



**SUSTAINABLE LIVING IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE:
A COMMON VALUE FOR FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND HUMAN ENTERPRISE**

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The underlying premise of sustainable development is that humans must find a way to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs¹. Contemporary human enterprise is often unsustainable, consuming nonrenewable resources and damaging the environment. Companies of all sizes denude landscapes, extract minerals, and leave a legacy of pollution. The result of such unsustainable enterprise is *reduced opportunity* for this generation and the next.

To reverse the trend toward increasingly short-term and exploitative enterprises, we must adopt an ethic that preserves or, better, creates opportunity. If entrepreneurs and developers acknowledge the right of future generations to enjoy the same field of opportunity that they enjoy for themselves, then activities will be carried forth in such a way that protects the environment and husband resources. Each generation will benefit from the considerate actions of its predecessors.

These elements of sustainable development are ordinarily applied to larger enterprises such as agriculture, forestry, mining, and industrial development. The premise of this paper is that the underlying ethic--the obligation to preserve or enhance opportunity for our colleagues here on earth--is an unambiguous credo that may be meaningfully applied to all human endeavor, from child-rearing to international diplomacy. A *sustainable living* ethic will have far-reaching beneficial influences, causing individuals, families, communities, and businesses to critically evaluate their role in the societies to which they belong. An informed evaluation of one's own role, combined with a value set based on the principles of sustainable development, will enable each individual to continuously improve his or her contribution to contemporary and future society.

In this paper, we will explore the elements of sustainable development and their relevance to individual initiative, family spirit, community activism, and entrepreneurial enterprise. Examples are provided of ethical endeavors--undertaken in the context of sustainable development--at all levels, from individual action up through international collaboration.

Family Life in Industrial Ecosystems

An important subdiscipline in sustainable development is *Industrial Ecology*^{2,3}. This viewpoint states that contemporary society should fashion itself after advanced organic ecosystems. The oft-cited example of a well functioning ecosystem, such as should be emulated, is the tropical rainforest. The rainforest grows where sunlight and water are plentiful, but where soil, nutrients, and detritus are scarcely available. Technically, these things are present in great quantity, but they are fully and efficiently utilized. A tropical rainforest is a model of resource conservation, recycling, and cooperation (albeit in the context of intense competition). Virtually nothing is wasted.

The remarkable biological diversity of the tropical rainforest reflects the variety of *opportunities* that are created and exploited by its resident species. Highly specialized organisms thrive on the waste created by others. For instance, tropical beetles and mites, which are among the most diverse taxa in the animal kingdom, include numerous species that live exclusively on bits of dung and detritus, metabolizing the carbon into reproductive energy and recycling the nutrients back into the ecosystem. Besides these abundant and obvious examples of waste-resource conversion, there are numerous complex symbiotic relationships that contribute to an ecosystem's productivity and functional efficiency. The four types of symbioses, with examples, include:

- *Mutualism*, where both species benefit: this is best exemplified by pollination in which flowering plants provide nectar to insects and receive reliable delivery services for their reproductive cells in return
- *Commensalism*, where one species benefits and the other is unaffected: air plants reside on branches above the forest floor where they get better access to light and rainwater at no expense to the tree that bears them
- *Competition*, where two species depend on the same resource: some species of birds and bats compete for fruit, although they avoid direct interaction by partitioning the daily cycle
- *Predation*, where one species benefits at the expense of the other: this includes *parasitism*, such as the gradual extraction of blood by the vampire bat, as well as the fatal depredations of carnivores upon their prey.

