

The Heart of Sustainability

- exploring the core of sustainability and overcoming resistance to change -

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is relatively easy to produce a consensus definition of environmental sustainability. Then, why is it so difficult to produce shared visions, and, more importantly, bring them into existence? This paper explores some of the anomalies in the movement for change and suggests a values-led approach to ways of dealing with them.

In a movement being developed primarily through the instigation of people who are materially wealthy, 'well-educated', and who consider themselves liberal-minded, then the behaviour of the movement will tend to reflect this.

An interpretation of 'what is a leaf?', depends on a person's knowledge, experience, values and the tools used to study it. Scientific study uses scientific tools, knowledge, experience and technical values. A poet uses others. If sustainability is to reach beyond new forms of environmental management, it must incorporate 'softer' values into its core. If it does not, sustainability will merely come to mean 'environmentally sustainable exploitation'. I have used the term humane sustainability to describe a more integrated form of sustainability.

So what are these 'softer' values? In order to understand what is important in our lives, we need to start with feelings: to love, be loved / liked / respected / secure ... etc. In our 'work-focused' society these values are compartmentalised and marginalised, having, merely a coercive in marketing products and services. To ask 'Where is love in all this?', whilst in a management meeting, would bring advice on the nearest psychiatrist or questions regarding which fundamentalist sect or cult you belong to! One needs to be prepared to tolerate a certain amount of ridicule when introducing such questions. Appropriate skills and timing would also help!

For ease of reference, this paper is divided into sections, allocated the same numbers as in this introduction. The interdependence of the sections should be acknowledged by the reader. In some cases, sections have been cross-referenced within the body of the text.

2. QUALITY OF LIFE

This section looks at people's needs. Improving the quality of life for some people may need little more than a shift in perception regarding what they already have. This shift has a different effect on the environment than enabling them to get the next thing on their desires shopping list.

Many people live in poverty. Whilst it is useful to distinguish between abject (or absolute) poverty and relative poverty when prioritising the allocation of resources, we need to be creating ways of living which avoid creating poverty in the first place.

3. NEW SOCIAL STRUCTURES

New structures can create opportunities and remove barriers. To be effective, the whole 'unit' also requires appropriate development processes.

Intentional communities or social housing, for example, bring people physically closer together. In theory, they provide opportunities for greater mutual co-operation, but people must learn how to come together in these new environments. People also need ways of dealing with conflict in a confined space, resulting from the more intimate contact. At the same time, the question arises of how this 'island unit' relates to the World outside it.

4. ECONOMICS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Whatever good can be claimed to have come from the existing global economic system, it has not solved and has arguably caused fundamental problems, namely: a) Exploitation of people and environment and b) poverty

A structural reform towards regional sustainability can easily move towards ghettoisation, inter-regional tension...etc. Development processes built on shared values can avoid this. This section explores the move from conventional to sustainable economies, including the issue of cross-border conflicts. Whilst not exclusively an economic matter, economics has a vital role.

5. SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

We must educate children, so that they do not repeat our mistakes. And how do we do this? We trap them in institutions for the best part of 5-6 days per week, away from main-stream society and for up to 12-16 years of their lives. We fill them with predominantly useless knowledge and make them jump through achievement hoops. In between, we tell them about the importance of the environment and how things ought to be.

Despite all this, some children do start to question the way things are. What do we do? We tell them that somebody else is to blame and that when they grow up, they will have the chance to do something about it.

Education is a key to change. Schooling in its existing form is not. Values in education, should not just deal with the curriculum content but with also with the 'education' system itself.

6. TECHNOLOGY AND PEACE

Technology has a lot to offer in the movement towards humane sustainability. Creating a more energy efficient version of something which does not need to exist is somewhat missing the point. This section addresses the question of values and the need for the development and dissemination of appropriate technology.

7. BARRIERS ON THE WAY TO HUMANE SUSTAINABILITY

There is often a tendency to blame 'them' for stopping 'us' from doing what we want to do. In this paper, I am more concerned with the often hidden and thereby stronger barriers which exist amongst people involved in the movement for change. Barriers to change are dealt with under each main heading in the paper. In this section, I have considered barriers which tend to have wider effects.

Sexual Energy: a word of caution

There is a lot of literature about what sexual energy is / means / causes. This includes the relationship of sex to love / pro-creation / jealousy...etc. Alongside these are individual desires / expectations coming from conscious and unconscious effects of past experiences and the culture in which we live. Suffice it to say, there are a lot of views about sex. It is a subject not covered in this paper but let us not pretend to ignore it in our deliberations about where we are going.

