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Caring about Self, Society and Environment:

On the Deep Green Eco-Ethics for Strong Sustainable Development

Abstract

Western humanity has long struggled to find effective and comprehensive ways of caring for members of our societies and the natural environments upon which we depend. Paradoxically, it is these same Western societies that are responsible for much of the social and environmental problems facing the planet today. While sustainable development (SD) is increasingly featuring in discussions at the highest levels of international governance, weak approaches to the ways we care for society and environment are being advocated throughout the West. These approaches are at-best reformist and anthropocentric. The following chapter argues that leadership can emerge in Western nations like Australia by implementing strong approaches to SD through deep green eco-ethics. Deep green eco-ethics prioritise care for society and the environment – concurrently. They are transformational and reach beyond the polarisation of human and more-than human needs. They centralise intrinsic value and in doing so guide us towards creating the conditions that will assure the flourishing of all life on Earth. Beyond the theoretical foundations of deep green eco-ethics is an array of praxes that reflect a commitment to implementing strong SD in one's daily life and throughout one's community. The following chapter also explores the importance of claiming a place as home, consuming consciously, volunteering in the third sector as a way to contribute to the resolution of local community issues, and non-violent direct actions.

A Sustainable Future?

Western nations in the Americas, the European Union and Australasia have long struggled to find effective and comprehensive ways of caring for members of our societies and the natural environments that sustain life. These same societies are responsible for disproportionately large amounts of the social and environmental problems the planet is now facing. They are also the source of considerable international leadership that could set a new agenda for the future. Notably however, while it is true that support for sustainable development (SD) is increasing as world leaders acknowledge the smart politics and the business-sense of social and environmental concerns, policies and practices implemented by regional and international leaders tends to tetter on a knife-edge of tension between economic flourishing and social/environmental reform.[1] Within such a paradigm, how successful have we been at creating a world that respects all humans along with the more-than-human world? The pervasive social and environmental struggles we are facing indicate that a reformist approach to SD falls short of the sort of changes to values, behaviours and infrastructures that are needed to avert worsening problems. It will be argued that a deeper and long-range approach to SD is needed and that this requires an ideological and practical shift in the ways we interact with each other and wider nature.

Ideologically speaking, SD can be divided into two main camps: weak and strong.[2] Those who subscribe to weak SD loosely support environmental preservation to the extent that economic growth is sustained over time. This has resulted in hierarchical systems of privilege that assure wealthy nations and individuals benefit at the expense of the

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[1] See Meadows *et al.* 1974, World Commission On Environment and Development, 1987, Meadows, *et al.* 1992. Also see Gorz, 1980, pp. 77 - 78.

[2] Daly and Cobb, 1994, pp. 197 – 198, Haughton and Hunter, *op. cit.,* p. 272 and Hopwood, *et al.,* 2005, p. 40.

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poor and the planet. Such a trend is reflective of a short-sighted approach to human flourishing, supports the competitive and consumptive ethical basis of a hyper-materialised West, encourages resource use while disregarding the vital needs of future generations of humans, and ascribes little if any concern to the impact of such habits on the more-than-human world. In short, business-as-usual is profoundly hegemonic (or hierarchicalised), and when proactive responses to the social and environmental problems have emerged, they have often resulted in weak policy reforms that preserve the status quo.[3] This hegemonic social construction and its accompanying edict of exponential economic growth must be challenged if we are to transform development policies beyond reform where broader care for society and environment is normalised. Resistance to making this step is fed by concerns that the privileges of wealth that benefit the West (and more accurately a select minority within these societies) will be eroded if we take a deeper and greener ethical approach to SD. The reformist approach of the status-quo is the product of prioritising profits over preservation, comfort over courage, and people over the planet. This has occurred because individuals throughout the West have lacked the personal and political will required to give all life on the planet the moral considerability deserved. We have instead deferred to technologies and innovations (such as genetic modification, or nuclear technologies) in order to sustain and advance the living standards that we have become accustomed to, while failing to see the important links between our own flourishing and the demise of human and other-than-human others.

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[3] Take the Western Australian Government's State Sustainability Strategy title Hope for the Future (2003), which began as a bold gesture of national leadership resulting in additional funding for public transportation in the city of Perth as one obvious example, the effectiveness of which has been systematically repealed over time, and with changes in government focus shifting towards global economic concerns.