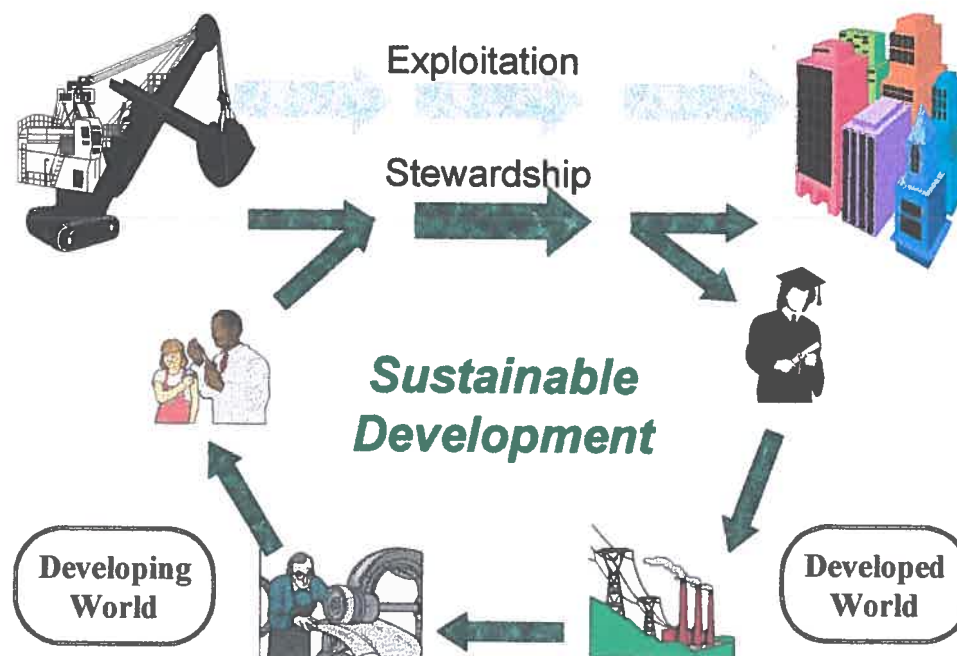
All ecosystems have these types of relationships; however, fully developed ecosystems such as the tropical rainforest and, to a lesser extent, coral reef, tall grass prairie, and mixed hardwood forest have such a diversity of species and interactions that resources are very effectively used. This biodiversity also makes these ecosystems resilient, adaptable to many types of change--climatic variability, fire, flooding, etc--without losing their vitality and efficiency. (These ecosystems are, of course, unable to accommodate catastrophic human influences such as deforestation, monocrop agriculture, or relentless exploitation). The resilience of advanced organic ecosystems is attributable to their diversity. Somewhere in the complex matrix of inhabitants are consortia of interacting species that will flourish even in the face of atypical environmental conditions.

Compare this to a poorly developed ecosystem such as a scarcely vegetated field or a farm with a single crop. One or two species may flourish, but resources such as soil, nutrients, and water are often incompletely utilized, with large quantities lost each year to runoff and erosion. Extreme events may totally depopulate the ecosystem, because no species are present to accommodate the environmental variability.

Contemporary human society is much like a scarcely vegetated field, wastefully consuming nonrenewable resources and carelessly disposing of unneeded materials in landfills. The inefficiency of our human ecosystem has not yet posed a debilitating problem, because we have artificially expanded the natural environment's carrying capacity for humans by exploiting abundant resources such as fossil fuels and mineral ores. We have also stolen field upon field of opportunity from our fellow species here on earth, destroying their habitat or banishing them to extinction. As resources--land, fuels, minerals, and species--approach their limits of availability, we need to increase efficiency and curtail waste (e.g., dumping and pollution). This is where the ethic of *creating opportunity* comes into play. For human society to flourish in the face of resource depletion, each participant needs to create new opportunities even while advancing their own interests. Humanity's rampant destruction of opportunity must stop.

An example, illustrated in Exhibit 1, would be a mining company from the developed world extracting minerals from a poor and developing nation. The old paradigm has the mining company destroying native habitat, pushing aside indigenous populations, extracting the ore, and, upon depletion of the ore body, leaving behind a wasteland. The new paradigm has the responsible corporation *investing* in the host nation, providing meaningful participation, including excellent education, to the resident community.

Exhibit 1
First world resource developers must reinvest the profits
from *earth capital* into *human capital*



The corporation will enter into joint ventures with local entrepreneurs to capitalize and establish sustainable enterprises such as manufacturing, services, and tourism. When this is done, we say that the responsible corporation is converting *earth capital* (the mineral ore) into *human capital* (an educated and empowered community). Most companies from the developed world make a public relations claim that they "give something back" to the nations where they do business. The more probing issue is whether they genuinely create enduring opportunities for the residents of the nations where they have so handsomely profited.