Disclaimer

This paper unashamedly combines simple psychology, rough analysis, unsubstantiated views and borrowed texts, together with an honest attempt to deal with the subject. It has been developed more from personal experience and observation than from rigorous scientific endeavour. I apologise in advance for some inconsistency in the use of terminology.

There are a few references to publications and interesting web-sites but as these are apt to change location or disappear, I would recommend the reader to undertake an Internet 'key-word' search once this paper is more than a year old. You will then be transferred to current work in the relevant fields. Attached to some references is information about related publications or web-sites.

2. QUALITY OF LIFE

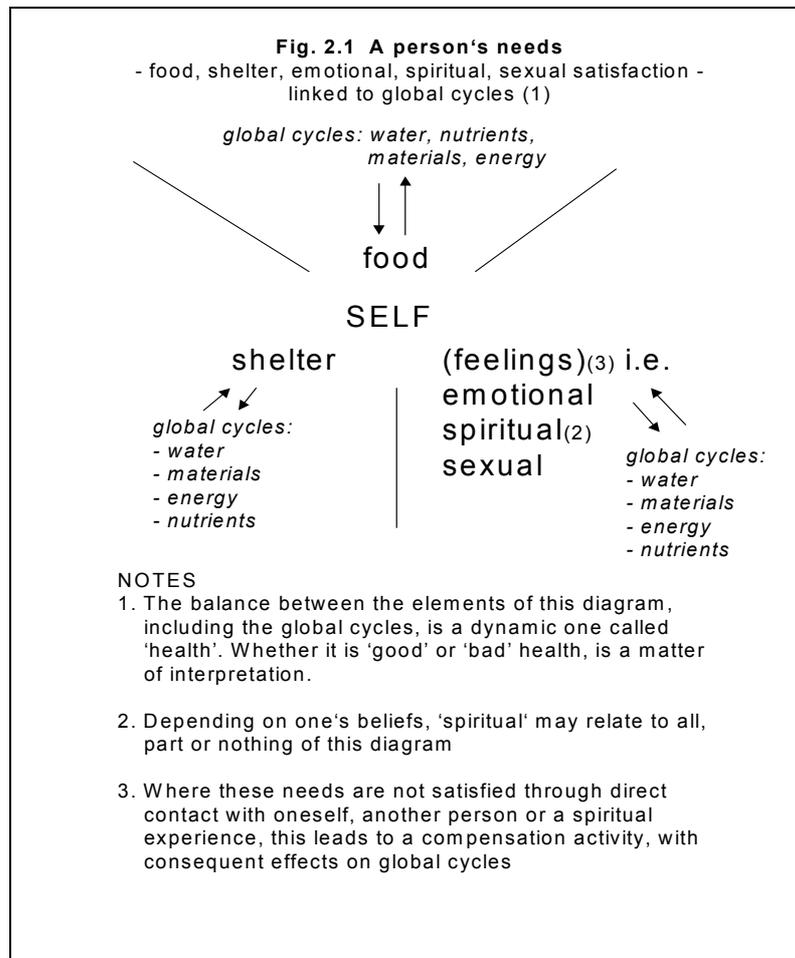
Improving the quality of life for people may involve:

1. Satisfying subsistence needs (dealing with abject or absolute poverty)
2. A shift in perception regarding what they already have

In between 1 and 2 is relative poverty. People in relative poverty may benefit from being able to supplement what is currently available plus adopting a shift in perception

The range of a person's basic needs stay with them from birth to death. The prominence of each need varies according to the autonomy of the individual, the phase of development and the extent to which needs are being satisfied.

There are a number of ways of categorising a person's needs. Readers may disagree on the categorisation but I shall just take one example from earlier work (Fig. 2.1), in order to illustrate the point I wish to make (James 1985):



The needs in Fig. 2.1 are satisfied through a person's senses, in contact with their environment. These contacts create a bond. Such bonds have a gestation period, determined by:

- ◇ the nature of the contact
- ◇ the development phase of the individual
- ◇ the time an individual needs to internalise them.
- ◇ the response of the environment

Emotional, spiritual and sexual satisfaction depend on one's concept of reality and the activities one pursues in order to satisfy these needs. If one lives a reality designed by others, rather than one's own inner feelings, the needs cannot be satisfied. This leads to compensatory activities, in search of satisfaction, which, through these activities, cannot be achieved. It is in the area of emotional, spiritual and sexual satisfaction where advertising, politics and religion have their appeal.

