

**Corporations and Deliberative Democracy: Finding Common Ground for “Our
Common Future”.**

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Abstract

Since corporations are major players in the global political economy, their engagement with sustainability is critical. Some observers go so far as to maintain that business must bear the main burden of responsibility for ensuring that development takes a more sustainable trajectory. Within the business sector, the concept of sustainability is often interpreted in a way that entrenches corporation's position of power within the global political economy and at the forefront of sustainable development. However, since sustainability is specifically concerned with diversity and equity and deals with complex value conflicts, it is imperative that effective communication between a diverse range of people takes place.

In this paper I briefly examine the processes of understanding of sustainability illustrated through language use and shifts from rhetoric to reality in a business context. I then explain how community engagement/deliberative democracy techniques can reframe the terms of the discourse so that companies can become more sustaining. I show how these techniques enable discursive plurality and can help to deal with value conflicts associated with sustainability. I outline the need for 'engagement' or 'dialogue' as opposed to forms of 'consultation' or 'discussion' that too frequently characterise business/stakeholder interactions. I explore the potential for deliberative democracy to facilitate a strong expression of environmental and social values. I argue that deliberative democracy's ability to find common ground is a must for a global population seeking 'Our Common Future'.

Corporations and Deliberative Democracy: Finding Common Ground for Our Common Future.

Introduction

Sustainability is an evolving and contested concept (Davison, 2001). Since business organizations such as multinational corporations are major players in the global political economy, it is essential that their role in influencing the discourse of sustainability and bringing about positive change is considered. This paper examines changing understandings of sustainability in a business context, as revealed by the language used to access it and by shifts from rhetoric to action that may occur. The paper then discusses the potential for community engagement/deliberative democracy techniques, as opposed to forms of 'consultation' or 'discussion', to reframe the terms of the discourse for the benefit of all. The potential for the discursive plurality provided by genuine, democratic engagement to deal with value conflicts and to provide room for expression of environmental and social values is considered.

Language and power in the discourse of sustainability

The way we talk colors the way we think, and the way we think shapes the way we act. We are the unconscious prisoners of our language. While most of the time this constraint matters little, at times of momentous change in culture or society, our use of old words to describe new things can hide the emerging future from our eyes.

(Charles Handy, 1997a, 26.)

The discourse of sustainability both constructs and is constructed by social praxis, existing institutions and power structures and the language used in the process of exploration of its themes. The use of language within this discourse is significant since language is thought to be inevitably related to power structures. In fact, theorists such as Pocock (1989) understand language as power. This view is based on the Whorfian hypothesis that language affects perception (Whorf, 1956). This notion has recently been supported by scientific evidence which shows language influences perception particularly on the left side of the brain - the side that is responsible for language (Gilbert et al., 2006)¹.

¹ The theoretical relationship between language and thought has been contested. Whorf and Sapir offered a theory of linguistic relativity (Whorf, 1956, cited in Vaughan and Hogg, 2002, 423) which has been presented in two forms - strong and weak. The strong version holds that thought is completely determined by language while the weak form suggests that language can constrain or influence thought so that some ideas come more easily to mind than others (Vaughan and Hogg, 423). Scientists from the University of California, Berkeley, suggest the relationship between language and perception is complex, but involves the sort of relationship Whorf described (World Science, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2006). They studied colour perception in order to investigate the implication arising from the Whorfian hypothesis that English speakers would see

The conceptual, or cognitive, approach to semantics² revolves around the notion that 'meanings of linguistic expressions are *mental entities* - meanings are elements of the cognitive structure in the heads of the language users. Language itself is seen as being 'part of the cognitive structure and not an entity with independent standing' (Gärdenfors, 2004, 154).

Several theorists have noted the significance of language in perpetuating power relations within sustainability (Beder, 1996; Livesey, 2001; Springett, 2003a; Sachs, 1999). Wolfgang Sachs, for instance, notes that 'Different actors produce different types of knowledge, they highlight certain issues and underplay others. How attention is focused, what implicit assumptions are cultivated, which hopes are entertained, and what agents are privileged, depends on the way the debate on sustainability is framed' (1999, 29).

Delyse Springett, who bases her research on business and the discourse of sustainability in 'the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School and in Foucauldian Theory', 'explores the genealogy of the discourse of development, the manifold and contested perspectives that characterize its dialectics' (2003a, 2). She notes that

self-appointed élites are attempting to dominate the discourse...just as the North has taken charge of the discourse in the global debate...and...the ensuing hegemony that brings about accommodation to the dominant interests of corporates, government, business organizations and intellectual élites (2003a, 2).

The WBCSD, created with a mandate to consider 'the business case' for sustainability (WBCSD, 2001a, 2001b, 2002c), sensibly offers sustainability strategies as essential to business success, while considering industry's potential contribution towards sustainability. While promoting the business case, the WBCSD notes that there other legitimate moral, ethical, religious and environmental imperatives driving the political discourse of sustainability. However, for those who maintain that business organisations must bear the main burden of responsibility for ensuring that development takes a more sustainable trajectory, the business case takes centre stage in the discourse (Dunphy et al., 2003; Holliday et al., 2002; Hart, 1997).

greater difference between blue and green than non-English speakers, since English is one of the few languages to distinguish between the two colours (World Science, 2006, 1). The researchers further suspected that 'if language affects perception, it should do so more in the right visual field than in the left visual field' - i.e. the side governed by the left side of the brain (Gilbert et al., 2006, 489). They concluded that 'people view the right (but not the left) half of their visual world through the lens of their native language' and that this 'pattern was disrupted when participants performed a secondary task that engaged verbal working memory but not a task making comparable demands on spatial working memory (Gilbert et al., 2006, 489).

² Gärdenfors defines semantics as concerning 'the relation between the words or expressions of a language and their meanings' (2004, 151).

Business is recognized as playing an important role in pushing the sustainability cause. In a recent Globescan survey, a group of 'sustainability experts' from the government, business, voluntary, academic and service sectors identified The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) in 2003 and 2004 as the 'number one source of information on sustainable development' (WBCSD, 2006, n.p.). They predicted that 'the WBCSD will be one of the most influential international institutions in terms of advancing sustainable development in the next 5 years' (WBCSD, 2006, n.p.).

While important however, the business influence has the capacity to push other perspectives to the periphery of important sustainability debates. The use of concepts such as the *Triple Bottom Line* serves to entrench business's position of importance (Springett 2003a, 2003b). Business remains the central focus of such perspectives, with other concerns retrofitted to comply with this aim. This conserves 'the traditional notion of business as usual' (Springett, 2003a, 3). The discourse of sustainability is restricted, discouraging broader 'dialectical discursivity' and reifying the concept according to the terms of the powerful (Springett, 2003a, 2, 3). Foucault would interpret this, says Springett, as discourse 'creating' sustainable development (2003a, 2). It is argued that

the discourse of sustainable development, for all its contestation, has been quite narrowly controlled, whereas what is needed is a dialectical, discursive, relational approach to the still evolving process (Harvey, cited in Springett, 2003b, 72).