In the fully developed industrial ecosystem, all businesses will operate in a way that creates opportunities for other businesses. Each company's byproducts, rather than being viewed as wastes for the landfill, will be viewed as feedstocks for the production of secondary raw materials. Whole industries will thrive on matchmaking, waste-resource conversion, and beneficial reuse. The one-way flow of resources from ore-bodies to landfills will be transformed into closed loops of reuse, refurbishment, and remanufacturing. Landfills themselves will be viewed as ore-bodies, serving up resources until, once depleted, they become prime real estate.

Tomorrow's industrial ecosystem will be characterized by an extraordinary level of interdependency, with relationships such as described above--mutualism, commensalism, competition, and predation--intensifying to levels even keener than in contemporary society. The term *collabotition* has been used to describe how companies will collaborate on one front while competing on another⁴. The fascinating legacy of collabotition among Microsoft, Apple, Intel, Netscape, and other pioneers of the information age portends the complex relationships that will someday pervade all areas of commercial endeavor.

What will be the role of *family* in this industrial ecosystem? First, the ethic of creating opportunity by living sustainably should be ever more deeply inculcated into family values. This may be an extension of the service ethic, wherein service is provided not just to those immediately in need, but to those who may be needy in future generations. Just as each business in a mature industrial ecosystem should mitigate adverse influences and create opportunities, so should each family and individual strive to play the most positive role in society. The goal should be to avoid wasteful resource consumption and perform meaningful actions, especially actions that have far reaching positive repercussions. An excellent metaphor is the biblical phrase, oft cited by the Peace Corps:

*If you give a man a fish, you'll be feeding him today;
If you teach a man to fish, you'll be feeding him forever.*

This incorporation of sustainability in the family's value set must begin of course with the parents. Parents exert enormous energy preserving and creating opportunities for their children. This practice, which is fundamental to the behavior of most animal species, is in the parent's own genetic interest. However, we "stewards of the earth" must now rise above genetic selfishness and accommodate the interests of all planetary cohabitants. We must be perpetually mindful of our negative impacts, viewing them not just as unpleasanties, but as destabilizing influences that diminish future opportunity.

Being Mindful of our *Ecological Footprint*

Assuming that the value of sustainable living may be effectively communicated by parents to children, and that people are fundamentally good, then the next step in the challenge lies in our systems of education. It is essential that humans understand the functionality of the complex social and natural systems that comprise our world today. Only when individuals understand how systems work, and how they personally affect the system, can they make informed decisions about their actions. This education needs to start from the beginning, with each individual understanding the nature of their influence on the world, present *and* future.

An excellent metaphor that works well with children in this regard is the notion of an *ecological footprint*⁵. Each individual, by his or her very existence, has an impact on our planet. We take up space, consume resources, and emit pollutants. Just as we learn to tread lightly in our carefully planted garden to preserve its appearance and productivity, so must we also learn to live lightly in contemporary society. When we wastefully consume resources and carelessly pollute the environment, then we leave a large and damaging footprint. When we choose *not* to consume and pollute, except as genuinely required, we are behaving in a way that generously preserves opportunities for our co-habitants on earth, human and non-human, today and tomorrow. We are living sustainably.

Transcending our Legacy of Unsustainable Enterprise

For most humans, it would be wholly unsatisfying to contribute to future prosperity simply by living idly, consuming very little. We are enterprising by nature, which no doubt explains our species' dominant role on earth. The problem is that so many human endeavors, while perhaps providing an immediate service, do little to create future opportunity. More often, in fact, human initiatives create a wake of destruction, depriving people in this generation and the next of the fundamental right to live healthful and happy lives. The obvious example is war, which destroys lives, devours resources, and ravages landscapes. Makers of war harbor no illusions about the unsustainable nature of their enterprise. The goal is to fully deplete your enemy's field of opportunity before exhausting your own.

