



Welcome to the December/January edition of the SOC newsletter for 2008/09. In this edition we are starting a series of articles that seek to explain a bit more about what SOC is on about, and give some flesh to the bare bones of our aim as stated in the constitution. This is:

‘ Recognising Te Tiriti O Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, to actively contribute within Otautahi/Christchurch to opportunities and means for achievement of long term sustainability. In doing so, to seek to ensure that all people have their basic needs satisfied, so that they can live in dignity, in healthy communities, while having the minimum adverse impact on natural systems, now and in the future..’

In regard to this the first article from John Peet looks at what we mean by sustainability and in particular strong sustainability. There is also an article on a recent visit the committee had from Andrea Lobb from Mahaanui Kurataiao Ltd, which has been of assistance to us in our ongoing process of considering the relationship between sustainable and Treaty based development. As per normal there are also listings of recent Committee activities, and of upcoming events. In regard to the latter I would like to draw your attention again to a more frequent and comprehensive notice of events service called Econet, which is now available from the New Zealand Association for Environmental Education <http://www.environment.org.nz/>. Given this SOC will not be duplicating information that is available through this site, except for activities that SOC is directly involved in or that relate to articles in this newsletter. Articles are again categorised as noted below so you can find the issues that most interest you. Also if you do have any ideas for articles, notices about what groups you are involved in are up to, or any other sustainability related contributions you'd like to make then I'd be very happy to hear from you at [ianandmarlys <at> actrix.co.nz](mailto:ianandmarlys@actrix.co.nz). Thanks to John Peet, Christoph Hensch, Dave Evans and Lorraine Leonard for their contributions this time.

Ian Burn, Newsletter Editor

Personal (and domestic)

Local (neighbourhood level)

Town and Around (city and region wide)

National

Global

Consumption

Waste Production

Biodiversity

All of the above and/or anything else to do with sustainability

A What is Strong Sustainability?

The world is currently faced with "change drivers" of a scale and intensity never before experienced by human societies, including financial instability, climate change and peak oil. Some responses to this under the labels "sustainability" or "sustainable development" are attempting to "balance" costs to the environment and most people on the one hand, against benefits for the economy and politics on the other, through such ideas as the Triple Bottom Line. This response is known as Weak Sustainability.

We know from sustainability science and engineering, however, that such policies – also described as Business as Usual (BAU) - won't deliver real sustainability, in that while they give the impression of progress, in reality, all that is happening is that things are arguably getting worse at a slower rate, as shown by data in almost all countries, not least NZ. We are gradually realising that BAU won't deliver. Much more radical change is necessary – and desirable. This response is known as Strong Sustainability. SOC is committed to promoting Strong Sustainability.

Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand (SANZ – www.phase2.org) has been working on this topic over the last year and more, in association with the NZ National Commission for Unesco as part of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD). The definition of strong sustainability that has been developed is as follows:

- Strong sustainability means preservation of the integrity of all ecological systems
- Ecological integrity means the ability of an ecosystem to recover from disturbance and re-establish its stability, diversity and resilience.
- A strongly sustainable human society lives and develops as an integral part of ecosystems that have ecological integrity
- Strong sustainability is the prerequisite and foundation of any human development, whether social, economic or technological.

SANZ has underpinned this definition by developing a list of System Conditions that must be satisfied by any country or organisation, if real sustainability is to be achieved. These will be discussed in the next SOC newsletter.

In order for the definition and the system conditions to be functional, a major societal shift towards a different set of basic values and ethics must also happen, to enable people and decision-makers to make the necessary changes in behaviour and policy.

SANZ/DESD will be releasing progress reports on the project over the coming months, as a contribution to what we hope will be a nationwide conversation and debate. A local workshop on the results is anticipated, early in the New Year.

John Peet
SANZ Board member and SOC Committee member.

Quote to Ponder

Consumer culture doesn't thrive because we are manipulated by business or ideology. It thrives because of the million small decisions we make every day – buying a latte at Starbucks...and driving over to the mall on a Sunday afternoon because we want to be with other people" (Sharon Zukin in Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture, 2005).

A Money – why isn't there ever enough?

Our economy is drifting into increasingly difficult times. The media is full of headlines about failing finance companies and investment banks, rising food and fuel prices, unaffordable mortgages, high exchange rates and the 'credit crunch'. After months of assurances that the problem is over, it is getting worse. The American government is preparing to bail out the finance industry on Wall Street with a trillion dollars. Alongside that, we also notice that the inequality between rich and poor is not being addressed and will likely keep increasing. Further more, we are in an election year, and the main parties are out in force with easy answers - tax cuts, apparently the panacea for our economic woes. It might be time to explore a bit further what is underlying all those symptoms we are experiencing.