Delyse Springett's (2003a) maintains that the concept of sustainability is poorly understood by many business people (2003b, 78). Her research has revealed systemic confusion about the meaning of sustainability in a business context. Several of Springett's 'co-researchers' from business conflated sustainability with other concepts such as 'eco-efficiency', 'sustainable management', 'sustainable growth', or most commonly, John Elkington's (1999) 'triple bottom line' (TBL) system of accounting for business (Springett, 2003b, 75, 76). Springer's research showed that 'sensible' responses tended to be defined as such according to their fit with old business paradigms (2003b, 77). Springett argues that the jargon of sustainability is one of the main inhibitors to 'participation, understanding and ownership' of the concept (2003b, 79).

Paul Tebo, in his role as vice-president for safety, health and environment at Du Pont, found that his choice of terminology greatly influenced the success with which his message about sustainability was received by people within the company:

Growth was very important. I tried *sustainability* and the business leaders saw it as status quo. I tried *sustainable development* and they viewed it as environmental sustainability. I tried *sustainable business* [but] growth is what organizations want - either you're growing or you're not and not growing is not a very good thing (cited in Holliday et al., 2002, 15).

The paradigmatic use of business language is evident here. The people Tebo spoke to found it difficult to accept messages that conflicted significantly with their business aims. The power of the conventional business paradigm selected for acceptable meanings of sustainability by screening the language used to present them. Terms which carried overly challenging implications were rejected. This act, supported by the enormous power corporations wield in the global political economy, reverberates through the discourse of sustainability, tugging the meanings associated with it in a modernist direction.

These observations suggest that 'stakeholder engagement' in the name of sustainability must be carefully undertaken if it is to be effective. Simply drawing non-corporate stakeholders into the business loop does not ensure that sustainability's full depth and breadth is catered for. What chance of equity and diversity of opinion exists within the discourse of sustainability if corporations are the primary referents to which other stakeholders are drawn? Deliberative democracy offers one possible path to discursive plurality, as will be discussed later in this paper.

Business and sustainability: from rhetoric to reality

Pocock emphasizes the fact that although particular discourses come and go 'the history of discourse is not a simple linear sequence in which new patterns overcome and replace the old, but a complex dialogue in which these patterns persist in transforming one another' (1989, ix-x). The World Business Council for Sustainable Development acknowledges the complex relationship between what people say and what they do. In the preface to the group's book *Walking the Talk: The Business Case for Sustainable Development* (Holliday et al., 2002), WBCSD president Björn Stigson draws a careful distinction between what companies say they would like to achieve in terms of sustainability, and what has actually transpired. The title of the book is provocative, says Stigson, and was chosen with hesitancy (Holliday et al., 2002, 8). This caution is not by way of apology for discrepancies or inadequacies - the tension between 'talk' and 'walk' is seen as inevitable and productive. The organisation's member companies are presented as being embroiled in the reflexive struggle to come to grips with the radicalising ideas of sustainability and to put them into effect. The initiating step is to 'talk'.

The adoption of rhetoric as a precursor to or catalyst for wider structural changes is widespread. Professor Patsy Healey (1999) notes that policy change tend to occur in three sequential levels of increasing depth in which are, in order:

1. changing language;
2. changing thinking;
3. changing culture.

Rhee and Lee (2003) looked at two case studies of Korean companies to determine whether differences existed between rhetoric and reality, and whether they play different roles. They identified 'gaps between the rhetoric and reality of (corporate)

environmental strategy' and noted that 'rhetoric changes faster than reality' (2003, 187). Importantly, they found that rhetoric played an important role in encouraging change in the environmental learning process. They also found that 'environmental motivation, organisational culture and leadership affect the gap between rhetoric and reality' (2003, 187).

Collaboration

Collaborative research efforts between MNCs and NGOs illuminate the inertial drag of residual language and concepts of both types of organisation and, importantly, the gestation of new perspectives. Giant MNC Unilever recently embarked on a two year project with Oxfam, allowing the NGO to examine the company's socioeconomic impacts in Indonesia. This was groundbreaking work for Unilever and 'it was clearly a painful experience' (WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.). The CEO Patrick Cescau explains that it was 'hard for our managers to find their values and behaviours subjected to such skeptical scrutiny, and to see their achievements, when operating in a complex business context, so lightly passed over' (cited in WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.).

Oxfam examined Unilever's work with poor farmers, which was designed to simultaneously help them out of poverty and improve the consistency of the company's supplies for their Kecap Bango soy sauce. Unilever joined forces with an Indonesian University and Rabobank, a Dutch co-operative bank with strong credentials in sustainability³ (Dunphy et al., 2003, 67), to try to 'improve seed quality, provide credit and guarantee purchases from the farmers at a contracted price' (WBCSD, 2005a, 2). The strategy has met with some success and more and more farmers have felt encouraged to join because of this. Potential areas for concern have been identified by the partners involved, such as the risks associated with farmers becoming over-reliant on a single corporation.

Oxfam personnel referred to 'difficult negotiations over language (which) caused frustration' but came to the conclusion that 'negotiating a common text forced us to understand each other in a way that would have been impossible if we had written separate documents' (WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.). The people from Oxfam found themselves revising many of the sometimes stereotypical ideas they had previously held about MNCs. Oxfam learnt that '“our analysis needs to be more alert to the differences between multinational companies” (WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.). Unilever Indonesia, which depends on local suppliers, employees, distributors and customers takes a long-term approach, “is very different from some of the traditional targets of...campaigning, such as extractive or export-processing industries” (WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.).

The negotiation of concepts and language throughout the research effort meant that it took much longer than expected. Oxfam noted 'considerable disagreement' (WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.), although both groups expressed commitment to reducing poverty. Even

³ Rabobank was founded in 1988. It expresses the ambition to simultaneously support 'profit, people and the planet' and 'regards sustainability as central to its business activities' (Dunphy et al., 2003, 67).

after these extensive and painstaking negotiations were completed, the project's participants within Unilever noted difficulties in explaining their new-found knowledge and ideas to other company employees who had not been directly involved in the research process. It was not easy to communicate "quickly and easily to other, more sceptical, non-team members" (WBCSD, 2005a, n.p.).

Tebo's colleagues and the collaborators from Oxfam and Unilever were struggling between preservation and transformation - between sustaining what they were already familiar with and taking sustainability on board as a radical transformational force. Both corporate employees' and NGO members' actions were influenced by the norms of the respective cultures they operated in, while at the same time their participation in radicalizing dialogues opened the way for possible transformation.

Forms of knowledge within business

Diverse perspectives that exist *within* business organisations must be integrated, for the sake of sustainability generally but also for the sake of the organisation itself. In business, experience has shown that sustainability strategies which are derived from a narrow range of opinions, especially those handed down from above, are unlikely to be appropriate (Vorley, 2004, 35).

Robert Shapiro's efforts within Monsanto in his capacity as CEO illustrate the problems associated with a top down approach to the formulation of sustainability strategies. A bold vision of sustainability emerged under his guidance. However, it was debilitated by its reliance on the comparatively uniform and narrow views of a small number of managers from the upper levels of the company (Vorley, 2004, 35). It was observed that 'Shapiro apparently surrounded himself with a handful of like-minded biotechnology enthusiasts, so there were few voices in that inner circle to provide a reality check' (Vorley, 2004, 36). For the most part, the company's employees were not adequately engaged during the formation of sustainability strategies. This meant that Monsanto's sustainability vision was of little relevance to the majority of the firm's workforce and therefore did not provide the long term results that Shapiro had envisaged.

