to most if not all humans, whether they knew it or not. Others considered it to be a core New Zealand value, although according to two participants, New Zealanders were becoming urbanised and losing this knowledge.

Learning from life experience

When asked what they thought had influenced their personal understanding of the meaning of sustainable development, participants suggested a variety of responses. Many participants reported actively sourcing information specific to sustainable development in the course of their work, attending conferences, and from various written media. Reading academic work rarely featured in these accounts. On further enquiry, it became apparent that on the whole this "specific learning" was not influencing participants' meaning of sustainable development. Rather, it was either reinforcing existing conceptions, or yielding information on particular issues such as climate change and, in particular, how to implement the principle of sustainable development. Formal education that was not specifically to do with sustainable development was also cited as influencing the way people thought and understood the concept. Participants cited a disparate range of pertinent disciplines including social science studies, geology, forestry, horticulture, philosophy, and resource management as influencing their understanding.

By far the greatest influence on understanding of sustainable development was what we have termed "life experience". This was epitomised by one participant's statement, that "everything" had influenced his understanding of sustainable development. Life experience encompassed upbringing and, in particular, the influence of parents, and travel which allowed participants to build an understanding of how they would like New Zealand to develop. Perhaps most influential were people who participants met and mixed with daily. And indeed networking, particularly with like-minded people, was considered to be "absolutely critical" to a growing understanding of sustainable development. Participants found like-minded people not only among sustainable business organisations, but also among their colleagues and workmates, friends, and during tours and conferences.

Interestingly, the Brundtland definition of sustainable development was not described by participants in this study, regardless that it is the most commonly used definition in New Zealand.[13] Nor was New Zealand's environmental legislation, despite the concept of sustainable management being the cornerstone of the Resource Management Act 1991. There is clearly a difference in regard to the conceptions of sustainable development that get put down on paper, whether in academic texts, business reports, or formal government documents, and those conceptions that people hold in their minds. A further point to note is that while participants suggest sustainable business programmes often introduced the idea of sustainable development, they did not have a major influence on the term's meaning. For many participants, the value of organisations promoting sustainable business was that they provided a network of like-minded individuals for sharing ideas.

Implications for the New Zealand context

It is to be expected that people implementing sustainable development within New Zealand business will hold many ideas as to what the term means. After all, different points of view are rife within the literature of sustainable development, and some would say that the contested nature of the concept guarantees plural understanding.[14] But perhaps, as it is with the environmental movement, this diversity of thought is an "Achilles heel". Such diversity allows the notion of sustainable development to host a huge range of ideologically-laden and even contradictory ideals. As sustainable development rapidly goes mainstream in New Zealand business, promoters of sustainable business should be very worried that the concept does not become so variously and loosely defined and "practised" as to be meaningless.[15]

Should we assume, for example, as former Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark once suggested, that any steps in the name of sustainable development are worthwhile? Clearly not, given the concerns expressed in this study by members of the NZBCSD itself, about the sincerity of some business behaviour. And what should we make of the recent claim by the CFO of Coca-Cola Amatil New Zealand, Craig Richardson, that: "Sustainability isn't anything new for us…it's a term that pools together a number of activities we've been practising for the last 100 years"?[16] The widespread knowledge that sustainable business is not offering anything new, and that it is has been practised over the last 100 years would surely kill off any distinction (as well as any niche advantage) between those pursuing genuine efforts to change and those simply greenwashing unsustainable products and practices.[17] Nothing could undermine the sustainable business movement more effectively than loose talk that suggests sustainable development can be whatever one wants it to be, or even just business-as-usual, which will not promote change at all.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of the diversity of opinion is the difficulties it may cause with communication. If we could imagine all participants attending the same conference on sustainable development, it is likely that they would be talking past each other; they do not value the same things and do not appear to see the same world.[18] Furthermore, if social movements have a role in directing social change, then such diversity of views may

be an impediment to change.[19] Creating 'social change' requires organised collective action; social movements are successful when people oppose one another on the details, but take the overall goals as given.[20] But the five typical views described in this study have differing priorities, and it is entirely plausible that policies based on each view would produce a different world. This very diversity may be one reason that precludes collaborative action by the various organisations promoting sustainable development to business in New Zealand. Reconciliation seems unlikely, as does collective movement against the power and dominance of our existing business models.