At the core of our economic system is something we call money and the financial industry. Most people never think about how money works, except that we will hurt if we don't have it, and therefore the best thing is to have as much of it as possible. The amount of money in circulation is rising rapidly - between 10% and 15% any given year, which is far beyond the increase of population in New Zealand - and this is far beyond the growth of the economy. Yet there never seems to be enough. If we take a closer look at how the money system works, then we see that the current difficulties were entirely predictable.

Price rises across the board are caused by different things. There are at least three major reasons for why everything becomes more expensive: a) offer and demand in the international market place, b) expectation of profits and c) the cost of money. We are currently experiencing significant increases in the cost of basic items we need in life, like food and fuel. For both of these necessities, and for many other items, we depend on the global market.

Peak oil and political uncertainty in many regions drive commodity prices up, fuel and food get more expensive because of higher transport costs, export restrictions and speculation. The demand and supply mechanism of the world markets is further enhanced with exchange rate uncertainties, with the highly valued NZ\$ making imports even more expensive.

The second reason for expensive prices is the expectation of profits. Oil prices, after hitting a high of almost \$150 in July, have come down to below \$100. Why is that in such a short period of time? Has there been a significant change in production – or is this rather a result of speculative trading with investors taking profits? In any case, those variances have a significant impact onto the prices we have to pay as a consumer. The same applies for food items.

The third reason why prices (and mortgages and rents) keep rising is the cost of money! There is hardly any property in the country that doesn't have a mortgage on it and most businesses operate on borrowed money as well. Despite the recent lowering of interest rates by the Reserve Bank, mortgages and other loans are still really expensive. At today's mortgage rates, one pays about 1.5 times the price of a house to the bank for the service of creating the money – that makes the buying of a house more than twice as expensive than the price advertised by the real estate agency.

The cost of money creation – interest – is factored into all prices we pay, for everything, not just for major items like houses. This takes us right to the heart of how our money is created. It is a fact that about 98.5% of our money is loaned into existence by a bank that is collecting interest for the privilege to do so. Nowadays, money doesn't represent the value of gold anymore, as it used to do in the past. Today's currencies are 'fiat' currencies – money is just created by a key stroke on a computer – out of nothing! The only protection (or value!) money has, is the law that makes it 'legal tender' – that means that the government requires you to use a particular kind of

'money' to pay taxes. At the same time, if traders cannot agree to use another means of exchange among themselves, the law requires that one uses legal tender to settle any outstanding debt. When money is loaned into existence, the banks are required to balance the numbers keyed into an account with a balancing account entry – in the case of a mortgage the value of the property mortgaged. This is how the 'sub-prime' crises arose at the first place, when money was created for people who could not service the mortgage and didn't have enough property value to cover the loan. This all got worse when the real estate bubble burst and property values slumped. Since we live with a 'financial monoculture', where we have only one kind of money to run our economy, we all are extremely vulnerable to any upsets in the financial industry.

Well then, what is being done about it? Having only one kind of currency to oil the economy, there are not many means to guide it. Reserve Banks in many countries believe that they only need to adjust interest rates to guide the economy. Currently the main aim seems to be to create a lot of money, by lowering interest rates, to keep the economy oiled – especially the speculative stock and currency markets, which far exceed 95% of all economic turnover. And still - why is there never enough money? Simply because the system is designed to be that way on purpose! What can we, the people, do about it? Maybe there is a great opportunity in this crisis! We've been putting all eggs into one basket: bank-issued money. Now, with the financial industry in dire straits, we might start looking at other solutions. Maybe it is time to transition from bank created money to community created money, from money created for private gain to money created for the common good, from money which is very expensive to money which is an almost free medium.

There are many thinkers and economists who have developed concepts of monetary reform and monetary transformation. Monetary reformers usually call on government to retake the power of money creation and to do so in the service of the people. Monetary transformers, often coming together in community groups, go ahead and create their own means of exchange and use it to empower and grow local communities, insulating them somewhat from the ravages of globalisation and insensitive government policies. Both have in common that currency should be issued without interest, and therefore radically reduce the cost of money.

More and more people are discovering that we have a multitude of ways at our disposal of trading and exchanging services and goods among each other. Money was invented because direct barter is often inconvenient. Money that is universally acceptable is a tangible form of trust – trust that we will receive something back for what we have provided on one hand, and trust that we contribute for what we have taken and consumed on the other hand. This trust could very well and easily be expressed in the form of complementary community currencies, timebanks and other nonexploitative exchange mechanisms. Trust could also be an implicit part of a culture of a community or nation. Such a culture would provide naturally occurring opportunities to share in the abundance that exists, unconditionally, without fear of lack. Ultimately, every individual human being can come to the realisation that we are all part of Nature, and that Nature and its intricate and interwoven systems will not stop providing – except of course if we destroy it in the process of satisfying and 'servicing' our current scarcity based money and economic system.