Despite 'parading sustainability stars [such as Paul Hawken] through its corridors' Monsanto's 'rank and file never internalized what the stars had to say' (Hart cited in Vorley, 2004, 36). Monsanto did not embrace sustainability as a fundamentally new business approach informed by effective dialogue that allows discursive plurality. Without effective engagement within deep networks of knowledge, companies simply *cannot know* what the best approach would be. Neither the shallow mechanisms of the market nor top-down management approaches within business transmit the requisite information satisfactorily. Although Shapiro's efforts received sharemarket support for a couple of years, his vision failed to impress in the longer term and the company weakened (Vorley, 2004, 36).

Ciba-Geigy's turn of the century sustainability vision also suffered from a lack of appropriate engagement with its own employees and with other stakeholders. The

company's reliance on a narrow knowledge base result left its sustainability vision as more of a 'self-justifying orthodoxy' (Vorley, 2004, 36) than anything else. It was based on assumptions which automatically direct responsibility for sustainable agriculture to Big Business (Vorley, 2004, 36). The company's stance was informed by beliefs that

Low-input farming is low-yield farming. Efficient agriculture is sustainable agriculture. First World farmers are famine fighters. Plant protection is food protection. The next era of crop protection will be high-technology 'precision' agriculture and protection via the seed with biotechnology. The public is irrational and needs to be nursed out of its misconceptions through 'effective communication' (Vorley, 2004, 36, 37).

This view overlooks the many and varied sources of innovation and resilience that exist. In Africa for instance, food security depends to a large extent on maize and cassava, crops which were 'largely adopted outside the confines of formal government initiatives or market inducements' (Richards, 2004, 283).

If new technologies are to be usefully created and incorporated in different cultural contexts it is important that diverse ways of knowing are integrated into the process. As Richards points out, technology is not the enemy, although it can seem that way: 'Anti-GM protestors imagine they are fighting a technique, whereas (arguably) their battle should be mounted against a system that monopolizes potential ways of viewing the knowledge gains of modern genetics' (2004, 284). He considers it essential that the world is not 'so tied up in intellectual enclosures that the results of differently configured projects cannot spread freely and create their own unpredictable webs of interconnection and interdependency' (2004, 284). The corporate contribution to sustainability should not dominate proceedings, in other words. If it does, says Richards, 'the power of technology to emancipate, i.e. to underpin new, adaptive social arrangements in a divided and fragile world, will remain latent rather than effective' (2004, 284). Business's potential to promote sustainability will therefore remain largely unrealized.

In an economy increasingly dependent on 'knowing' and therefore requiring integration of diverse forms of knowledge within business and beyond, it may well become increasingly difficult to keep sustainability concerns out. If business success rests to a large extent on healthy dialogue between people with different perspectives, as Vorley (2004) contends, then it is likely that some of those people will bring with them a desire to attend to broader socioeconomic and ecological problems. Businesses ignore these alternative perspectives at their peril. As Vorley (2004) observes, glaring failures to comprehend the importance of alternative opinions have adversely affected transnational agribusiness. In Monsanto's case, the company's woes were due in large part to its failure to appreciate and react appropriately to public concern (Vorley, 2004, 36). If Monsanto had engaged with communities in good faith, it would have constituted a

practical step towards the development of corporate products and services regarded by the public as socially, environmentally, economically acceptable - sustainable, in other words. Company members' own understanding of sustainability would have been augmented. The company itself might have been better off. Vorley maintains that 'a general vision of sustainability that excludes the majority of its workforce and does not challenge the underlying theory of the company is itself unsustainable. Such a vision cannot survive internal or external shocks, such as a merger or the loss of key products' (2004, 39).

Deliberative democracy as a way of achieving discursive plurality

As political rhetoric, the discourse of sustainability requires the integration of a diverse range of values, beliefs, interests and forms of knowledge. However it can be difficult to integrate competing values and diverse ways of knowing, such as scientific and traditional or Indigenous knowledge. It has been argued in this paper that the language which dominates the discourse serves to uphold certain power structures and their underlying values, emphasizing particular interpretations and strategies for sustainability. How can people - in government or in business - formulate policies or strategies for sustainability that include the diversity of relevant perspectives and values?

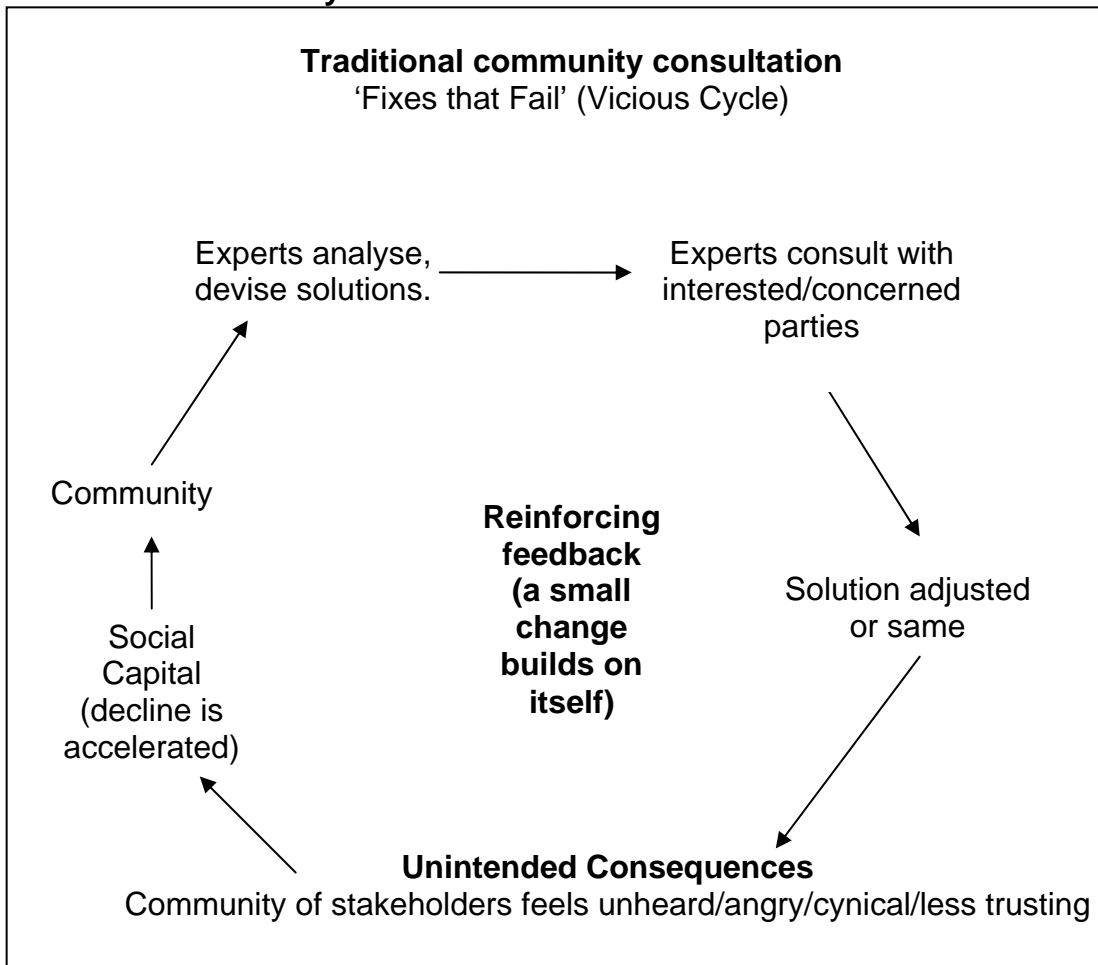
It is argued that it is *only* possible to discover what sustainability means in particular communal and political circumstances through 'processes of civic dialogue' such as deliberative democracy as opposed to liberal democracy as it is commonly manifested (Barns, 1999, 19). Ian Barns (1999, 2) argues that liberal democracy is being undermined by:

- the concentration and global mobility of transnational power - multinational corporations sometimes threaten healthy democracy by exerting undue influence on political processes, and have been accused of deliberately behaving unethically in this regard;
- the dominance of scientific and technical expertise in a wide range of public issues;
- the corrosive effects upon policy development of the ideology of economic rationalism - governments are accused of developing policies that suit MNCs, for example;
- the weakening of citizenship commitment and capacities by an all-pervasive ethos of consumerism - often expressed as the conflation of capitalism with democracy, or market choices with democratic options;
- the questioning of the presumed universalism and neutrality of the liberal state by a range of dissenting feminist, ethnic and alternative-life style voices; and
- post-modern critiques of the 'grand narratives' of progress and reason.

The usual mode of community consultation undertaken in this atmosphere has been described as a 'vicious cycle' (Hartz-Karp, 2004/2005, 15) (see Box 1). In conventional consultation processes between business and stakeholders, the

tendency is to either inform, consult or involve participants. It tends to be a top down process. 'Informing' is translated to mean providing balanced and objective information to participants and then proceeding to 'help them understand'. 'Consultation' generally means obtaining feedback on ideas or decisions after they have been produced. Stakeholder 'involvement' is frequently a process of ensuring that people understand and consider the issues (21st Century Dialogue, n.d.).

Box 1: The Vicious Cycle



(Source: Hartz-Karp, 2004/2005, 15).

This scenario is not limited to government initiatives. Similar 'vicious cycles' occur in hierarchically managed corporations. Ciba-Geigy's sustainability 'Vision 2000' relied on top-down approaches. Senior management provided videos and organised exercises to 'assist' employees to grasp the concepts involved. The vision was extremely uniform in perspective, and 'partly achieved through a culture that separated employee's personal values from their professional positions and rhetoric' (Vorley, 2004, 33). As a result, William Vorley, one of the people employed by the company to work on Vision 2000, was left feeling incensed and patronized. He maintains that this top down attitude which essentially disengaged employees was

one of the main reasons that the strategy did not live up to its potential (Vorley, 2004, 33).

Niemeyer (2004) identifies the capacity within communities to respond collaboratively to environmental issues, but contends that this capacity is muted by political systems which actually engender civic disengagement. Niemeyer suspects that citizens' 'will and preference' in regard to the environment is sometimes distorted by the 'operation of politics as usual where the success of particular perspectives is more a function of salesmanship than the expression of free will' (2004, 348). This is clearly a risk within the corporate dominated discourse of sustainability. He notes that environmental concerns tend not to be expressed strongly in normal political processes, but considers this to be a result of the limitations of conventional political avenues of expression, rather than a lack of concern or understanding among the populace (2004, 348).

Beck suggests that this unfortunate situation can be dealt with by broad democratic participation, focusing on risk 'selection, allocation, distribution and amelioration' (Dryzek, 2000, 164). In fact, Beck has the grand objective of subjecting economic development and technological change to democratic control, releasing them from the dominating influence of 'experts' (Dryzek, 2000, 164). Sagoff issues a similar call for democratic control in the form of political deliberation when policies regarding 'moral or aesthetic judgment' are formulated (2004, 13). He reasons that this is necessary because 'people who take positions about public policy often have the social good rather than their own good in mind' (2004, 13). Hartz-Karp goes so far as to assert that 'if our democracy is to survive, it *requires* deliberation' (2004/2005, 14, emphasis in original). Since sustainability, with concerns such as for intra- and inter-generational equity, is an inherently democratic political concept, it too *requires* deliberation. Bendell argues that we cannot leave it 'up to the powerful to decide if they are responsible or not...if they are carrying out their obligations or not' (2005, 32) nor to decide what their contributions should be.

Deliberative democracy and other closely related concepts described as 'civic engagement' or 'community engagement', or 'participatory', 'ecological' or 'discursive democracy' amongst others, offer the potential to boost endogenous control systems, embrace culturally diverse ways of knowing and deal with value conflicts associated with sustainability (Dryzek, 2000; Niemeyer, 2004; Sagoff, 2004; Smith, 2003; Riedy, 2005; Hartz-Karp, 2004/2005). The aim of community *engagement* (not just consultation) techniques is to allow people to work in partnership with others to develop understandings, decisions, solutions or strategies, and to empower all parties involved, rather than leaving final decisions in the hands of the elite (21st Century Dialogue, n.d.). Such concepts are not new. Deliberative meetings were instituted in Ancient Greece, in the states of the western world as they emerged and again briefly in the USA in the early twentieth century, for example (Hartz-Karp, 2004/2005, 14).

Deliberative democracy is described as 'strong' democracy (Niemeyer, 2004, 349). In comparison to corporate-centered knowledge production, techniques based on the

premises of deliberative democracy are better able to include the spectrum of values and ways of knowing which need to be taken into account when formulating sustainability policy. Smith notes that environmental issues, for instance, are inevitably sources of value conflict: when reasoning about the non-human world, individuals and groups often find themselves pulled in contradictory directions, appealing to values that they find difficult to reconcile' (2003, 1). Such apparently dissonant values can be reconciled by giving deliberators access to necessary information, approval to voice moral concerns and impetus to contribute (Niemeyer, 2004, 348). Deliberative democracy seeks to promote 'discursive plurality' involving diverse networks of people and concerns for the more-than-human world. Views can be put forward and considered using the full gamut of communicative possibilities - humour, drama, logical argument, emotion, music and so on (Riedy, 2005; Dryzek, 2000). It is important that appropriate methods of communication are used to support discursive plurality - the forms of communication used must be accessible to all participants. The sort of social learning at the centre of deliberative democracy is inhibited if participants fail 'to communicate in terminology and vernacular' that are meaningful to all those involved (Keen and Mahanty, 2005, 109).

Where democratic deliberation is enacted, it is an attempt to move beyond democracy as a detached process of casting votes of approval or disapproval. The aim is to allow formulation and direction of policy through participatory processes so that democracy is about 'deliberation and communication' (Dryzek, 2000, 129). Importantly, community engagement strategies provide room for stronger expression of environmental and social values than is easily achievable in corporate dominated discourses. Deliberative democracy techniques have been recognized for their ability to 'reconcile humans and the environment in politics' in particular (Niemeyer, 2004, 347). In fact, deliberative democracy has come to prominence in relation to environmental concerns (Dryzek, 2000, 164). Indigenous knowledge can also be specifically and appropriately included (Marinova et al., 2004; McGrath et al., 2005).