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Notably, Western interactions with wider-nature have tended towards human

stewardship over the natural world.[4] Aldo Leopold's (1966) classic text *A Sand County*

Almanac illuminated the importance in harbouring a reverence for the land, suggesting

that we need to love, respect and admire the natural systems that support life.[5]

Leopold argued the case for an ethical awakening to the bounties of the land as an

alternative to the burgeoning pull towards materialism and its resultant environmental

destruction. Leopold was able to gain insight into the land's ecology by keeping record

of the biotic abundance on his Wisconsin farm. The restorative work that he and his

family devoted themselves to enabled the depleted ecological systems of that location

to be revived, and in the process provided an immersion in the land which gave rise to a

land ethic as an academic discourse unto itself. Leopold's concern for the disconnection

between rampantly industrialising humanity and its cost upon wider nature was acute:

> Mechanized man[*sic*.], oblivious of floras, is proud of his[*sic*.] progress in cleaning up the
> landscape on which, willy nilly, he[*sic*.]must live out his[*sic*.]days. It might be wise to prohibit at
> once all teaching of real botany and real history, lest some future citizen suffer qualms about the
> floristic price of his[*sic*.] good life.[6]

From such insights, Leopold posited that now famous ethical maxim: "A thing is right

when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It

is wrong when it tends otherwise."[7] Our ethical treatment of the land is necessarily

dependent upon our willingness and ability to " … see, feel, understand, love, or

otherwise have faith in" the land – to develop an "ecological consciousness" that

enables us to value the land both ideologically and in practice.[8]

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[4] See Lynn White's (1967) seminal paper *The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*, which characterizes the
tendency towards a theocratic stewardship over the Earth that views nature as at-best a 'benevolent
resource'. This is considered an artefact of the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, where humans were
conditioned to view themselves as separate and above the Earth in the pursuit for closeness with God.

[5] Callicott in Callicott (ed.), 1987, p. 196.

[6] Leopold, 1966, p. 46.

[7] *Ibid*., pp. 224 – 225.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 223.

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But this ecological rendition of stewardship stops short of valuing the biophysical world
intrinsically, giving precedent to the land for what it can do for people, even if in a
spiritual and emotive sense beyond material harvest. Something deeper than
stewardship is needed that includes one's sensitivity to the pulses of the land. This is a
perspective that might be interpreted as teleological, emotive, erotic and immersed in
rather than separate and above the land. An ethical premise that goes beyond the
traditional uses of land for human gain is one that employs reason *and* emotion in
encouraging us to take responsibility for the patches of wider-nature that we have
influence over – the back yard, the local park, a favoured forest, a field, a beach, a reef,
the family farm, the atmospheric commons – simply because they exist there. As much
as stewardship can pull us towards an intentional and active engagement with wider
nature, to do so from a utilitarian perspective is problematic. Given our reliance on
non-substitutable resources, the toxic pollution associated with natural resource
exploitation, the economic inequities that mar even the wealthiest of nations, and
declining biological resilience, something different than business-as-usual is sorely
needed. In the following chapter, it is argued that there is a stronger path forward that
stands in contrast to these weak and reformist approaches to SD. Strong SD is defined
as the willingness to embrace:

> …responsibility to future generations … including representation of future generations in
> decision-making … intergenerational conservation assessments, sustainable use of renewable
> resources, intergenerational trust funds, and education to foster a new planetary ethos.[9]

Wilfully moving towards strong SD requires deep green eco-ethics. Deep green eco-
ethics are defined as the ethical principles and practices that prioritise care for society
and environment as the ultimate expression of care for the self. Deep-green eco-ethics
harbour a sensual view of the land, and enables us to make important connections

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[9] Beder, 1996, pp. 150 -151.

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between wider nature and our own survival.[10] This is an ideological shift that places a moral premium on the intrinsic value of all life, and is a central tenet of deep ecology. This deeper view of our surroundings centralises intrinsic value in the deep ecological sense, such that broader environmental needs are given equal consideration to human needs.[11]

For Naess (1990), ecophilosopher and founder of the deep ecology movement, humanity's advancement can be tracked through four distinct phases: progress, development, economic growth, and, most recently SD.[12] From a deep ecological perspective reformist SD is the embodiment of a 'shallow' ecology.[13] Naess advocates:

> … for a further step [along his aforementioned continuum] from SD to 'ecological development' to long-range 'ecosophical development' – with an emphasis on the need for wisdom (*sophia*) as much as on the need for science and technology … [A wisdom that] will entail our studying the loss of beliefs and cultural identities now happening because of the tremendous impact of the economy and technology of big, powerful, rich industrial societies … [who are] largely responsible for this impact and the resulting cultural shock.[14]

For deep ecologists, stopping short of acknowledging the intrinsic value of all life is to see nature as little more than a means to desired humans ends, an ethical premise that lays at the very heart of deep-green eco-ethics. Deep ecology argues that we live richer lives when we acknowledge our intractable immersion in wider nature. In this light, all life is worth preserving *for its own sake*.[15] Drawing on faith and trust in human intuition, courage through direct action, joy in the lived experience and embodied play, deep

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[10] By 'sensual' I am referring to an immersive, embodied exchange with our surroundings.   By 'holistic', I am referring to an ecological view of nature where emphasising the relationships between discrete entities becomes our default perception. Such perceptions stand in opposition to a reductive, pragmatic, and cerebral approach to the ways we perceive our world, which has long been the norm – particularly throughout Western industrialised societies.