Unlike war, most large-scale human initiatives are driven by economic motives and by the long held view that "more is better." Agriculture, forestry, mining, and urban development are all activities that may be carried out in a sustainable way, but that are only rarely practiced sustainably in today's economy. Under present economic conditions, investors and entrepreneurs are rewarded for the "quick kill," in which they satisfy a need that generates a short-term return on one's investment. Once the land is depleted and rendered non-productive, then the developer simply moves elsewhere and starts anew. This modern equivalent of slash-and-burn agriculture may have been tolerable, at least from a human perspective, in earlier times when--as environmentalists

say--humans lived in an "empty earth." The interests of other species, less mobile than humans, may have been trashed, but our kind could always abandon a depleted or otherwise ruined landscape. Humans today occupy a "full earth," meaning there is nowhere else to go...no escaping the damage and depleted opportunity deriving from an unsustainable enterprise.

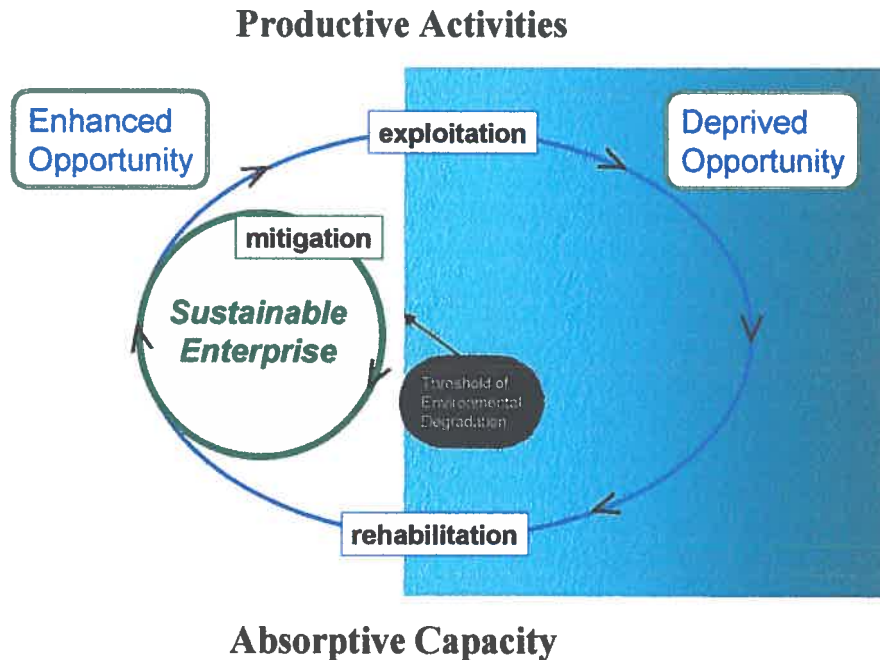
Humans at all levels of existence suffer the consequences of unsustainable enterprise. Dust bowl agriculture creates desperate migrations. Resource boom towns displace or culturally corrupt indigenous peoples. Mega-cities create unprecedented urban squalor. And all humans today suffer a profound loss of future security due to the reckless over-use of limited resources, as well as the pervasive spread of unhealthful and destabilizing pollutants. There is no human practice more *un*-sustainable than the widespread destruction of the tropical rain forest. These formerly vast tracts of habitat are essential reservoirs of biodiversity. They are also aptly called the "lungs" of our planet because they capture carbon dioxide, sequester it, and release plentiful oxygen. The world's forests are essential on any count, but their criticality today is heightened by our species' rampant conversion of fossil carbon--oil, coal, and natural gas--into carbon dioxide. The forests, if left intact or allowed to proliferate, would provide a valuable hedge against atmospheric carbon accumulation. But instead we destroy them, often by burning, which pumps still more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

The cynical environmentalist points out that the earth and its biota, on the larger scale, is unthreatened by humanity's rapid redistribution of carbon from the crust to the atmosphere. Taken as a whole, the biosphere is resilient, with many species that will thrive in the climatically changed circumstances of a carbon-enriched atmosphere. The problem becomes evident only when viewed from the human perspective. Our massive and still malignant society is keenly adapted to, and now hyper-dependent on, things as they are today. Our cities are sited, our infrastructures are constructed, and our agriculture is organized with today's conditions in mind: today's sea level, today's temperature, and today's storm intensity. As these conditions change in response to ill considered and unsustainable enterprise, the human consequences will be devastating. The scale and suffering of human refugees--for instance, moving northward from the densely populated coastal plain of Bangladesh--will eclipse our memories of the plighted migrants fleeing the American dust bowl or wandering through sub Saharan Africa during times of famine and turmoil.