Dryzek argues that the network form is most appropriate for democracy, since it is capable of enabling 'decentralized, deliberative control of the weight of rival discourses' and because it 'finds a home in civil society' (2000, 133). Institutionalized networks allow a wide range of competent participants to engage discursively in democratic contests, from a local to an international level (Dryzek, 2000, 162). In fact, he argues that network approaches are valuable because they need not be limited by association with the nation state (Dryzek, 2000, 129)⁴. Networks dedicated to deliberative democracy can emerge 'when individuals or groups that are similarly situated in one important respect, but different in other respects, decide that their common interest would benefit from joint action' (Dryzek, 2000, 134) - such as when people come together to promote sustainability.

⁴ It is sometimes *necessary* to look for democratic support beyond the boundaries of the nation state. As Dryzek points out 'one reason why high-profile groups like the Zapatistas in Mexico and the Ogoni people in Nigeria have sought allies and visibility in transnational society is to escape states trying to destroy them' (2000, 136).

John Dryzek endorses the concept of discursive democracy⁵ specifically. He argues that discursive democracy should be:

- pluralistic - communicating and embracing difference;
- reflexive and self-reflexive - questioning established traditions, including deliberative democratic traditions;
- transnational - applicable even outside the boundaries of nation states where there is no constitutional framework;
- ecological - able to incorporate the non-human; and
- dynamic - open to threats and opportunities relevant to democracy (2000, 3).

Janette Hartz-Karp, who has extensive experience designing and running community engagement exercises, identifies five key building blocks which best support the process:

- the random selection of a representative sample of the population concerned;
- a thorough understanding of the issues and their implications;
- the careful consideration of diverse views and values⁶;
- the search for consensus or common ground; and
- the capacity to influence decision making processes (2004/2005, 16).

The need for participants to be representative is in keeping with the notion that democracy is best served when disinterested citizens are engaged (Saul cited in Hartz-Karp, 2004/2005, 16). When this happens political processes become more impartial and the terms of the dialogue can be more equitably reframed. As a consequence, deliberative democracy has the potential to engender trust in political processes.

Hartz-Karp (2004/2005) nominates two critical conditions that must be satisfied in order to support deliberative democracy. For a start, an atmosphere of trust must be established - in the form of a '“container” in which honest and open dialogue can take place and people are clear that it will matter' (2004/2005, 16). The second essential step is to 'create the conditions for participants to reframe the issue so alternative and emergent solutions or trade-offs are possible' (2004/2005, 16). Reframing is

⁵ Dryzek does not use the terms 'deliberative' and 'discursive' interchangeably in his discussions of democracy. He describes discursive democracy as a 'more critical strand of deliberative democracy'. He considers that a 'defensible theory of deliberative democracy must be critical in its orientation to established power structures, including those that operate beneath the constitutional surface of the liberal state, and so insurgent in relation to established institutions (2000, 2).

⁶ In one case, citizens from northern Sierra Nevada who got together to plan forest management achieved this goal by holding their meetings in a library so 'they could not scream at one another' (Sagoff, 2004, 201).

stimulated by drawing on different perspectives and forms of knowledge. This is a very important step for sustainability.

Participants are encouraged to approach deliberation with a commitment to reciprocity and agreement to give equal consideration to all arguments. People from diverse backgrounds bring with them a range of ways of understanding and talking about sustainability. 'Enlarged thinking' is encouraged. Inflexible strategies which aim to deliver specific and predetermined outcomes must be left at the door (Niemeyer, 2004, 349). Imagination plays an important role in encouraging enlarged thinking, because it helps people to see things from others' perspective and frees us from 'private conditions and circumstances that limit and inhibit the exercise of judgement' (Smith, 2003, 26). This is a critical step for sustainability. For example, sustainability strategies created within corporations often suffer from myopia induced by the conditions and circumstances in which they are immersed, and the language predominantly used to approach the subject.

Dialogue⁷ - as opposed to debate - is encouraged in order to encourage learning and thinking together (Ison, 2005, 30). This contrasts with 'symbolic politics' where vested interests such as corporations vie for dominance within the political discourse (Niemeyer, 2004, 349), an exercise which 'disenfranchises not only nature, but humans too' (Niemeyer, 2004, 366). In deliberative dialogue, conflict between divergent viewpoints can be approached in a constructive manner. Keen et al. contend that conflict should be thought of as

- an inevitable part of change rather than a sign of failure of people or the system;
- a step towards a solution, rather than a signal to give up;
- shared, rather than being the responsibility of a person or group;
- part of a process, rather than an outcome, barrier or excuse; and
- a matter for negotiation, rather than the end of the line (2005, 15).

Deliberative democracy has a greater capacity than most conventional techniques of liberal democracy to give voice to essential diversity. Deliberation allows the cognitive abilities of a group to be combined 'in much the same way as multiple processors working in series increases the power of computers' (Niemeyer, 2004, 249). This synergistic effort leads to the development of highly sophisticated views informed by the values of a wide and representative range of actors. The complex issues pertaining to sustainability can therefore be dealt with optimally. Hartz-Karp maintains that deliberative democracy can circumvent

⁷ 'Dialogue' can be distinguished from 'debate'. Ison explains that 'Debate-based communication is often grounded in situations of conflict...the roots of the word 'debate' mean 'to beat down' (2005, 30). He defines dialogue as 'a sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties that compose everyday experiences' (2005, 30). It involves 'sharing understandings and assumptions and the reasoning behind these assumptions in order to build richer pictures and act jointly' (Ison, 2005, 30, 31).

the deficiencies of conventional stakeholder consultation, by creating a 'virtuous cycle' of interaction and communication (2004/2005, 16) (see Box 2).

The virtuous cycle associated with community engagement moves beyond the limitations of the vicious cycle caused by adherence to community consultation strategies. There are three critical levers which enable community engagement: (1) inclusion, (2) deliberation and (3) influence:

- (1) Inclusiveness ensures participation that is
 - representative of the relevant population;
 - inclusive of diverse views; and
 - based on equal opportunity to participate.
- (2) Deliberation involves
 - speaking honestly and openly;
 - seriously considering differing viewpoints and values;
 - thoroughly understanding the issues and their implications;
 - reframing issues;
 - seeking a range of solutions;
 - searching for common ground.
- (3) Influence
 - the capacity to influence policy and decision-making is necessary so that participants consider the process is worth being involved in (21st Century Dialogue, n.d.).