[11] Callicott in Callicott (ed.), *op. cit*., p. 196.

[12] Naess in Engel and Engel, 1990, p. 87.

[13] Naess, 1973, pp. 95 – 100.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid*., p. 89.

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ecology charts a conceptual and practical course towards a holistic view of nature as an extension of the most fully Self-expressed human being.[16] Deep ecology advocates for the "… rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total field image [where] Organisms are knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations."[17] The ways that an individual integrates the central premises of deep ecology results in a deep-green shift towards strong SD in both principle and praxis. In this way, deep ecology provides a conceptual framework for the individual to reach towards a meta-narrative of global existence, one that locates them and their lived experience within (as opposed to separate and above) the biophysical world [Appendix 1].

Deep ecology also offers an important contribution to the praxis of strong SD. Naess constructed a 'wide and deep ecological Self" that he defined as an internal state of being arrived at by the individual through various identifications with one's surroundings.[18] Naess's 'ecological self' suggests that we are:

> … in, of and for Nature from our very beginning. Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in its constituitive relations. These relations are not only relations we have to other humans and the human community … [19]

… they are relationships with wider nature as well. For deep ecologists, such a view is the default human condition, concealed by the complexities of materialism and a utilitarian selfishness. Reawakening this ecological Self emerges through an ecosophy-T; the development of a personal ecosophy (or relational wisdom) where each individual becomes a unique reflection of the infinite number of possibilities for human exchanges

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[16] Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 7. Also see Mathews, 1994, p. 159.

[17] Naess, *op. cit*., p. 16. For the eight-point platform of deep ecology, see Naess in Soulé (ed.), 1986, pp. 509 – 510.

[18] Naess, 1986, [Fourth Keith Roby Memorial Lecture in Community Science], n. p.; Naess, 1986, p. 3.

[19] Naess in Drengson and Inoue (eds.), 1995, p. 14.

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with wider nature.[20] Consequently, an ecosophical approach to SD requires ecologically

friendly ethical foundations that empower an individual to transform the abstract and

theoretical aspects of sustainability into lived experiences that will have considerable

impacts on the ways humans think about, engage with, and preserve wider nature.

Adopting a teleological view of the planet as an organism unto itself, and then taking

steps to embody such a perception in one's deeper consciousness and actions provides

a path towards strong SD. Doing so increases the likelihood that human activity will

better prioritise the needs of present and future generations of all life on Earth. This is a

Gaian view of the living planet of which humanity is an integral part.

James Lovelock formulated the Gaia hypothesis in the mid-1960's with microbiologist

Lynn Margulis.[21] Employing complex mathematical models to substantiate their claims,

the two researchers developed a view of the Earth as:

> … a complex entity involving the … biosphere., atmosphere, oceans, and soil; the totality
> constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical
> environment for life on this planet.[22]

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[20] Naess refers to his observation of a slow and painful death of a flea that leapt inadvertently into a dish
of acid as a prime example of the natural arising of " … a painful compassion and empathy" that enabled
him to see himself in the flea (*Ibid*., pp. 15 – 16.). Seeing one's self in nature is precisely the point of deep
ecology. Naess reported being able to relate with the flea by seeing himself as the flea, effectively
dissolving the boundaries between the self and the other (Naess, 1986, p. 3). Naess's particular ecological
self (*Ecosophy T*) was born from his engagement with the ecosystem of his beloved Norwegian mountain
retreat Tvergastein – each individual comes to this philosophical awakening, which is accompanied by
parallel ecocentric praxes, through their own unique personal experiences and insights. There is no
specific or prescribed ecosophy in a Naessian deep ecology, but rather an ecosophy for every person who
is able to step towards what Naess refers to as universal Self-realisation! for all beings through an
individual's deep engagement with wider-nature, see Alan Drengson's (1999) '*Ecophilosophy, Ecosophy
and the Deep Ecology Movement: An Overview*'.
[21] In Greek mythology Gaia was the Earth, destroyer and creator, offspring of Chaos and mother to Uranos
(the Heavens) and Pontus (the Sea). See Allaby in Palmer (ed.), 2001, pp. 221 – 222. Mating with Uranos,
Gaia gave birth to the gods and the Titans who eventually gave rise to all life on Earth, including humanity
(Harding, 2006, p. 40).
[22] Lovelock, 1979, p. x.