For people in poverty, whose living fluctuates around the boundary of subsistence, there are additional considerations.

It is now useful to consider the individual and their 'natural' i.e. innate characteristics and attributes – notably those which may be considered a block in move towards humane sustainability. I take here, for example, the matter of competition.

2.1 People are naturally competitive?

One may wish to argue that people are naturally competitive (with a desire to beat other people). This can sit somewhat uncomfortably with the desire for a peaceful, co-operative future. Rather than argue whether or not competitiveness is 'natural', I propose that we work to create environments in which the energy associated with this attribute can be developed into what are perceived as constructive rather than destructive activities. This also requires that we are aware that:

- ◇ it is our perception of an activity which leads us to categorise it as constructive or destructive, not the activity itself
- ◇ destruction is a natural part of a renewal process

In practice, we could acknowledge that competitiveness may be a natural phenomenon but focus attention on such things as:

- ◇ Learning: how to do things better. This leads to co-operation and openness with competitors, and best use of resources, as distinct from secrecy and resource-use duplication and wastage
- ◇ Self-improvement : improving one's own previous performance. This leads to improving status being a measure against oneself, as distinct from other people
- ◇ Overcoming adversity: poverty, hunger, storm damage
- ◇ Status: even if status is translated into measurement against another person, it should be possible to reflect this as: "I can do this better than you", as distinct from "I am a better person than you."

There is a significant difference between

- a) Arguing for or against the idea that people are naturally competitive
- b) Acknowledging that it may be the case and making constructive use of the energy associated with it

It is interesting to look at conventional sports and their significance to individuals. We can do this in conjunction with considering an individual's needs (see Fig.2.1). In conventional society, competitive sports represent much more than what might be claimed as a 'normal and natural expression of the desire to win' (survival of the fittest). Appealing to people's wider feelings, consumerism has attached itself easily to sport. Thus, by association, consumerism has become 'naturalised' and 'normalised'.

3. NEW SOCIAL STRUCTURES: Family / community / ?

In section 2, I considered people's needs. For a baby, satisfaction is achieved through contact with the closest people. In a nuclear family these are the parents, notably the mother.

Depending on one's beliefs, the mother / biological parents may be the best or only people who can provide for these needs. One's beliefs may be further extended into the notion that unless the mother / biological parents satisfy the needs of a baby and young child, then that person will be permanently adversely effected/damaged. A lot has been written on this subject but I am not convinced enough to make a position statement on the issue. It is obvious that if people other than the biological parents are involved in satisfying needs then the bonds and their effect will be different. Whether or not this difference represents an adverse effect/damage, is a matter for debate.

I do believe that baby-making abilities are different from nurturing abilities. However, in a nuclear family it is expected that baby-making and nurturing are provided by the same people (biological parents). In an extended family, part of the nurturing role falls to other family members. An extended family may also provide a support network for members in satisfying elements of the needs in Fig.2.1

I do not propose to challenge the significance of the bond between child and biological parents but I do have suggestions regarding what constitutes 'family' and 'community'.

I believe it appropriate to attempt to provide environments in which a child has access to (but not obliged to live with) both biological parents. I believe that a family should be a self-selecting, negotiated arrangement of 'intimates'. In conventional Western European societies, a family is a structure of people connected by birth or Third party association; and afforded rights and expectations accordingly.

There are many different concepts of community and it is for people to determine for themselves what is appropriate for them. I see a community as a collection of active participants (individuals, families, groups) with a declared identity and commitment to what they describe as community and community life.

"The family under threat!" is a topical cry. Economic demands for a flexible work-force and more customers have seen workers moving further away from 'home' and (coincidentally?) the emergence of a larger number of smaller households trying to buy things which they cannot afford, in order to survive. The pressures are considerable.

Rather than trying to defend a structure (family), it would be more appropriate to say what values are important, and to support the emergence of ways of living which enable these values to be expressed in real life. To give value to the concept of 'the family' merely on the basis of tradition is a very weak argument.

With these basic ideas for family and community, we can then busy ourselves with issues such as sanctions, access, exclusion, birth rights...etc. Perhaps this will bring us back to the need for existing social arrangements i.e. it may be that the conventional 'nuclear' or slightly 'extended' family emerge as the most viable forms of micro-social unit. I do not know but I doubt it. I would be interested in studies on the subject.