Engaging in Sustainable Enterprise

Most human endeavor is unsustainable. Perhaps our individual, family, and community lifestyles would be sustainable with a population of a million or even a billion. But with a world population approaching six billion, accommodating three new humans every second, our individual ecological footprints are cumulatively overwhelming the absorptive capacity of the environment. Exhibit 2, adapted from Reith and Thomas⁶, illustrates how human practices degrade environmental conditions whenever productive endeavors exceed the absorptive or self-renewing capacity of the environment.

Exhibit 2
In sustainable enterprises, environmental considerations
are integrated into all decision making



The environmental degradation that results from unsustainable enterprise diminishes future opportunity in the ways described above. The ethic that must be promoted, from the first training of our youth through the strategic decision making of large governments and corporations, is that human endeavors must not degrade the environment nor destroy future opportunity. The key is to do business wholly in the realm of sustainability. Leaders must come to grips with the fundamental reality that exploitation today will necessitate costly rehabilitation tomorrow. The far wiser and, in the long run, more economical approach is to mitigate (anticipate and avoid) environmental impacts. In strategic planning, the questions that must be raised and unfailingly addressed are:

- Does this enterprise create, maintain, or destroy opportunity?
- Does our enterprise damage the environment in a way that will be expensive and time consuming to correct?

- Have we accounted for the hidden costs--health effects, displacement, species extinction, accident, and human suffering--that may underlie our endeavors?
- Do we simply try to comply with environmental laws and regulations, or do we commit ourselves to protecting health and environment to the fullest extent possible?
- Do our stakeholders--owners, employees, customers, and neighbors--fully understand what we do? Do they know the risks and view them as worthwhile? Do they approve of what we do?
- How will our children and their descendents view our actions of today?

A good model for corporate and community decision making, which is frequently cited by environmentalists, is that which was promulgated by the leadership of the great Iroquois Confederation in 18th Century America:

*In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact
of our decisions on the next seven generations*

Command and Control Systems of Environmental Regulation...On the Way Out?

Although it is attractive to think leaders in business and government would, in their deliberations, accommodate the interests of future earth occupants, such is rarely the case. The truth is that many business leaders are responsive almost singularly to their company's next earnings report, and politicians to their approval ratings and campaign coffers. How are we to inculcate sustainability into the values and decision frameworks of these decision makers? The problem is that, even if some companies or individuals elect to sacrifice their short-term wealth and profitability for the sake of environmental sustainability, there will always be those who exploit the situation to their own advantage, negating the benefit of the altruistic behavior. Garrett Hardin calls this *the tragedy of the commons*⁷.

The solution thus far has been to enact vast and cumbersome systems of environmental regulation that curtail pollution, limit waste production, and otherwise force industries and municipalities to reduce their environmental impact. The goal is to share the burden of sustainability and prevent environmentally exploitative behavior--with government enforcement actions, if necessary. This formula of regulation and enforcement generally accomplishes its intended goals, albeit at a very steep price, on the community and national levels. The system breaks down entirely at the international level, which is why pervasive problems such as deforestation, fisheries depletion, and atmospheric CO²/ozone problems continue unabated.

Nations and communities who seek sustainability within their own boundaries turn to a regulatory system often called *command and control* these days, which, as mentioned

earlier, exacts a grave price in terms of creative and productive enterprise. Command and control systems have countless disadvantages, not the least of which are as follows:

- Such systems generally pit regulators, with virtually no creative mandate or latitude, against industries and municipalities who could probably solve their way out of any problem, but are restrained from using their creative resources to do so
- The systems prescribe standardized requirements that are often inappropriate for specific applications
- Where command and control systems don't prescribe, they prohibit, impeding productivity and limiting the field of opportunity.
- The systems create an atmosphere of adversity among all participants instead of fostering the creative cooperation that is really needed to address the problem