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The now widely accepted Gaia theory notes that cybernetic geophysiological macro-
systems are comprised of tightly coupled subsystems, which collectively regulate all
life.[23] Gaia theory recognises that the Earth possesses three unique traits when
compared to other known planets in our Solar System: a holistic tendency to keep
constant conditions that support life; an intricate web of ecosystems that function as
vital organs that are accompanied with expendable/redundant ones; and an ability to
self-regulate in response to environmental perturbations to prevent systemic run-away
effects.[24] For Margulis (1998):

> Gaia, in all her symbiotic glory, is inherently expansive, subtle, aesthetic, ancient, and exquisitely
> resilient. No planetoid collisions or nuclear explosions have ever threatened Gaia as a whole. So
> far the only way in which we humans prove our dominance is by expansion. We remain brazen,
> crass, and recent, even as we become more numerous. Our toughness is a delusion … The planet
> will not permit our populations to continue to expand.[25]

As humanity places increasing stress on the earth's biophysical systems, we increase the
likelihood of social and ecological aberrations that may well compromise our own
fecundity along with the many other-than-human others that are being threatened by
our success.

But for some, Gaia theory is more than a holistic science. In acknowledging a
teleological presence throughout the global biosphere, Gaia theory can have profound
cultural, psychological and metaphysical ramifications. Beyond scientific insights into
the geophysiology of the Earth, Stephan Harding (2006) suggests that Gaia theory

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[23] *Ibid*., pp. 1 – 10. To be precise, Gaia theory refers not to the entire planet in the global sense but rather
to the:

… thin spherical shell of matter that surrounds the incandescent interior; it begins where the crustal rocks
meet the magma of the Earth's hot interior, about 100 miles below the surface, and proceeds another 100
miles outwards through the ocean and air to the even hotter thermosphere at the edge of space. It
includes the biosphere and is a dynamic physiological system that has kept our planet fit for life for over
three billion years (Lovelock, 2006, p. 15).

[24] *Ibid*., p. 119.

[25] Margulis, 1998, p. 128.

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(re)awakens the *anima mundi* or 'soul of the world' by (re)connecting the human soul with the soul of the living planet.[26] In suggesting that the litany of social and environmental problems we are facing today stem from a false perception of the planet as mere resource, Gaia theory views a reductive approach to modern science as erroneous.[27] Consequently, the relevance of Gaia theory as an alternative or holistic science is accompanied by the potential for a paradigmatic shift in the perception of humanity's place within the living planet. A Gaian perspective might also include the view that evidence of global warming for example is in fact the Earth's way of giving warning signs to humanity about overshoot and the possibility of collapse in some essential life support systems. From a deep-green eco-ethical perspective, the subtext beneath the symptoms of climate change may be taken as the Earth's call for human actions that considers the needs of current and future generations of all life. Doing so could redirect individual and societal will towards a broader and longer-range care for human and more-than-human others. Such a conceptual transformation increases the likelihood of assuming behavioural modifications that advocate for just social constructions while preserving the resource wealth of the planet.

Deep Green Eco-Ethical Praxes:

So how do we live more sustainable lives in a practical sense? Weak SD values people's needs over the vital needs of wider nature. To the other extreme, valuing wider-nature over people's vital needs approaches misanthropy. Neither scenario is adequate. We must examine the practical applications of deep green eco-ethics in real terms if strong SD is to become a reality. The following examples offer some ideas about how we can

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[26] Harding, *op. cit*., p. 28. Note that the terms (re)awaken and (re)connect are used here to imply that these perceptions of the human/nature relationship are not new, but rather have been concealed by Western Modernity (see Devall and Session, 1985, p. ix).

[27] See White, 1967, pp. 1203 – 1207.

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take the deep-green eco-ethics of strong SD into our daily lives. They are both personal and public as well as private and political.

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Claiming Place as Home:

Developing a relational sensitivity towards the vital needs of others beyond one's own

vital needs is an important aspect of strong SD. When we identify with others,

empathise with them about the circumstances in their lives, and reach towards them

beyond the self, we actively engage with our community.[28] This can occur between the

self and human and other-than-human others, simultaneously. Sinking into the

immediate environment of our communities and the ecosystems that sustain them

enables us to participate in less exploitative and more connected stories about home

and our place within it. This reaching beyond the self is valuable because we tend to

better care for that which we are in relationship with; distancing the self from others is

a recipe for relational breakdowns which reaching for others contradicts.