Deliberative democracy: seeking wisdom for sustainability

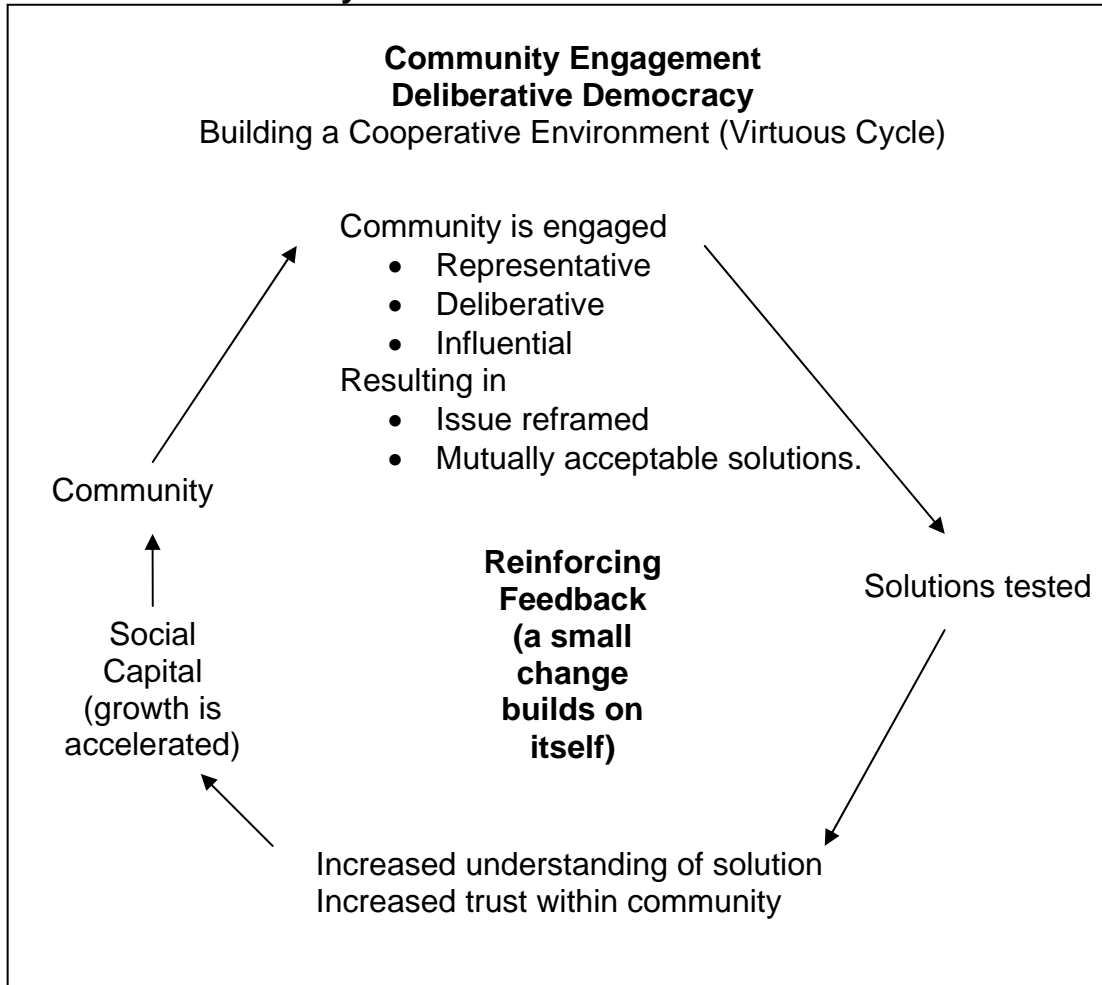
This virtuous cycle of communication can provide wisdom, as opposed to simply knowledge. Baltes and Staudinger define wisdom - needed for sustainability - as that which 'coordinates knowledge and judgements about the fundamental pragmatics of life around such properties' as:

- (1) strategies and goals involving the conduct and meaning of life;
- (2) limits of knowledge and uncertainties of the world;
- (3) excellence of judgement and advice;
- (4) knowledge with extraordinary scope, depth and balance;
- (5) search for a perfect synergy of mind and character; and
- (6) balancing the good or well-being of oneself and that of others (cited in McKenna, 2005, 40).

Psychologists have demonstrated empirically that 'intrapersonal, interpersonal and extrapersonal relations significantly (contribute) to people's ability to demonstrate wise judgement' (McKenna, 2005, 50). The evidence psychologists have produced about human interactions leads to the conclusion that 'wisdom is a collectively anchored product and that individuals by themselves are only "weak" carriers of wisdom' (Baltes and Staudinger, [2000] cited in McKenna, 2005, 50). In the context of deliberative democracy, wisdom can emerge as a result of the 'social, ethical and discursive competence' (McKenna, 2005, 40) unleashed through dialogue. Collaborative

synergy can help community members of all descriptions weigh up the potential for corporate contributions to sustainability, since the wisdom they tap into ‘can separate negative changes which are intended for empire building for developing and maintaining power from those that promote necessary change’ (McKenna, 2005, 42).

Box 2: The Virtuous Cycle



(Source: Hartz-Karp, 2004/2005, 16).

Although traditional knowledge is ‘the mother of wisdom’ (McKenna, 2005, 44), the desire to access wisdom in contemporary life should not be interpreted as a call to ‘ask a tribal elder to open the proceedings of our next conference and then get on with the real business...(or) feng-shui our office’ (McKenna, 2005, 43). We need to formulate sustainability strategies wisely, embracing the positive innovations of the contemporary world (such as eco-efficiencies provided by the business community) while preserving sustaining traditions (McKenna, 2005, 43). Deliberative democracy can help us to choose which of the formidable gifts of business are appropriate for sustainability, while tempering any negative impacts.

Power and control in deliberative democracy

Deliberative learning and planning processes create power in a particular way. The democratic power derived through patient deliberation 'is not just about domination,' it is 'more subtly about the power to act' (Keen and Mahanty, 2005, 113). Similarly, social learning techniques such as those used in deliberative democracy access power 'not only from the resources we command and the knowledge we hold, but also from belonging' (Keen and Mahanty, 2005, 113). As Keen and Mahanty explain:

We gain power and knowledge from the social groups with whom we associate, provided we can maintain agreement on core values and principles, or re-negotiate the nature of our belonging to that group (2005, 113).

The power to act in relation to pressing sustainability concerns is achieved in part by ensuring that communities feel that they 'own' the problems they face as well as any strategies designed to tackle them. Researchers working on community programs to ameliorate land degradation have noted that a 'Key to the creation of alternative visions is participation. Participation is also educational, and the process can elevate the debate and help everyone achieve deeper levels of understanding about ecological issues' (Soulé, 1995, 6). People tend to resist top-down direction which does not engage them appropriately 'but will often support progressive change *if* they have some role in its formulation' (Soulé, 1995, 6).

Dryzek is confident that discursive democracy can provide more equitable distribution of power by spanning discourses, promoting a deep understanding of other perspectives and enabling people to reflect critically on the content of discourses they are immersed in (2000, 163). This means that discourses, such as that of sustainability, could be subject to democratic control, rather than being left to the discretion of the elite of the global political economy, and that a variety of ways of knowing could be contributed. Business people such as Jan Wallinder support this view. Wallinder emphasizes the need to spread the locus of responsibility: 'There can be tremendous benefits if we share this responsibility (for sustainability) through open dialogue within a global community of interest' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 1) (see Box 3).

Achieving deliberative democracy

Dialogues for sustainability may be undertaken by people from various groups, including governments, community groups, NGOs, and businesses (see Table 1 for examples of deliberative democracy techniques). They may be confined within organisations for specific purposes. Corporations, for example, might establish a wisdom council or a world café (see Table 1) within their ranks to determine company policy on sustainability, or they may participate in community or regionally based projects with or without government involvement.