And so we claim that the disparate nature of the understandings of sustainable development within the business arena does not bode well for change. However, we acknowledge that agreement on any one definition of sustainable development is far from easy given the many and various political values and interests of those in the sustainability debate, and do not advocate what is not realistic. Agreement on one definition seems as unlikely as agreement between Kerr, Williams, and the government of the day. Rather, we agree with Jamison's assertion that it is important to elucidate and understand the various points of view if sustainable development is to have any worth.[21]

In this vein, our focus here has been to report the different understandings that emerged from our participants. We believe that it is important for those working to implement sustainable development within the business sector to be aware of and understand the variety of points of view in play — especially from the "sustainable business" leaders and influencers we interviewed in this study. Participants' comments showed that they do distinguish differences in understanding, but to a very limited extent. For example, there was evidence that participants were aware of differences between: pragmatic and philosophical points of view; the emotion and religion of sustainable development; and the "greenie" and the realist points of view. However, there appears to be little evidence that they have given serious thought to or critiqued these various points of view in any depth. Springett draws a parallel conclusion in her earlier study of the meaning of sustainable development held by New Zealand business-people.[22] She reports that unfortunately there is a "general dearth in New Zealand of discourse about sustainable development that includes business or the general public."[23] What discussion there is, is driven by members of government departments and a few elite business groups, but excludes some key business organisations. [24]

It may well be that there is a role for advisors to encourage discourse that critiques the various points of view and that informs business-people of the key principles and history of the concept of sustainable development. However, broadening and popularizing debate over business and sustainable development, we suspect, may not be welcomed by all advisors. The NZBCSD, for example, makes a great deal out of the "business case" for sustainable development, pragmatism and getting on with it, and reportedly "bemoans the 'distraction' of elevating the debate to an ideological level".[25] But broadening and promoting wider debate over the meaning of sustainable development within a business context, we suggest, is actually in the interests of those genuinely committed to enhancing business for a sustainable future. Not only would it permit an airing of the sorts of visions for sustainable development that emerged as part of this study,

it would also help more carefully delineate what constitutes sustainable development for business, as opposed to a case for so-called "enlightened business".

We believe that academic researchers have a role to play in contributing to advisors' knowledge of sustainable development. They can offer deeper understandings of the histories and contradictions of sustainable development, and offer different and alternative perspectives of their own. They can also help illuminate claims and practices carried on in the name of sustainable development, that when framed from alternative perspectives, appear questionable as being sustainable.

In summary

Although this study is confined to a relatively narrow sample of people working in and with business, and having express commitments to sustainable development, arguably they are among those most influential in defining and achieving sustainable business in New Zealand. Their views matter. However, it is difficult to know where they will lead us — and possible that their diversity of opinion may lead us nowhere. It is unlikely that any individual is going to suddenly and miraculously appear with a practical and operational definition of sustainable development for business to implement. On the contrary, according to our participants, meanings of sustainable development are derived from the very diverse source of "life in general" of which, of course, everybody's differs. That said, what is also clear from our findings is that the most influential sources of knowledge of sustainable development are the milieu of everyday contacts and interchanges within circles and networks of like-minded (business) people. The obvious paradox here is that while understanding of sustainable development among our business participants is subjective and normative, these personal understandings rarely appear to surface among discussion and representations of business and sustainable development. Instead, and perhaps reflecting the constraining context of influence from like-minded group members, a "business-case" for sustainable development appears to become the pervasive mantra.

We suggest a greater knowledge of sustainable development, and its many perspectives, will strengthen the sustainable development movement, protecting it, for example, from the fraudulent claims of businesses that purport to practise sustainable development, while in fact pursuing unsustainable practices. There are clearly roles for both advisors to business and for academics to facilitate extended understandings of business for sustainable development. Advisors should, and sometimes do, encourage debate and discussion among their members and beyond as to the "proper" future for humanity and the role of business in achieving it. Such debate would encourage participants to discuss the concept beyond their circles of like-minded people, and to engage with the wider community within which business operates. In this way, society and the environment could ultimately benefit, and the pool of innovative ideas would likely be enhanced.