Whatever may be the environmental basis for regional sustainability, the question of how people live with each other will be the key to humane sustainability. Humanely sustainable life-styles require not only a) shifts in environmental management from conventional to environmentally sustainable forms but also b) appropriate shifts in values and behaviour as affect relationships between people. I believe that it is in area 'b)' where the main resistance in the move to humane sustainability resides. Intentional communities provide a wealth of experience in dealing with these matters (Jackson 1999).

3.1 Law and restraint

The restraining effect of community moderates the behaviour of people. Where there is no or little sense of community, this restraining effect does not exist and is replaced by the Law. Where people have been hurt through a betrayal of trust, they may:

- ◇ Seek revenge
- ◇ Forgive
- ◇ Try to create conditions which protect them against hurt in the future, with or without a revenge element
- ◇ Withdraw

To see this in action, let us look at LETS. In short, LETS is a system/scheme which enables people to exchange goods and services, for which trading account balances are registered in points rather than national currency.

For people with a low-trust disposition, laws and restraints can help to provide a safe environment for them to meet other people and take the risk of exchanging goods and services. Whilst laws and sanctions may have a place, they should not be thought of as the key restraining influence. It may take a while for people to work through a shift in perception and realise that open accounts and no obligation to trade offer sufficient defence and that even if a person does default, it doesn't matter.

Trust in people is connected with love. If the bonds between people in a LETS are based on such feelings then felt senses of empowerment and community can emerge.

4. ECONOMICS FOR HUMANE SUSTAINABILITY

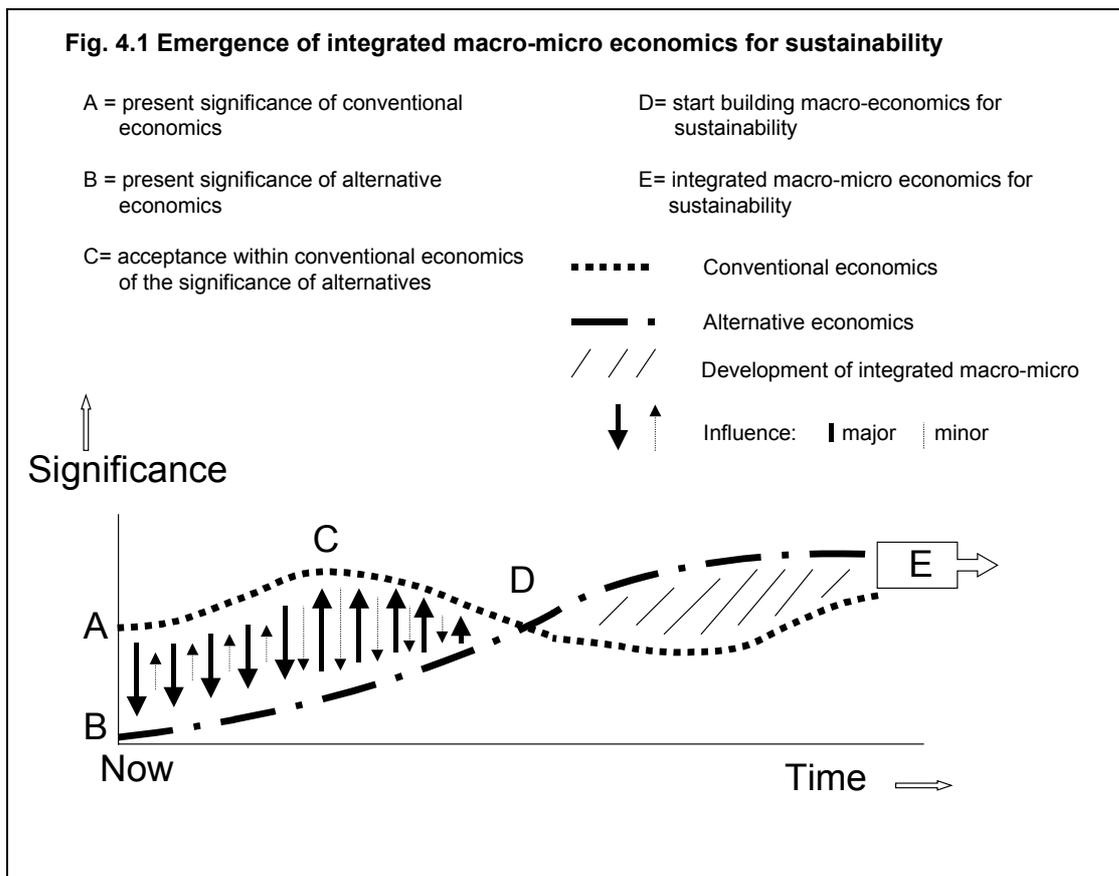
Whatever good can be claimed to have come from the existing global economic system, it has not solved and has arguably caused fundamental problems, namely:

- ◇ Exploitation of people and environment
- ◇ Poverty

Provided that people see these problems as (at least) unfortunate, (possibly as) undesirable or (preferably) unacceptable, there is scope for introducing something better, either through reforming or replacing the existing economic system. I believe a way to achieve this is as reflected in Fig. 4.1, namely, to:

- a) develop parallel systems, based on regional economics (micro-economics)
- b) enable these micro-economic systems to grow in strength and number
- c) enable them to influence the existing macro-economic system
- d) support metamorphosis into the emergence of a new macro-economic system

Whether one believes the metamorphosis in 'd)' to be a reform of the existing system or its replacement depends on one's ego and the strength of one's attachment to whichever belief. What is important is that the change takes place.



It is arguable whether the conventional economic system continues to function because there is trust in it or merely because there is no viable alternative in operation. Certainly, until viable alternatives develop, the conventional system will lumber on, fuelling human and environmental destruction. Even if the conventional system were to collapse 'unexpectedly', it is not to say that something better would emerge. People's learnt values, norms, behaviour, expectations and experience are entrenched in the existing system. There would be a tendency to establish merely a slightly modified version, in order to re-establish 'control'.

4.1 REGIONAL ECONOMIES

In order to be done effectively, I maintain that regional economies should be managed from within regions. The ability to influence the following are crucial elements:

- ◇ Land – access and use
- ◇ Means of production
- ◇ Money supply

Unless people have access to influencing the things which would otherwise adversely effect them, regional sustainability can still be translated as environmentally sustainable exploitation.

There already exist theoretical models and experience related to land custodianship and stewardship (TOES 1997) as well as for local currency systems (Davies 2000). These can be developed voluntarily alongside existing regimes. This should be done in areas where resistance is least, in order to build a body of praxis which can inform new developments elsewhere. Development would be enhanced by political commitment, notably in the form of ‘space’ in which to develop i.e. physical and legislative space.

Where resistance hardens, it may be necessary to ignore such areas, whilst taking care not to build an aggressive enemy in the process. How this is handled would depend on the nature of the resistance.

In theory, it should be possible, voluntarily, to develop ways of dealing with the question of what and how things are to be made, and what services are to be provided. It is in this area where I see most difficulties arising, notably through new dogma / indoctrination replacing existing ones. I am not referring here to whether decisions are made and implemented through a planned economy or a market economy. My major concern is what values are influencing the decisions.

I maintain that values appropriate to sustainable living can only be developed through education amongst people whose lifestyle is moving in the direction of satisfying their needs (as outlined in section 2.). If we are not busying ourselves doing things which do not need to be done, it releases more time to move in this direction.

4.2 DEALING WITH CONFLICTING IDEAS

It is possible to develop a set of parameters appropriate to humane sustainable development. Other writers have done this more comprehensively (Turnbull 1992). There may be differences and some conflict between them but provided that we remain willing to learn, the differences should be reconcilable through co-operation and adaptation. Surely, one of the elements of economics for sustainability is such that it should be adaptable or replaceable by something better if the need arises.

I maintain that, whilst arguing in favour of one or other theory may lead to improvements, what is needed are regionally focused and committed people and institutions to bring ideas into praxis. All the time we merely have people throwing theories at each other, the beneficiaries of the contemporary system can smile in disengaged amusement.

4.3 MONEY SUPPLY, CREDIT AND DEBT

It is pointless printing more national currency if the intention is that people living in poverty should get more. Apart from the inflationary effect on prices and the deflationary effect on the value of the currency, the mechanism which bleeds money from people living in poverty would still be in place. Writing off the debts of people in poverty can provide a brief respite but if there is no economic alternative to the mechanism by which they came into debt, the situation will re-appear.

Plugging the out-flows and increasing the in-flows of conventional currency are important for the survival of local economies. Development of local currency with access to interest-free credit, which can run parallel to national currency, are another important element. Both are needed. These can be enhanced by trade with other regions, also using an appropriate currency as a medium of exchange.

The control of money supply is a regional (personal!) issue and local currencies are an essential element of sustainable development. There are many examples in theory and some in praxis of local currency systems (Davies 2000). Some are cash equivalents, others provide credit. There are also examples of these being combined.