We also tend to have a stronger sense of self when we are intimately connected to our

homes. With time, a basal reference point to our biome can emerge; our presence

within a bioregion comes into our consciousness and our knowledge about the

ecosystems that support us become intuitive in much the same way that indigenous

peoples develop a deep sense of Country as spiritual home along with being a source of

sustenance. Through the passing of time, we acquire historical knowledge about a place

that we impact and are impacted by. Such story building is a primal exercise. Becoming

familiar with the flow of a local river throughout the seasons, the changing trajectory of

the sun, the sector of the night sky where a favoured constellation dwells, the return of

a song bird that delights us in the Spring, a reflexive understanding about what food

crops grow best where and at what time of the year in our own back yards, a barefooted

walk in a spring rain, sharing time with family and friends in parks, forests, deserts, or

coasts, exercising outside, organising street parties, noting the nuances of people from

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[28] Cheney in Weston (ed.), 1999, pp. 150 – 151. Peterson (2001) notes that narratives about one's storied
residence or home provide an ethical map that includes signposts to guide us towards creating a different
reality from that which we are currently immersed (p. 230).

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places similar or different from our own, even the simple act of taking our neighbour

some lemons, all amount to sinking roots in place. These are but a few of the myriad

ways that claiming home in the Western context facilitates a transformational shift

towards strong SD. Activities such as these draw us out from behind our computers and

television screens to authentically engage with the community of human and more-

than-human Others that we live with. And in doing so we are participating in the

making of stories of local significance; we allow ourselves to be graced by the Earth as a

"… presence of the more-than-human … to awake and go to sleep with it, to take its

rhythms and cycles for the rhythms and cycles of [our own lives], until the two finally

merge into one stream."[29] There is a grounding quality that comes from such an

experience, which occurs when we embrace the many human and other-than-human

others in a particular place, season after season, year after year.[30] In these times of

looming climate change, increasing fuel costs, and cybernetic social networking, the

compulsion to travel vast distances is being confronted by the richness of claiming one's

place as home.

Conscious Consumption:

Forming an organised consumer lobby can help guide us towards strong SD as well.

Western standards of living far exceed those in the developing world, and result in

considerable material excesses and waste. Investing time to provide feedback to

manufacturers can be a proactive means of supporting SD, but requires a deep green

ethical foundation to do so, along with a commitment to enrolling one's self and others

in a particular cause. As Nader (2000) astutely points out, we are not likely to have a

comprehensive impact on manufacturing trends as individuals.[31] Group buying,

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[29] Weston, 1994, p. 143.

[30] Cook, 2001, pp. 55 – 64.

[31] Nader, R. (2000) 'The Current Trend Of Excessive Consumption Is Creating A Consumer Culture That
Values Quantity Above Quality'.

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collective information exchanges, bulk complaint handling, and unionised negotiations
with management are likely to have much more profound impacts on the ways
consumables are produced and distributed, as well as consumed.   Building on the
aforementioned recommendation, it is in the company of the many that corporations
and governments being to be lead by the people. Further to reducing consumption and
waste, consumer organising governs politicians whose shifting morality will invariably
aim to keep pace with their constituents. Note that the tipping point for change in
public policy is estimated to be approximately twenty percent.[32] The effectiveness of
such intentions hinges on a critical mass, which requires education and networking. This
may take the form of attending meetings to create and manage local food cooperatives,
growing one's own food in a community garden or through guerrilla gardening on
vacant lots, helping to organise a local 'buy-nothing' day, submitting petitions to
corporate executives whose products and services are failing to meet appropriate social
or environmental standards, or lobbying public representatives etc. It may make sense
to buy fewer but higher quality things that will last longer, or to the other extreme, find
contentment with the purchase of used or locally produced goods that are cheaper or
not quite what one is looking for. While these sorts of strategies will have a minimal
impact on consumer trends, collective organising in alignment with deep green eco-
ethics will help move corporate (first sector) and government (second sector) policy and
practices towards strong SD.[33]

Volunteerism:

Becoming a member of a community coalitions (third sector) can have a profound
impact on one's knowledge, investment, and contributions to the local community.

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[32] Gladwell, 2000, p. 19.

[33] Being thoughtful about the way one consumes is no panacea in reconciling the aforementioned social
and environmental concerns – 7 billion people consuming in thoughtful ways still leaves us in a state of
resource scarcity. But being thoughtful in the directions suggested here will make incremental inroads
towards strong SD policies and practices.

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Community coalitions provide a forum for resourceful citizens to engage in local
decision making, provide needed services, or distribute goods that fill a specific purpose
throughout a community.[34] They are typically comprised of groups of people who share
a common interest in a particular service of social or environmental significance, and are
willing to volunteer time to bring about a benefit for themselves and others. The
strength of a community coalition is dependent on the breadth of skills, the integrity of
the relationships, and the effectiveness of the organization to be able to deliver useful
products and/or services to the members' community. By becoming a member, an
individual is able to build capacity (the ability of a community coalition to increase its
member's competencies in various tasks), provide opportunities to interact with others,
and facilitate personal and professional growth. Organizational leadership
development, flexibility in responding to changing conditions, cooperative functioning,
and collaborative attempts to achieve desired outcomes provide some key motivators
for participating in a community coalition. Typically, community coalitions aim to
accomplish proficiency on all of these levels, and pursue such goals with hefty doses of
goodwill and donated labour.