What now? We suggest that we should be thinking sustainable development for business, rather than business for sustainable development. This framing might provide the basis on which to give voice to the perspectives and visions detailed in this

The research

We adopted a multi-method design, combining questionnaire, cognitive mapping, semi-structured questioning, and Q Methodology. These methods were applied in the context of two rounds of individual face-to-face interviews between participants and the lead researcher.

Our main method, Q Methodology, identifies ideal-type points of view on a particular topic from an analysis of the order in which participants individually sort a sample of stimuli. In this case, the stimuli were opinion statements. The fundamental assumption of Q Methodology is that while points of view are held subjectively by each individual participant, similarities among individual views make it possible to articulate a small number of ideal-type points of view on a topic. The computer programme PQMethod (version 2.11) was used for the analysis of the forty-four sorting patterns gathered in this study. This programme performs correlation, and then factor analysis and factor rotation.

In the first round of interviews, using semi-structured questioning and cognitive mapping techniques, opinion statements regarding sustainable development were gathered from 21 participants comprising 10 advisors and 11 business-people. Interviews were structured so that matters were explored in some depth, and questions were purposefully broad to capture the range of views held by participants. Cognitive mapping refers to a wide variety of methods for deriving and analysing the structure and content of an individual's knowledge on a given topic, in this instance sustainable development. Particular attention was paid to ensuring participants spoke freely and that the "conversation" was not limited to the researchers' own understandings. Several participants commented that the interview required them to think more deeply about sustainable development than they had previously.

Then, using a typology defined by four themes (sustainable development, humanity and nature, industrial society, and human nature) the most similar statements were eliminated until the 36 most unlike statements remained.

In the second round of interviews, 44 participants (including the original 21 participants) sorted the 36 statements according to how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Then, using Q Methodology, we derived five typical views of sustainable development from the 44 unique 'sortings'. Finally, all participants were questioned as to the source of their understanding of sustainable development.

In selecting participants, we looked to those people who are applying the principles of sustainable development within business; both business-people and the advisors assisting in this endeavour. We approached those people we considered to be leading the uptake of sustainable development by business in New Zealand, and who therefore have an influential role in defining sustainable development and influencing the direction other businesses will take in this regard.

We chose business-people hailed as examples of good practice, and advisors from New Zealand's six most prominent organisations promoting sustainable development to business. Thirty business-people were selected from those who had made a public commitment to sustainable development (for example on websites, through public reporting, and in the news media) or who were participating in a sustainable business programme. Preference was given to those promoted as exemplars through case studies of good practice or as award winners. A range of industry types and business sizes were represented. Fourteen senior advisors were chosen from established organisations actively working with business to implement sustainable development initiatives, rather than environmental management. The organisations represented were BusinessCare, Green Globe, The Natural Step Aotearoa New Zealand, the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development, Redesigning Resources, the Sustainable Business Network, and the Sustainable Industries Group of the Ministry for the Environment.

The first contact with potential participants was by telephone. The project was described, the reason for their involvement explained, and their participation requested. All those contacted were interested in the results of the study, and almost all were keen to participate. Those that were not were generally not available to be interviewed, or did not consider themselves to be "the right person for the job", or their organisation to be in the "target group".

Acknowledgement

References

1. Roome, N. (1998). Conclusion: implications for management practice, education, and research. In N. Roome (Ed.), *Sustainability Strategies for Industry. The Future of Corporate Practice* (pp. 259-276). Washington DC: Island Press. p 275.

2. Quoted in Greenpeace (1992). *The Greenpeace Book of Greenwash* released at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro - (see also Greer, J., & Bruno, K., (1996) *Greenwash: The Reality Behind Corporate Environmentalism.* New York: Apex Press. p 1.

3. The New Zealand government has produced numerous reports that attempt to define sustainable development, the most prominent being Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, (2003). *Sustainable Development for New Zealand. Programme of Action.* Wellington: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. However, on the whole these are short on specifics and long on ideals.

4. Clark, H. (2007, 13 February). Prime Minister's Statement to Parliament. Retrieved 30 June, 2008, from http://www.beehive.govt.nz.

5. Diamond, J. (2005). *Collapse. How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive.* London: Penguin.

6. Dryzek, J. (1997). *The Politics of the Earth. Environmental Discourses.* New York: Oxford University Press. p 123.

7. Barry, J. (1996). *Green politics, democracy and political judgement: connecting green politics and democracy.* In B. Doherty & M. de Geus (Eds.), *Democracy and Green Political Thought* (pp. 115-132). London: Routledge. pp 118-119.