4.4 CO-OPERATION WITH NEIGHBOURS

This an important issue, having two important elements:

- ◇ Enhancement of quality of life (see section 2)
- ◇ Security (see section 6.1)

4.4.1 Inter-community trading

It is straight-forward to set up a local currency system in a region. Difficulties may arise when approaching the issue of trading between different regions. There are a variety of ways of dealing with this; some of which have been tried in practice e.g. inter-regional LETS (Davies 2000)

What underlies all these systems is trust. Because of the scale involved, it maybe unlikely that a person would get to know many people in the other region. Trust in this case has three elements i.e. trust in:

- ◇ The trading partner
- ◇ The opinion of people whose opinion you trust regarding the other people/system
- ◇ The other system

If we look, for example, at inter-regional trade using LETS, it may be that people of a low-trust disposition, will be reluctant to enter inter-regional trade until:

- ◇ Experience indicates that it is safe to trust
- ◇ There is a realisation that if the other person or indeed the other system subsequently disappears, it does not represent a problem

Provided that trust exists, a system of trading can be grounded, developed and metamorphosed as required. Trust is a feeling, not a bag of money or pile of goods.

5. SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

Schools have been given the responsibility to educate, train, socialise, acculturate and to some extent protect children. They mediate between the claims of society and the individual so that the individual can emerge within a social context.

A key question for a school is what balance should it apply between Authority and Freedom – to what extent is it directive and to what extent enabling. Toogood, (1986), in making a case for mini-schools, offers a matrix (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Assessing schools as directive or enabling

DIRECTIVE POLE.....	ENABLING POLE	Mark*
1. SCHOOL		
An institution of withdrawal to prepare young people for society; teacher centred	A partnership to develop individuality; person-centred; dis-alienating	
2. LEARNING		
A process of acquisition, assimilation, initiation, conditioning, training rehearsing	An active engagement in the process of coming to know about oneself, others,	
3. KNOWLEDGE		
A property, to be banked, acquired, finite, measurable..an instrument of power, status, influence, affluence	A movement of personal transformation, towards becoming oneself; a process of authentication, of a personal, unique reconstruction of reality	
4. TEACHING		
Transmission of culture; traditional knowledge from teacher to learner...teacher is guardian of a body of knowledge	Practice of co-learnership aimed at the learner becoming a better learner...teacher as a skilled co-learner and counsellor	
5. YOUTH		
A stage on the way to adulthood, a lesser 'awaiting' existence; to have modified, restricted form of regime; protected, withdrawn	A human condition valid in itself; having full right of enjoyment with reality; in transition and in development	

Mark*

1= strongly agree with directive pole

5= strongly agree with enabling pole

He then looks at the key management variables for a school: Time, Territory, Teachers, Things , Thinking. He considers the extent to which these are integrated with or insulated from the wider community.

It is useful to look at existing schools with such analytical tools and ask the question: ‘‘What are we doing, beyond producing compliant members of a managed consumer society?’’

Of course children learn at school. It is more the question of whether they learn because of or despite the teaching.

Certainly the hidden curriculum is a key factor in their lives. It includes:

- ◇ Boredom and its tolerance
- ◇ Develops habit of self-defeating consumption of services and alienating production
- ◇ Tolerance for institutional dependence
- ◇ Dominance / subordination

Is reconstruction possible? Roland Meighan, amongst others, writing on the works of John Holt, has suggested principles for the reconstruction of schooling in particular and of education in general. (Meighan 1995)

A few of the principles are reproduced here, to give an indication of what is needed:

- ◇ We need education that aims to produce people who have no wish to do harm
- ◇ Compulsory schooling degrades the learning experience, so school should be invitational
- ◇ What we can learn from good teachers is how to teach ourselves better
- ◇ Custodial-type school cannot teach morality. To talk of using schools to teach morality is a bad joke. We might as well talk of using the Army to teach Pacifism
- ◇ We can reconstruct schooling if we want to: Schools are not a force of nature.

There is a wealth of experience in alternatives to regressive education. They include mini-schools, flexi-schooling, home-based learning etc. We should make use of this experience in bringing about change not just in what we teach and teaching methods but how education is managed and how it enables the learner to take charge of their learning. (James 2000)

I maintain that education should be considered a life-long process, available to all who desire it and not restricted to institutionalised learning. If schools are to exist in future they need to become skill centres, providing access to practitioners rather than to certificated teachers who monopolise teaching, manipulate it, and are less competent.