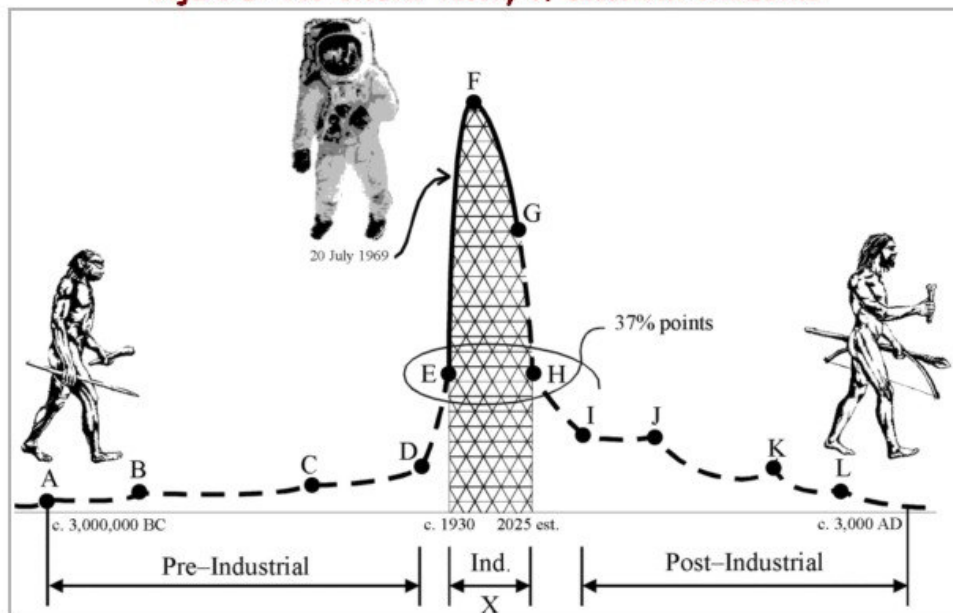
Christoph Hensch
September 2008

Christoph will be speaking on this topic at a SOC organized meeting on Tuesday 16 December at 7.30pm WEA, 59 Gloucester St

A Innovative initiative in local body consultation with the tangata whenua

At the October SOC committee meeting Andrea Lobb, General Manager of Mahaanui Kurataiao Ltd (MKT), told us about this novel and interesting new company. It opened for business on 1 October 2007 and is jointly owned by the 6 Ngai Tahu Rūnanga. The 12 directors are from the Runanga and most are involved in resource management work for their Runanga. The company was formed in response to huge demands on tangata whenua, through requests for comment on and evaluation of proposals. The same issues are being faced all over the country. These demands result from a desire to raise awareness of Maori issues and from consultation outcomes not reflecting Maori interests. They are often driven by the Local Government and Resource Management Acts to take account of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The capacity and resources for this voluntary work is limited and the people are overloaded. The CCC, for example, wanted to work more effectively with Maori in general, and with Ngai Tahu in particular. It reached an agreement with MKT to provide advice, liaison and engagement services for officers. With Councils MKT works on a cost recovery model for its base operations in order to minimize the financial risks to the Runanga. CCC has made a 3-year commitment to the agreement which has a broad scope across Council activities. Andrea says the CCC has been willing to transform the challenges of engagement with tangata whenua into opportunities. MKT aims to maximise the opportunities for improved outcomes within the constraints of the legislation under which Councils work. Continued commitment to openness and growth is a key to the success thus far. The Mahi (work) of MKT is to uphold the Mana of the Runanga as Kaitiaki. MKT does this through an appreciation of the depth of meaning of whakapapa, tikanga, mana whenua, and kaitiakitanga, underpinned by an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Andrea's presentation showed the committee that there is a lot to be learnt from the fruitful relationship that is being developed.

Figure 1. The Olduvai Theory of Industrial Civilization



A Council's to work together to prevent river pollution

On 12 September an agreement to work together to improve the quality of surface water being discharged into Christchurch rivers was signed by the City Council and Environment Canterbury. Christchurch City Council (CCC) Healthy Environment Programme Manager Jenny Ridgen says, until now, resource consent conditions relating to the quality and quantity of surface water being discharged from new developments have been determined on a site-by-site basis.

“One of the risks of considering resource consent applications on a site-by-site basis, instead of holistically, is the cumulative effects of a lot of small developments. Each one may have only a minor impact, but together the effects could be significant,” Ms Ridgen says.