Community coalitions dedicated to social and/or environmental justice projects provide
an important source of community education. They provide creative and locally
relevant solutions to percolating social and environmental dysfunctions.[35] But for such
organizations to survive and flourish, a number of key criteria must be met. These
criteria are: cooperation, respect, effective conflict resolution, communication, and an
understanding of member capacities.[36] Long-term success of these coalitions is
dependent upon the virtues of caring and kindness, consideration and sensitivity, of
community and allegiances that prioritize the good of the Earth as a commons. Such

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[34] Knoke and Wood, 1981, p. 2.

[35] Selsky, 1991, p. 112.

[36] Foster-Fishman *et al. op. cit.,* p. 243

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virtues need to gain purchase within members as well as the organizational structures and management systems they facilitate if strong SD is to emerge as a central tenet.[37] Community coalitions empower local citizens to address local problems that may not be receiving the attention they deserve from governments or corporations. There is a richness of exchange that comes from one's active participation in a community coalition that can stretch the bounds of one's moral inventory to include perspectives that were perhaps not considered before. In this sense, active engagement with a community coalition can accelerate the degree to which one engages with broader views. When focused on issues of social and/or environmental justice, community coalitions provide a forum for ethical transformations towards increased community and ecological sensitivity to occur. Active participation also enables members of community coalitions to diversity their ethical values through exposure to a mosaic of differing beliefs.

Non-violent Direct Action:

The praxes mentioned above collectively support what is arguably the most effective way to steer a community towards strong SD. Non-violent Direct Action (NVDA) is a particular approach to social change that employs public and disruptive confrontations to raise awareness and interrupt the execution of governmental or corporate endeavours that are unpopular, destructive, or inconsiderate of local social and environmental issues. These confrontations avoid conflicts that would result in harm towards nature, people or property. NVDA finds its roots in Bill Moyer's (1987) *Movement Action Plan*, beginning with the premise that "[p]ower ultimately resides with the populace."[38] No government or corporation is more powerful than a unified,

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[37] As a cultural response to non-sustainability, such virtues might be thought of as a necessary counterbalance to the culturally reinforced tendency to be acquisitive, aggressive, warlike and domineering that pervades the West. To do otherwise is proving to be suicidal.

[38] Moyer, 1987, p. 3.

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educated and communicative group of inspired citizens who challenge powerbrokers to conform to common sensibilities. The imperatives of NVDA have been particularly successful at mobilizing movements to shift public opinion away from ruling bodies with controlling interests over an issue, resulting in the redistribution of decision-making authority to grassroots community coalitions or even an empowered loosely organized general populace. Integral to NVDA is the commitment to non-violence. Following in the footsteps of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, NVDA as a gesture of activism is built upon pacifist philosophy, which assumes a moral high-ground where all forms of violence are considered wrong.[39]

During the 1990's, NVDA played a crucial role in the successful campaign to end the logging of old-growth forest in the South West of Western Australia. This resulted in a Regional Forest Agreement, which included the preservation of 45,700ha of old-growth jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and karri (*E. diversicolor*) forests, the establishment of 215,000ha of conservation reserves, assured the forest industry of 20 years resource security through a managed harvest plan, committed $59million to timber, tourism and regional development so that fiscal opportunities other than old-growth logging could be established, of which $17.5million was specifically dedicated to tourism facilities in the region.[40] This outcome exceeded the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system quota for forest preservation, which can be largely credited to the collective efforts of the forest protection campaign.[41]

Crucial to the success of the campaign was consensus decision making, community building and the prioritization of conflict resolution amongst the 'forest protectors'. This engaged group of citizens remained committed to their cause for the long haul.

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[39] Moseley, 2006, n.p.

[40] Lee and Maddock in Paulin (ed.), (2006), pp. 110 – 124. Also see: Prime Minister's Press Office (1999).

[41] *Ibid*.