Industry and government is littered with examples where a win-win solution to an environmental problem has been apparent, but where statutory requirements prohibited the synergistic solution in favor of some unhappy compromise. The regulatory program in the United States, administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, seems woefully ineffective. According to one industry leader⁸, EPA estimates that over 85 million manhours are spent each year simply filling out and filing environmental reports. The program's inefficiency is reflected in a calculation, performed by policy makers at Harvard's School of Public Health, that the *cost-per-life saved* by EPA's regulatory program exceeds 7.5 million dollars. This is more than 87 times the cost-per-life saved by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's programs on worker protection, and 326 times the cost-per-life saved by the Federal Aviation Administration, which oversees aircraft safety.⁸

A human life has infinite value, and cost-per-life is not the only measure of a program's worthiness. But the point is that today's environmental regulatory programs are cumbersome impediments to productivity. They may control pollution, reduce waste, and discourage cheating, but they seem to accomplish little in advancing underlying ethic of sustainable development, which is to preserve and/or create opportunity. The basically represent institutionalized adversity, pitting environmental activists against industry, with scientists and government serving as uneasy arbiters.

Community Green Plans

What is needed is to unleash the creative potential of industry and the environmental community in synergistic problem solving. No one underestimates the power of the enterprising human spirit--imagination, adaptability, and perseverance--when unleashed. Most of us now recognize that bureaucratic regulatory systems are like ever-tightening leashes, stifling creative productivity. A promising new approach to effecting meaningful environmental improvement is called *green planning*⁹. The process, which is nicely articulated in stepwise fashion in *The Community Indicators Handbook*¹⁰, starts

with a meeting among community leaders, industry, environmentalists, and other concerned parties to determine *what everybody really wants?* It is often quickly discovered that, when even the most dissimilar among us explore our core values, we often seek the same general things: security, health, comfort, and opportunity. The process is a consensus exercise, concentrating on the common ground and disregarding to the extent possible the potentially distracting and discouraging array of differences.

The next step in the green planning process is to establish agreed-upon measures of things that we all desire. For instance, few would dispute the desirability of easily measured trends such as:

- More high-paying, secure jobs
- More families in their own homes
- Lower prices for bread and milk
- More families with incomes above the poverty level
- Fewer cancer diagnoses at the local hospital
- Faster commutes between home and work
- More graduates from high school and college
- Fewer crimes and preventable accidents.

These might not seem at first blush to be environmental parameters, but they are good measures of a community's health and security. Some parameters such as the percentage of unpaved land and amount of waste recycled bear directly on the issue of sustainability. Once community representatives settle on a consensus suite of parameters to measure, systems are established to capture and report the desired data. Short-term and long-term objectives are set, toward which community leaders work diligently.

Green planning has worked promisingly well for a number of communities. Most American environmentalists look toward *Sustainable Seattle* as the seminal example of community consensus building and environmental improvement. Dozens of other US communities have followed the *Sustainable Seattle* model as is elucidated in *The Community Indicators Handbook*¹⁰. All that is really required for this approach to succeed on the community level is energized individual participation in which representatives advocate their own interests, agree on common objectives, and participate in good-faith support toward the achievement of those objectives.

Green plans have shown promise on a larger scale, as well. New Zealand and The Netherlands have both adopted a cooperative approach toward setting and pursuing environmental goals. They have succeeded in defusing much of the antagonism between industry and environmentalists, instead putting these parties to work on formulating mutually desired objectives, and then developing plans toward their achievement. Government basically serves as the facilitator for this interaction, helping to negotiate "environmental improvement contracts," and then providing follow up enforcement of the agreed upon standards of conduct. The scientific community, mostly participating from an academic perspective--provides the objective insight for informed planning and measurement systems for effective performance monitoring.

An International Environmental Management Standard

What about the greater challenge of enlisting the participation of business and industry, where decisions are driven by the financial bottom line, and corporate altruism is competitively penalized? The key is for industry leaders to recognize collectively that business will flourish only in a prosperous and healthful future. With a few depressing exceptions such as coffins and cancer therapy, most markets will require a vigorous, healthy populace to provide a steady source of demand. If corporations contemplate their long-term possibilities, they realize that, by protecting the environment, they are nurturing their future customers.