Within companies effective dialogue can lead to wise practice - thought by some to be essential for businesses trying to survive in the knowledge economy (McKenna, 2005, 50), as well as for those aiming to become more sustaining. As an antidote to any residual preoccupation with the 'myth of the triumphant individual', McKenna calls for the application of 'principles of cooperation and collaboration...that admit tacit knowledge, practical considerations, and various perceptions and insights into wise management practice' (2005, 50). The sort of management philosophy he advocates can be supported by open dialogue that allows diversity of opinion and knowledge to surface and balances the necessary but inadequate structures of codified knowledge and technical rationality within organisations (McKenna, 2005, 49). Increasing use of deliberative techniques might help to remedy the way management practice is too often portrayed as 'democratic and responsive' while actually being 'extremely conformist and authoritarian' (McKenna, 2005, 42). It would help to minimize 'mindlessly valorized' change for its own sake, drawing on the collective wisdom and experience of the group to distinguish desirable transformations from those which are not (McKenna, 2005, 42).

Government driven programs for deliberative democracy are also important. The existence of democratic networks that traverse territorial boundaries demonstrates that democracy need not be intimately linked to the state (Dryzek, 2000, 129). However, national and sub-national governments will continue to be influential in many regards, and their policy making processes can be enhanced by applying principles of deliberative democracy. Governments ranging from local to international levels can stage community engagement programs of various types.

Business representatives can participate in these events by acting as expert witnesses, for example. In this way, business perspectives can be democratically included without dominating proceedings. There are instances where this has occurred already. At a Community Engagement Over-arching Workshop staged in October 2005 as part of the policy development process for the Perth Coastal Planning Strategy (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2006), business representatives were among the expert witnesses invited to talk with the group. As one business person from the construction and development industry remarked to the group, the representative views reached through transparent and equitable deliberative processes may be more readily accepted by business communities than decisions reached via conventional government avenues. The speaker further suggested that outcomes of deliberative democracy processes could be very helpful to business, because they provided relevant and accurate information about community wishes. He thought that if businesses took heed of outcomes reached through democratic deliberation, it could save them a lot of time and effort by avoiding difficult and detrimental stakeholder conflicts.

METHOD	World Café	Wisdom Council	Citizens' Jury	Deliberative Poll	21st Century Town Meeting	Citizens' Assembly	Millions of Voices
Who participates?	12 - 1000 invited people - not randomly selected citizens.	Series of meetings of 8-24 randomly selected people. Different people participate in each meeting.	15-24 randomly selected, demographically representative 'jurors'.	Statistically representative random sample of people.	300-5000 people demographically representative of relevant population.	Two randomly selected citizens from each electoral district in region.	1 million citizens in town meetings and forums across nation; millions more engaged via television.
Why run it?	To allow people to explore problems drawing on their own wisdom and experience; cross-pollination of ideas; strengthens relationships.	To involve all members of a community in order to create choices, reach consensus and solve difficult problems.	To find out what informed members of the public want; promote trust; obtain transparent and unbiased view; resolve conflict/ develop plans; influence decisions.	To find out what public would think about a subject if informed and given the chance to deliberate with peers.	To engage citizens in public decision-making processes at local, regional and national levels.	To provide non-elected people with the chance to influence government decision making about a particular issue.	To involve national citizens in dialogue; to frame discussion and bring results to decision makers.
How does it work?	People sit in small groups round café style tables; one person stays at each table others keep moving to new tables; final group discussion.	Meetings chartered by community; dynamic facilitator helps proceedings; participants choose topics; statements reported back to larger community.	Jury deliberate 'charge' in facilitated meetings over 2-5 days with expert witnesses; common ground sought; report produced.	Participants polled on opinions about an issue, then attend conference with small group interaction and expert panel; then polled again.	Dialogue supported by key-note polling, networked computers and interactive television for immediate feedback.	Deliberation in public hearings and group meetings over months; Experts provide assistance. Government acts on outcome.	Issue defined by citizens' jury type forum; series of forums across nation using variety of approaches; results compiled on online database.
Examples of use.	Has been used in Business, government and tertiary education institutions.	Has been used in business organisations.	Reid Highway Extension Citizens' Jury, Perth, Western Australia, 2001.	Scarborough Deliberative Survey, Perth, Western Australia, 2004.	Western Australia's 'Dialogue with the City'; 'Listening to the City: Rebuilding Lower Manhattan'.	Electoral Reform in British Columbia 2003-2005.	In national contexts, possibly international.

(Sources: 21st Century Dialogue, n.d.; Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Government of Western Australia, 2005).

Table 1: Sample of community engagement techniques

Box 3: FutureComFactory and the World Café

The Swedish corporations Ericsson, Telia and AP Fastigheter combined to establish a forum called FutureComFactory in which to consider the future of society and of what they refer to as the infocom industry. Jan Wallinder, the CEO of FutureComFactory, explains that over several years he had 'come to see that an important part of my own life purpose is working for a sustainable future on this planet. I wanted to figure out a way to connect that passion with my work at Telia, the largest telecommunications company in Scandinavia' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 1). He 'thought that the role of infocom in a sustainable future was an important question' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000,1). The group began to explore 'the hard issues and how the infocom services industry might help or hinder the development of a more sustainable future' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 2).

Wallinder recognizes the importance of telecommunications in everyday life, affecting 'transportation, the environment, material and energy resources, and food and health supplies' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 1). He recognizes the reflexivity in this connection: 'They all impact on our businesses. And our businesses impact on them' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 1). Part of the process involved convening a World Café involving 'influential people from groups with very divergent perspectives' (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 3). This was not intended to be a meeting of self-interested individuals, however enlightened, aiming to promote their own viewpoint. Neither was it intended to remain safely in the province of the usual 'rational' business speak - divergent discourses were embraced. Wallinder saw this as something the participants found challenging.

Wallinder is excited about the effect of the Café, and although unable to predict its ultimate benefits sees great potential for the ongoing use of such techniques. He notes that the setting seemed to encourage participants to abandon the idea that any of them alone 'had the power to push the others into submission to their own solutions' and that they shared the hope that future generations would be proud of their efforts to contribute to sustainability (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 6). Wallinder noted a 'special kind of listening' happening within the group. He thought that people were excited about going back into their own situations with their new understandings...and that such ways of having conversations may make it easier to get action, but it's not the same way we think about it most of the time - with voting and long lists of action steps' which lead to little or no action (Whole Systems Associates, 2000, 7, 8).

Traditional, Indigenous and local knowledge can be included as well (Marinova et al., 2004; McGrath et al., 2005). People of all cultural backgrounds will bring certain forms of traditional and local knowledge with them. Indigenous people can participate as deliberating citizens and/or as expert witnesses, depending on the type of community engagement procedure being implemented. In events where equitable demographic representation is required, an appropriate percentage of Indigenous people can be actively sought to take part in the deliberations. Indigenous groups often use forms of

community engagement that can be incorporated into larger decision making processes. Lois Olney, an Indigenous person who acted as a Juror in a Citizen's Jury that had been set the task of considering the value of deliberative methods in Western Australia explained that in Roebourne⁸:

Indigenous people form a Bush Assembly or Circled Meeting to discuss relevant issues in their community, the elders being the ultimate judges of fairness and cultural practices of respect for the elders. Issues are resolved through Bush Assemblies or Circle Meetings, then reports are passed to relevant people for the next process (The Jefferson Center and the Department of Planning and Industry, Government of Western Australia, 2005, 19).