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They educated themselves about both sides of the issue of old-growth forestry, extending empathy towards forest workers, government representatives and law enforcement personnel. They developed acute communication skills in managing their community and found innovative ways to engage with those representing the forest industry.   They harnessed their passion for forest preservation with tenacity, using respect and humility as their guiding principal. They looked to the forest to refresh their efforts and allowed the grandeur of the trees they stood with to inspire them when fatigue and defeat approached. They celebrated the smallest of victories to refresh their resolve. They nurtured each other in body, mind and soul. They organized themselves around a commitment to non-violent direct action which included erecting platforms in tree canopies, sinking obstacles in logging tracks, locking their bodies to machinery and blockading transportation routes into and out-of coupes. They employed conventional means such as letter writing and political lobbying to enable their efforts to gain momentum in urban centers. When disunity struck, they invested the time and energy required to settle their differences and in doing so sustained their collegiality.[42]   In these ways, they made manifest a dream of standing up to government policy, corporate financial savvy, and law enforcement on behalf of one of the world's most biological diverse ecosystems. The effectiveness of this level of coordinated action is succinctly captured by Murdoch University's foundation lecturer and renown ecological feminist Patsy Hallen:

> As I stand beside a 500-year-old Jarrah, I ponder the meaning of community, the heart stopping support we received from so many good people, and I am also attentively mindful of the interspecies communities, of all the incredible, wonderous, mind-blowing beings that share in our triumph. John Muir is right: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."[43]

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[42] Frith in Paulin *op. cit.*, p. 130.

[43] Hallen in *Ibid.*, p. 135.

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As an expression of the most sophisticated personal praxis of deep-green eco-ethics, NVDA teaches us much about the empowering prospect of caring for each other and our surroundings as the ultimate gesture of caring for ourselves. And to implement these strategies to the degree of success witnessed required a profound shift in the ethical foundations that were laid into each member of the forest action group. Articulating one's way through the deep-green eco-ethics of strong sustainable development encourages one to embrace the universal whole, bending one's back and lending one's voice to the many human and other-than-human others that would otherwise be swept aside by business-as-usual's insatiable appetite for unfettered development.

Conclusion:

Weak SD has used reform to delay the reasonable, realistic and sorely needed responses to the problems we are facing in society and environment by denying the transformational changes required for a truly sustainable relationship between humans and wider nature to emerge.   A stronger stance must be championed if those species whose vital needs have long-lacked the consideration they deserve are to flourish along with humanity on into the future. Through the lens of deep green eco-ethics, one's perception shifts away from the dualistic and materialist egoism of self-gratification. Spending time in natural settings where life is given the space to express itself with wild abandon is one vital way for those of us in the West to foster deep-green eco-ethics. Go for an hour, a day, a week or longer; find pristine places and let them pull on your heart and imagination.[44] Stand and be their voice. There is something inherently powerful about removing ourselves from the manufactured environs of the technocratic world. But such delights are the privilege of the wealthy. With the localised recommendations offered here, there must be an equal emphasis on extending resources – financial, infrastructural, consumable, political and educational – to raising the lot of all peoples

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[44] Cook, 2001, p. 79.

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throughout the planet. We must be willing to give voice to the voiceless many non-
human species whose lives lay in our hands in our own back yards and throughout the
global biosphere. This requires humility and the courage to face the discomforts that a
deep green eco-ethical transformation may well instigate for those of us who have
become accustomed to the wealth and privilege of plenty. Without our willingness to
make this transformation, pristine places will suffer further degradation, and an
oblivious detachment from the hard realities of injustice will continue. Through the
deep-green eco-ethics of strong SD, we are more likely to enrich the lives of others or
leave them a wide berth to enrich themselves. In doing so, we come home to being
people *of* the Earth with our fullest humanness intact, and the integrity of the planet
preserved for *all* living beings.

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Appendix 1:

This more deeply considered view of the human/nature relationship is one that shares some similarities and differences with ecological feminism (see Zimmerman, 1987, pp. 22 – 44). Cheney (1994) sings the praises of some aspects of deep ecology, but notes that a subscription to *ecological consciousness* that widens one's self-identification to include the universe – a transition from selfhood to Selfhood – is 'salvational' (p. 163). Deep ecology is widely critiqued for an over-emphasis on the individual self, and general lack of support for social justice. Coupled with this, some view deep ecology as androcentric, overly abstract and ineffectual in the real world by erring on the side of "… socio-economic and scientific naiveté …" in order to maximise its ability to transform paradigms towards ecological consciousness from within the existing parameters of Western capitalism (Zimmerman, 1987, p. 39. Also see Merchant, 1980, p. 103). On a harsher note, Ariel Salleh (1984) views deep ecology as a self-congratulatory reformist movement …" that is little more than " … a spiritual search for people in a barren secular age…" supporting men (especially – but not exclusively) to salve an " … ungrounded restless search for the alienated Other part of themselves …" that inadvertently preserves the status-quo (p. 345). Such critiques suggest that deep ecology promises more than it delivers. However, ecological feminism shares with deep ecology a thesis of complementary interconnectivity and interdependence that can lead "... us out of the moral impasse created by the divorce between humanity and Nature" (Mathews, 1991, p. 163). Where deep ecology fails ecological feminism is in the omission of a gendered, politicised discourse (Merchant, 1992, p. 102). For ecological feminists sympathetic to some of deep ecology's tenets, the:

> … [d]eepest ecology … recognizes that science is enmeshed in socially negotiated relationships with nature, relationships that respond to the needs of society … If social goals start with the fulfilment of basic human and quality-of-life needs, then people working together through social movements can create a truly egalitarian, ecological society. Perhaps then Nature as equal partner can be healed (*Ibid*.).