A growing number of major corporations have adopted sustainable development with this very recognition in mind. British Petroleum, Monsanto Chemical, and Tokyo Power are among the world's largest enterprises, and each has made a strong corporate commitment from the top down to sustainable enterprise. These are but three members of the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD), which is a consortium of more than 200 major companies that recognize the importance of sustainability, and that collaborate in its advocacy.

Even the most strongly committed company cannot change overnight. There are profits to earn and stockholders to reward. However, environmentally enlightened corporations such as BCSD's membership rarely bother to contest environmental regulations, because they recognize that such rules "level the playing field" against environmental cheaters (e.g., tragedy of the commons). Further, such companies concentrate their planning efforts toward sustainable endeavors that create human capital (education, services, manufacturing) rather than just consuming earth capital (fossil fuels, minerals). They look for opportunities to promote sustainability¹¹, share lessons learned, and work together on the more encompassing environmental problems.

Business leaders have teamed up to formulate an international management standard to help environmentally responsible companies easily identify each other. The standard, which is known as ISO 14000, was conceived in Europe, and is now sweeping around the globe. Unlike command-and-control regulatory systems, the ISO standard does not explicitly prescribe how a participating company must conduct its business. Instead, the standard calls for its participants to establish *environmental management systems* that institutionalize the precepts of sustainable development. Companies that wish to declare themselves as "ISO 14000 certified" (or, optionally, seek third-party sanction from a board of auditors) must commit not just to upholding all pertinent environmental laws, but to continuously reducing their adverse environmental impacts and expanding their potentially beneficial influences.

The ISO program is totally voluntary, but an ever-increasing number of companies now limit their business relationships to fellow ISO 14000 companies. In this way, companies large and small are combining their forces to reward and sustain the productive members in today's industrial ecology, and to squeeze out the environmental cheaters whose era of selfish prosperity is nearing its end.

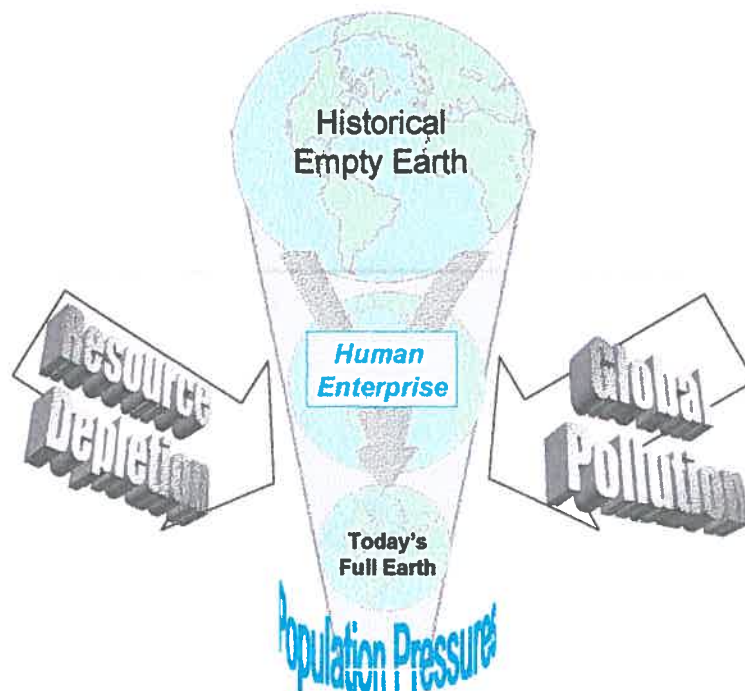
From Corporate Cooperation to Individual Initiative--*The Natural Step*

It is heartening to know that communities and corporations are learning from the mistakes of the past, that they understand the importance of environmental sustainability, and that they are closing in on solutions to perpetually perplexing problems such as the tragedy of the commons. Ultimately, however, humanity's fate resides in the human spirit. How will we as individuals contribute personally and collectively toward the broadest possible field of opportunity in which humans may evolve toward a higher condition?