If, as adults, we want to engage young people in our agenda of moves towards sustainability, we need to take them seriously. This includes acting on what they say, rather than merely agreeing that they have a point.

6. TECHNOLOGY AND PEACE

Technology may be developed through a planned economy, a market economy or some other economic regime. Unless people have an opportunity to seriously consider the sort of place (world / region) they want to live in and the technology appropriate to this, the risk is that they will tend to be led by the technology. Working practices will also be determined by the demands of the technology.

Change can come about through people’s awareness of the environmental necessity and human opportunities, combined with the development of appropriate economic ‘instruments’ built on humane sustainability.

Other writers have considered the combined topics of futures, sustainability, work and technology. Robertson (1985), for example, considered three future scenarios under separate headings. Two of these were 'work' and 'technology'. The three futures were classified as: Business-as-usual, Hyper-expansionist (HE) and Sane, Humane, Ecological (SHE). Today, it is interesting to look at the HE and SHE futures and the elements of which have since emerged.

Current examples of what could be considered existing or emerging HE and SHE futures include:

HE

- ◇ Terminator technology – genetic engineering of plants to produce sterile seeds
- ◇ A skilled elite of professionals and experts operating and managing capital-intensive technology

SHE

- ◇ Free computer software of all types and internet access readily available to all
- ◇ Increased working from home

Whilst challenging the development and expansion of HE technologies is important, I maintain that there is a great deal of scope for developing and disseminating alternatives. This needs to be linked to appropriate economic tools, some of which are considered in this paper.

Robertson, like other writers, also provides a 'strategy for change', as well as an 'own work check-list. I mention these merely as examples of tools which can be used by people who are wondering what to do next.

Perhaps technology will, sometime, be seen as a phase of human development, rather than something which determines our future.

A great deal of technological expertise and resources are applied to military purposes, in the name of defence and peace.

6.1 Technology for defence and peace

It is important to have cross-border communication between people and development of relationships built on love and trust (feelings rather than function). Do you have an enemy? If so, who/what is it? I suggest that an enemy is built from:

- ◇ Ignorance of 'others' i.e. what 'they' are like
- ◇ Acceptance of the exploitation of 'others', thereby building hostility in 'others'
- ◇ Belief in the person behind you telling you that the enemy is in front of you
- ◇ Projection from previous experience

I maintain that Peace is an environment in which:

- ◇ There is a desire amongst people to help others
- ◇ There is a desire amongst people not to harm others
- ◇ There are no threats and no fear

This is an idealised position but it helps to show that peace is not merely the absence of war but a way of living which needs substantial commitment, skills and resources, away from militarisation, in order to bring it about.

Alongside this it is worth noting:

- ◇ It is relatively cheap to kill or maim a large number of people e.g. through dosing a water supply with an unmonitored toxin
- ◇ The implications of defining people in terms of 'them' and 'us'
- ◇ The benefits which come from helping people to get what they need, rather than trying to exploit them and get what one can out of them
- ◇ The emerging pressure, incentives and interest in trying to breed or genetically engineer in/out certain characteristics of people

Unfortunately, there is not space in this paper to consider these issues further. I would welcome thoughts on the subject.

7. BARRIERS ON THE WAY TO HUMANE SUSTAINABILITY

One of the difficulties in trying to bring about change is locked in the unchallenged, and often hidden assumptions under-lying what we do. Such unchallenged assumptions exist in many areas.

7.1 Self-regulation

In my experience, one of the major blocks set up by people working for change comes through 'self-regulation'. An example of self-regulatory behaviour is in respect of the Law e.g. adopting the position: I do not take-over unused buildings because it is illegal, and I will be sanctioned. The reality is that it is illegal. Self-regulation comes into play by assuming that the Government/Police will bring the sanction into force. In fact, it may well be that the Government (and Police) would rather ignore my activity because it helps to solve an embarrassing problem (homelessness and street-dwellers), for which they have no solution.

7.2 Change: getting stuck

There are, in many fields, theories and models relevant to sustainable development: economics, housing, communities, work etc. They all have limitations but until they are brought into practice they are nothing more than ideas and pieces of paper. It is the lived reality which provides us with the experience from which to develop. Along the way, it is important that people affected by decisions have adequate access to the means of influencing them.