The Surface Water Protocol Implementation Agreement between the two councils provides a new way of managing stormwater on a catchment-wide basis, including:

- Protecting waterways as development occurs,
- Enabling early intervention if water quality deteriorates, and
- Setting out how the two Councils will work together to deal with pollution.

Catchment boundaries are determined by areas of urban growth and Christchurch's main rivers, the Avon, Heathcote and Styx. Banks Peninsula catchments will also be covered by the agreement. Surface water can be polluted by many things, such as zinc from the roofs of houses, copper from brake linings in cars, fertilisers, pesticides and sediment runoff from building work disturbing the soil. These contaminants and sediment can effect the health and food chains of various species that rely on high quality water. The protocol aims to prevent deterioration of water quality, restore the life of the streams as much as possible and manage the risk of flooding.

Until now, developers have applied for resource consent from Environment Canterbury (ECan) to discharge stormwater. Under the new catchment-wide consents, they will seek authorisation from the CCC to discharge stormwater, as per the CCC's consent from ECan, although high risk discharges will still require consent from ECan. The CCC will apply for its first catchment-wide consent from ECan soon. Planning will be based on a joint CCC and ECan document entitled “Planning and Consents Protocol for Surface Water Management,” which was adopted by the councils in March 2006.

For more information contact Jenny Ridgen on 941 8407 or jenny.ridgen@ccc.govt.nz.

Source: CCC

W Tip the Balance - On Waste



Developed by Environment Canterbury on behalf of the Canterbury Waste Joint Committee, Tip the Balance is an interactive resource aimed at year 5-8 students. It highlights how actions have reactions and how individual choices influence the war on waste. Student workbooks and facilitator guides are also available to complement the worksite. These books are intended to work alongside the interactive CD ROM and form the base of a long term inquiry based learning experience.

www.ecan.govt.nz/Protection+and+Education/Environmental+Education/

B The Canterbury Conservancy

As background to its current Canterbury Conservancy Management Strategy Review the Department of Conservation notes that Natural heritage in the Canterbury Conservancy includes:

- 2 national parks
- 7 conservation and forest parks
- More than 1300 conservation areas and reserves
- Total conservation lands of about 1,000,000 ha
- 1 Marine Reserve and 1 Marine Mammal Sanctuary
- 18 threatened bird species
- 24 threatened freshwater fauna species
- the threatened Hector's dolphin/upokohue
- 142 threatened invertebrates
- the threatened long-tailed bat/pekapeka
- 11 threatened lizard species
- 275 threatened plants
- 800 km of coastline
- and 1 World Heritage Area



Supporting the recreation needs of 900,000 + visitors per year there are:

- 2 visitor centres
- 175 DOC huts
- 18 walkways
- 1304 km of foot tracks
- 108 km of roads/vehicle tracks
- 355 concessionaires
- 9 ski fields



DOC is also responsible for protecting a range of historic places in sites, including:

- 72 actively managed historic places
- and 1500 known historic sites

And responding to threats to all of the above such as:

- 100 + weed species,
- 20 mammalian pest species,
- wild fires,
- and biosecurity risks

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/getting-involved/consultations/current-consultations/canterbury/cms-review-overview.pdf>

CA Walk2Work Wednesday

Many of you probably walk to work daily or at least make walking a part of your week's activity. Why not celebrate walking with others on Walk2Work Wed next year by coming along to the Square 7.30-9am on March 18th to grab a breakfast treat & enter for spot prizes. There will be speakers & fun activities for all so come along with your friends and workmates for a great start to the morning. If you're in a workplace outside of the city centre, why not challenge your colleagues to walk to work on the day if they don't already – could be start of a behaviour shift. For more information see the Living Streets website <http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/> and look out for more information early in 2009.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Christchurch Transition group 12.30 pm Tuesday, **9 December**. (shared lunch at 12.00). St Albans Community Centre, 1047 Colombo St. See <http://transitionaotearoa.org.nz/group/canterbury> for more information
- 'Money: why isn't their ever enough?', Christoph Hensch speaking at the SOC organised event Tuesday **16 December** at 7.30pm, WEA, 59 Gloucester St
- Walk2Work Wednesday March 18 7:30 – 9:00am Cathedral Square for lunch and prizes (see above for more info)

COMMITTEE ACTIONS

Completed

- **W** Waste minimisation project (see previous newsletter)
- **A** Election Forum (see previous newsletter)
- **A** Yearly planning day (see website for notes)

In Process

- **A** Consideration of relationship between Sustainable and Treaty based development (including visit from Andrea Lobb from Mahaanui Kurataiao Ltd, see above article)
- **AB** Preparation of DVD of Transition Communities Bus tour