An inspiring initiative to inculcate sustainability into the values of a whole nation is *The Natural Step*, which is a profoundly promising movement initiated by one individual: a Swedish oncologist named Karl Heinrich Robert. In Robert et al's *Compass for Sustainable Development*¹¹, our ever fuller earth is viewed as a funnel presenting an increasingly narrow range of successful alternatives for businesses, communities, and individuals. As illustrated in Exhibit 3, the factors listed above--overpopulation, resource depletion, and global pollution--create ecological pressure. Ill conceived, (i.e., unsustainable) endeavors will either escape the boundaries of the funnel and fail, or will bounce off the walls of the funnel back into the realm of sustainability. Robert asserts that the most efficient, and least painful, course of action for any person, place, or thing, is to understand this funnel of sustainability and steer successfully within its bounds, toward a prosperous future.

Exhibit 3

The Natural Step views the global field of opportunity as a funnel bounded by unsustainability and impingement on the rights of others; astute entrepreneurs will steer their enterprises through the middle of the funnel.



Robert personally undertook the education of his homeland nation of Sweden¹² by convincing government leaders to promote the doctrine of sustainability in virtually every possible context. Course materials were provided to schools, churches, and businesses, and mailings were distributed to homes and charities. The concept of sustainability was explained in all these contexts, and Swedes were encouraged to factor the elements of sustainable development into all their planning and decision making.

The results of this remarkable campaign have been most promising. Overall measures of quality of life have improved, and Swedish industries have retained their competitive position in the international market place.¹³ Once informed about sustainability and its value, citizens in all walks of life made subtle changes in their outlook and behavior to promote environmental improvement. The countless small changes appear to be acting synergistically toward wholesale reductions at the national level in energy use, pollution, and waste. Further, optimism abounds that, as the current generation--having been educated from first principles on sustainable development--moves into leadership positions, the situation will simply build upon itself. Sustainability will become truly inherent in the value set of the Swedish persona.

Many advocates of sustainable development view Sweden's natural step very favorably, and are striving to initiate similar programs of education in their own communities. The encouraging message is that: once humans *understand* what needs to be done to make the world a better place, and how everyone stands to benefit, they will participate generously in process. The key is to create understanding, at which point this seemingly hopeless environmental problem will almost solve itself.

Conclusion: It all Boils Down to *Considerateness*

This paper has thus far dealt almost entirely with the issue of environment and sustainability, which reflects the expertise and value set of the authors. One of us (CR) is an academic in the environmental field, and both of us (CR and NSB) are deeply committed to a family-owned environmental business. We strive for our small enterprise--which provides environmental management consulting to companies of all shapes and sizes--to be a model of everything we preach. We strive relentlessly to minimize our adverse environmental impacts and extend our favorable influence. These objectives occasionally require sacrifice in short-term wealth and productivity, but they provide gratification, which is profound and enduring. We intentionally integrate our business and our family life, which is easy because our offices are part of our home. The children understand that our mission is *sustainability*, the protection of the environment and the preservation, if not creation, of opportunities for others to meet their own needs.

We try to be generous toward the interest of others in the conduct of our business, but we are not selfless. *Sustainable Systems, Inc.* (our management consulting practice) is entrepreneurial and profitable. We intend to keep it that way, building continuously upon our successes.

Sustainability is unequivocally the underlying the ethic in the practice our family business. We acknowledge, however, that the concept of sustainability is perhaps too mechanical and impersonal to be the central element in the value set of our family life. To translate and expand the notion of sustainability into a more meaningful value set for family life, we may look to the profound teachings of Confucius in ancient China. When asked to distill all of his teachings to a single word, Confucius responded: "considerateness."

We humans, in the conduct of our lives, need only be considerate of the interests and opportunities of all other living beings with whom we share our planet. Time must vanish in this value set, meaning that we must learn to represent the interests of our forebearers, whom we have traditionally revered, and our successors, whom we have typically abandoned to their own resources. It is in this context--where each of us strives to enhance the opportunities of others even as we endeavor in our own personal enterprise--that our species may someday realize its highest condition.

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