If something is working in an unacceptable way then change it. Different groups of people do this in different ways e.g. visioning combined with re-patterning, or detailed analysis combined with strategic planning. In the process it is important to realise the effect of dogma. This may include sticking to: the theory, the way of working, the people one works with, the time of day/year etc. People (except me of course!) may well need help to relinquish their dogma

7.3 Change: choosing the 'best' route, methods and timing

Directly challenging the exploitative nature of Capitalism is important but even if Capitalism were to collapse, it still needs something to take its place. A movement benefits from resisting oppression and building something better. Each

requires different types of activity and character traits. Often there is a lack of appreciation between people in a movement of the value of each other's aims and methods.

7.4 Language and concepts

Concepts are defined in language. That language is given the meaning of the culture through which it is read/heard and, more specifically, the meaning of the person doing the reading / hearing. Words do not have fixed meanings. They are merely symbols which are interpreted by individuals. This does not mean that words are useless tools, merely that they are of limited use and should be treated with caution. I have just included a simplified extract of this work, in order to stimulate thought:

- ◇ Translation: it is possible to translate a word but not the meaning
- ◇ Understanding: it is not possible to understand anything, merely to move towards a position of greater empathy with something or somebody
- ◇ Proof: It is not possible to prove something unless you accept that:
 - a) It is possible to prove something
 - b) You are prepared to accept probability as proof
- ◇ Control: it is not possible to control something. All actions have an effect beyond that intended. Our actions influence but not control.
- ◇ Time: we regulate life by breaking time into fixed lengths but for Nature, an hour in January is different from an hour in July, as is an hour in Scotland or Namibia.

Academic language should strive to be precise and consistent, in order to convey meaning, and be capable of analysis, comparison and comment. The risk is that it becomes dry and/or inaccessible, except to a closed group of readers.

7.5 Appropriate indicators

a) tampons on the National Health

Unless there are appropriate indicators of progress then it is difficult to see if and how things have changed. Whether we look at concrete measures or take attitude surveys, the choice of parameters is important. If we look at the status of women, for example, we find that In Europe and the U.S., there has been some attention given to restrictions on the promotion of women within professions – the so-called 'glass-ceiling'. Another indicator, effecting more women could be the availability of free sanitary towels and tampons.

b) Children: a special case?

The concept of childhood is determined by the culture of the people looking at that person. If we take a romantic view, children are to society what Whales are to the environment – a beautiful life-form that does not need to and should not suffer. How we treat children is an indication of the health of society. How this changes provides an indication of progress. Currently, we allow children to be exploited, maimed and killed, and we profit from it – cheap clothes, investments in weapons companies etc. Things need not be like this.

7.6 Effects of the sub-conscious

In addition to people's expressed reasons for not doing something e.g. no time, other commitments etc, there may be a whole raft of sub-conscious resistance. This can have a fundamental effect on their behaviour. For people working to build community, it is useful to be aware, engage in and work on these internal processes. As a Shiatsu practitioner, I use predominantly body-work but other means exist.

Related to this is fear of change. Making people aware of choices does not mean that they will move in the direction of change. If they are conditioned to support the status quo, and are sufficiently fearful of moving from it, they will stay with it.

7.7 Project skills

From managing project developments over the past 25 years, I am aware that it needs a range of skills and character traits to bring something into existence and / or develop it. In analysing group's needs, one can use Chinese five-element theory, an English community worker's Manual or a US management consultants team parameters. If one does this, one is able to see why so many initiatives have been tried and not got very far. Project development needs co-operation between people, in order to make things happen. Unfortunately, there are often counter-pressures amongst participants. They include:

- ◇ Fear of exposure: risk of being shown to be incompetent
- ◇ Fear of failure: leading to reluctance to 'go for it'
- ◇ Lack of skills: a good lecturer is not necessarily a good work-shop leader
- ◇ Unequal status of participants: belief that a highly qualified person has something more important to say

Good development work can help with solving these difficulties

7.8 Attitudes and values

A person may express a desire to move from a conventional life-style to an alternative one. It should not be assumed that they have the values and attitude compatible with that alternative. Tyrants, for example, come in many guises.

7.9 Hypocrisy

A declared intention of a desire to work for change must be linked with the praxis in one's own life. In support of this, I suggest that it would be helpful if members of such movements make public declarations regarding their personal income and wealth. That is not to say that a particular level disqualifies participation but it will help to un-mask hypocrisy which may be clouding judgement and action.

References

These are just a small selection of what is available. Internet Web-sites and electronic discussion groups provide a wealth of information but as these are apt to change location or disappear, I suggest that the reader undertake a 'key word' search to locate relevant Internet addresses.

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