The members of the jury recognized that Indigenous people in Western Australia have difficulty in 'participating in current political discussions' (The Jefferson Center and the Department of Planning and Industry, Government of Western Australia, 2005, 15). The jury unanimously concluded that Indigenous people's voices should be heard and hoped that 'the government (would) find innovative ways to integrate their views into the views of the citizenry as a whole' (The Jefferson Center and the Department of Planning and Industry, Government of Western Australia, 2005, 15). The group was not able to decide how Indigenous views might be best incorporated into decision making processes (The Jefferson Center and the Department of Planning and Industry, Government of Western Australia, 2005, 15). Some businesses are actively trying to accommodate the views, knowledge and wishes of Indigenous people. There are companies who are building groundbreaking partnerships with keepers of traditional, Indigenous and local knowledge. (See Box 4: Aveda Corporation.)

There is, of course, no guarantee that deliberative democracy will inevitably result in sustainable outcomes. Smith points out that deliberative democracy and environmental concerns are not necessarily linked in a positive sense because decisions derived from deliberative processes may not necessarily meet the approval of all environmentalists (2003, 76). Provided the processes in question are fairly run, this is as it should be from the point of view of sustainability, since equity concerns dictate that neither environmentalists nor any other interest group should be permitted to dictate terms. Furthermore, the observation that deliberation is not a fool-proof method of setting the compass for sustainability is not basis enough to reject it. In the long run, there is nothing to say that any of the schemes we try will enable the majority of the planet's human population to live sustainably. However, deliberative democracy techniques have a unique capacity to provide synthesis of knowledge, values and purpose required for sustainability.

⁸ Roebourne is a small town in the north west of Western Australia.

Box 4: Aveda Corporation

Aveda Corporation, owned by Estee Lauder since 1997, manufactures and sells a range of personal care and lifestyle products and services (Bonda and Sosnowchik, 2004). Dominique Conseil, head of the company, is dedicated to sustainability. In particular, he sees the company's 'connection to indigenous people' as being very important, explaining that anthropology taught him 'to accept and to value differences and not to judge' (Bonda and Sosnowchik, 2004, 4). The company states that it is 'committed to building sustainable business partnerships with indigenous people worldwide in the sourcing of its plant-derived ingredients' (Aveda, 2005, n.p.). In this and other respects, the company claims to be 'dedicated to changing the way the world does business' (Aveda, 2005, n.p.). Recently, the Songman Circle of Wisdom, a group of Indigenous leaders from Western Australia, and Aveda collaborated to establish the Indigenous Plant Certification protocol, the first of its type in the world (Aveda, 2005, n.p.). The protocol is described as 'a model for Global indigenous leaders to practice sustainable business in their own communities' (Aveda, 2005, n.p.). Indigenous people in Western Australia provide Aveda with a harvest of *Santalum spicatum*, or sandalwood, which is used as a perfume. The company works with local Indigenous people to ensure that they are paid a fair price for the traditional knowledge and contemporary effort that allows them to harvest sandalwood sustainably (Laurie, 2004, 5). Such schemes are welcomed as positive developments by many Indigenous people who fear the impacts of 'bio-prospecting for drugs or cosmetic products' and who therefore regard plant rights for Indigenous people as a crucial issue (Muir, cited in Laurie, 2004, 5). At one stage, Aveda marketed an 'Indigenous' line of products, which was 'originally introduced to connect the modern consumer to the timeless wisdom and values of indigenous peoples', 'to raise awareness about the beauty of their sustainable lifestyles and to generate funding for key indigenous programs through sales' (Aveda, 2003, n.p.). However, in 2003, Aveda discontinued its 'Indigenous' product line and undertook to give up rights to the 'Indigenous' trademark, according to the wishes expressed at a meeting of Indigenous people from the Americas and Australasia (Aveda, 2003, n.p.). The company stated that by its action 'Aveda hopes to stand in solidarity with indigenous peoples in their quest for recognition of intellectual property rights in their traditional wisdom' (Aveda, 2003, n.p.). In doing so, the company demonstrated a willingness to work democratically with its partners for the benefit of all involved. Aveda has adopted particular management and architectural characteristics specifically to promote sustainability. Two people - Mary Tkach, the head of environmental sustainability and David Hircock, the advisor for sustainability affairs - have the power to reject any product or service innovations that threaten to derail the company from its sustainability mission (Bonda and Sosnowchik, 2004, 7). Conseil also rejects strategies such as franchising, even though they promise to be financially lucrative in the short term, because he feels they are likely to cause the company's core orientation to sustainability to degenerate into greenwash (Bonda and Sosnowchik, 2004, 7). Conseil feels that Aveda's association with the powerful corporation Estee Lauder can have benefits in regard to sustainability. For instance, when negotiating with suppliers about the quality of raw materials, he observes that it can help to be supported by Estee Lauder's bargaining power (Bonda and Sosnowchik, 2004, 7).

(Sources: Aveda 2003, 2005; Bonda and Sosnowchik, 2004; Laurie, 2004; Marinova, 2005; Marinova and Raven, forthcoming).

In the public sphere, exogenous political control systems will continue to be important at all levels of governance, but this can be complimented by deliberative democracy. The members of the Citizens' Jury held in Western Australia to consider the merits of deliberative democracy supported this view:

Given that various methods of community engagement have been trialed within Western Australia, Australia and around the world, we concur that community engagement (deliberative democracy) is an effective vehicle for decision-making on public policy.

We unanimously recommend that methods of community engagement continue to be used and expanded in Western Australia on a routine basis, monitored by an independent body and integrated into the workings of government (The Jefferson Center and the Department of Planning and Industry, Government of Western Australia, 2005, 14).

There is no need to provide a one-size-fits-all prescription for implementing deliberative democracy - in fact, to do so would contradict the ideals of democratic engagement. Nonetheless, as Hartz-Karp stresses, if democracy is to thrive a paradigm shift must occur. Community engagement could become an essential part and official part of governance, enshrined in national and international law where appropriate (2004/2005, 19). The costs of failing to organise robust community engagement events far outweigh the costs of running them, as far as Hartz-Karp is concerned (2004/2005, 19).

Conclusion

Business has a vital role to play in promoting sustainability. Business organizations do certain things very efficiently and where the outcomes provided by these capabilities support sustainability there are important gains to be made. However, by definition, the success of sustainability strategies must be assessed using a broader vision than those associated with the neo-classical economic world of business and the hegemonic global political economy.

One way of incorporating diverse ways of knowing, and promoting the equity and discursive plurality essential to sustainability is to embrace deliberative democracy techniques. This can occur at various levels - within a company, between industry groups, on a regional basis or at local, state, national or international levels of government for example. Deliberative democracy techniques may be usefully instigated by a variety of industry, community, and government groups, depending on the circumstances and issue at hand.

Deliberation can make an important contribution to sustainability because it facilitates discursive plurality. This allows the inclusion of a range of values and knowledges relating to the human and more-than-human worlds. Furthermore, deliberative democracy sets out to ensure equity and fairness in representation, so that the integrity of outcomes can be trusted. This is particularly important when dealing with

political issues of sustainability that are typically complex and heterogeneous and therefore susceptible to manipulation by symbolic politics.

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