8. See, for example, Aguirre, B. E. (2002). "Sustainable Development" as collective surge. *Social Science Quarterly,* 83(1), 101-118. and Faucheux, S., Pearce, D., & Proops, J. (1996). Introduction. In S. Faucheux, D. Pearce & J. L. R. Proops (Eds.), *Models of Sustainable Development* (pp. 1-20). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

9. PCE. (2007). About the PCE. Retrieved 22 May, 2007, from http://www.pce.govt.nz.

10. Kerr, R. (2002). *Making sense of sustainable development.* Paper presented at the Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce and Industry Annual General Meeting, Hutt Valley. p 3.

11. See, for example, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, (2003). *Sustainable Development for New Zealand. Programme of Action.* Wellington: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. p 13.

12. Springett suggests that the New Zealand Business Roundtable is one of several groups constructing themselves as leaders of opposition to sustainable development. See Springett, D. (2003). An 'incitement to discourse': benchmarking as a springboard to sustainable development. *Business Strategy and the Environment,* 12, 1-11.

13. Tregidga, H. (2002). *The Shared Meaning of Sustainability within the New Zealand Business Context and Its Implications. A Delphi Study.* Unpublished Master of Business Management, University of Otago, Dunedin. Where the term sustainable development is used with reference to the Brundtland Commission, it refers to a specific interpretation of sustainable development as articulated by the Commission in its report Our Common Future, (see WCED. (1987). *Our Common Future.* Oxford: OUP.) and clarified by Dryzek, J. (1997). *The Politics of the Earth. Environmental Discourses.* New York: Oxford University Press.

14. See, for example, Dobson, A. (1998). *Justice and Environment. Conceptions of Environmental Sustainability and Theories of Distributive Justice.* Oxford: OUP; and Jacobs, M. (1999). Sustainable development as a contested concept. In A. Dobson (Ed.), *Fairness and Futurity. Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice* (pp. 21-45). Oxford: OUP.

15. Swift, G. (2008). SDR becoming mainstream. *New Zealand Chartered Accountants Journal*, 87(9), 4.

16. CPA Australia. (2008). Canny operator. *IntheBlack,* 78(9), 23-24.

17. Futerra. (2008). The Greenwash Guide [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 29 October 2008, from www.futerra.co.uk

18. See Cotgrove, S. F. (1982). *Catastrophe or Cornucopia. The Environment, Politics, and the Future.* Chichester: Wiley. and Stern, P., Dietz, T., & Kalof, L. (1993). Value orientations, gender, and environmental concern. *Environment and Behavior,* 25(3), 322-348.

19. See, for example, den Hond, F., & de Bakker, F. G. A. (2007). Ideologically motivated activism: how activist groups influence corporate social change activities. Academy of *Management Review,* 32(3), 901-924. and Touraine, A. (1981). *The Voice and the Eye. An Analysis of Social Movements.* Cambridge: CUP.

20. Burns, T. J., & LeMoyne, T. (2001). How environmental movements can be more effective: prioritizing environmental themes in political discourse. *Research in Human Ecology,* 8(1), 26-38.

21. Jamison, A. (2001). The Making of Green Knowledge. *Environmental Politics and Cultural Transformation.* New York: CUP.

22. Springett, D. (2003). Business conceptions of sustainable development: a perspective from critical theory. *Business Strategy and the Environment,* 12, 71-86.

23. Springett, D. (2003). *See endnote 22.* p 75.

24. We acknowledge that since 2003, and particularly during 2007, the New Zealand Government has talked at length about sustainable development, and that the situation may now be different to that reported by Springett.

25. Springett, D. (2003). *An 'incitement to discourse': benchmarking as a springboard to sustainable development. Business Strategy and the Environment, 12,* 1-11. p9. Emphasis in original.

26. Hart, S., & Sharma, S. (2004). Engaging fringe stakeholders for competitive imagination. *Academy of Management Executive,* 18(1), 7-18.

27. Webler, T., Tuler, S., Shockey, I., Stern, P., & Beattie, R. (2003). Participation by local government officials in watershed management planning. *Society and Natural Resources*, 16, 105-121.