Taken to its logical conclusion such statements indicate a belief by some ecological feminists that the 'deepest' ecology is best allied with eliminating social inequities as a priority (*Ibid*.). The fact that deep ecology obscures social justice is taken by some to be a significant over-site. Deep ecology offers a useful contribution to SD by providing a non-prescriptive environmental ideology that has immediate and practical applications for expressing care for human and more-than-human Others. Such an ideology is built upon the foundations of deep green eco-ethics.

Appendix 2:

Dominant global political, economic and social systems have failed to reconcile the tension that exists between the problems of society and environment. This has occurred because of a pervasive tendency towards undifferentiated growth, militarism, and the hegemonic exploitation of both people and natural resources, resulting in both a burgeoning gap between rich and poor as well as exacerbated environmental catastrophes (Spretnak and Capra, 1986, p. 16). Social ecology aims to address this tension. Standing opposed to the void of politics that pervades the biocentric world-view of deep ecology, social ecology suggests that social equanimity amongst humans is required if we are have a just world for humans and more-than-human Others. Social ecology reaches for an ideological and practical approach to human and more-than-human vital needs that is neither anthropcentric of biocentric. This was a view championed by the erudite Murray Bookchin.

Bookchin's formulation of social ecology grew out of his earlier forays in libertarian socialism, anarchist communism, eco-anarchism and social anarchism. The discourse evolved into a call for social politics and environmentalism to be at-once both public and personal:

> We are standing at a crucial crossroad. Not only does the age-old "social question" concerning exploitation of human labor remain unresolved, but the plundering of natural resources has reached a point where humanity is also forced to politically deal with an "ecological question." Today, we have to make conscious choices about what direction society should take to properly meet these challenges. At the same time, we see that our very ability to make the necessary choices is being undermined by an incessant centralization of economic and political power (Eirik Eiglad *in* Bookchin, 2007, p. 7).

Heralding the claim that "… all ecological problems are social problems …", the founder of social ecology offered his firebrand interpretations of the need for localised social freedom movements that are committed to environmental preservation through the justice politics of 'Communalism' (Bookchin, 1990, p. 24). Bookchin advocated self-organising communalisation that supports the flourishing of localised intelligence over centralised bureaucratic control. Bookchin placed his faith in the ability for small collectivities to meet the social and environmental challenges of the current age (Guha in Gruen and Jamieson (eds.), 1994, pp. 242 – 250). Bookchin's revolutionary communal politics offered a "…coherent libertarian radicalism …" that has become one of the most thorough political alternatives to arise from within human/nature discourse (*Ibid*., p. 15).

Social ecology offers an important 'real-life' alternative to Western capitalism. The discourse locates social and environmental 'freedom' at the very heart of international development discourses with the intent of supporting the rise of a rational ecological future that harmonises human societies with wider nature. This is a revolutionary notion that embraces inner and worldly liberation that reaches beyond the constraints of red/green politics:

> The achievement of freedom must be a free act on the highest level of intellectual and moral probity, for if we cannot act vigorously to free ourselves, we will not deserve to be free … If freedom is to be equated with mere survival in a world infused with myth and magic, then the less developed an aboriginal culture is, the freer it is … If this state of 'innocence' be freedom, then hyenas and zebras are freer than any 'primal' human beings who are obliged to live with social obligations and customs, not to speak of nightmarish fears … human beings [cannot] be free in a society, however pristine, if much of their lives is guided by the need to meet material requirements for existence (Bookchin, *op. cit*., pp. 255 & 260).

There is a chronology to this recommendation. Creating a space for societal and environmental freedom from human oppressions requires the presence of personal freedom first – humans will not engage nor persevere with ecological preservation imperatives if they are hungry, scantily clad, homeless or under-educated. For Bookchin, developing an awareness of this perspective is a key component of creating sustainable communities. But his recommendations go further; Bookchin implored us to do something about this need to be free, beginning with politicising the self. Politicising oneself is to actively engage with one's community, to seek out conversations that raise one's consciousness, and expand the scope of acceptable activity that one's community endorses. We need to be willing and able to 'think outside of the box' when supporting the rise of strong SD, and social ecology supports the sort of ethical transformation that the deep green eco-ethics of strong SD require. Social ecology encourages us to organise our communities in ways that work within the surpluses and constraints of our local areas, with a focus on creating functionally just societies that are self-sustaining.