Towards a theory of Sustainable Communication in Risk Society: Relating issues of sustainability to marketing communications

There has recently been much discussion about a preferred ecological outcome for late capitalism to work toward, that is sustainable consumption. Related to this is a fundamental question, can business in Western industrial society (some now use the label risk society\textsuperscript{2}) be transformed into ecologically sustainable organizations? If we optimistically assume the answer to this question to be 'yes' how would these organizations communicate with the world in which they operate? This paper reports the author's application of a social constructionist approach to 'green' communicative acts and those responsible for them in an attempt to start answering such questions. In a qualitative empirical study of an environmental and social justice communications consultancy the social world of the people involved is explored as they interact with and communicative the issues with which they are concerned in risk society. A main research theme attempted to relate three issues of ecocentrism\textsuperscript{3} to what is known as marketing communications. In this respect the author has concentrated on a leading edge agency and four of its clients in the fields of animal, personal health and planet preservation. In the analysis the author lays the foundations for a new theory, Sustainable Communication, which can account for communicative acts, in any eco-discourse (Harris, 1996), that have issues of sustainability as their focal point. This process is then problematized for the reader in relation

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\textsuperscript{2} Risk society is the phrase commonly attributed to the sociologist Ulrich Beck (see Beck 1992, 1995) as a description of Western industrial society where he observes not only wealth creation and distribution but also the production and distribution of ecological risks and threats to humanity.

\textsuperscript{3} Ecocentrism is deemed the opposite of anthropocentrism (human centredness) with account being attempted of both human and nonhuman life on earth and their interconnections (See Eckersley 1992; Merchant 1992). The present author links issues of sustainability to ecocentrism using the proxies of planet, personal health and animal preservation in this study.
Abstract to capitalist organizations and the final discussion proposes that others, interested in this theoretical area, play with this notion of Sustainable Communication to help in its future development. In this respect the author proposes a fruitful allegiance between Critical Macromarketing and Sustainable Communication. Throughout the paper, especially in the section on ‘building blocks’, the author chooses to illustrate key points for the reader by drawing on data from the study.

Introduction

‘Sustainable development’ has been adopted as a solution by many stakeholders because it conveys optimism. And yet we still understand very little about what the term means. Perhaps in the struggle to understand its meaning - a constructive dialogue among reasonable people and even among those who do not yet view each other as reasonable - is exactly what is needed. (Long and Arnold, 1995: ix)

The above quotation highlights that the moment has not passed, marketers still have the opportunity to develop theories grounded in more ecological concerns. There is nevertheless the need to clearly communicate the ecological issues of sustainable development to a wider audience than is presently achieved in society thus raising the importance of the communicative act. It is argued that society ought to move away from the present situation of hyper consumption (see Kilbourne, et al., 1997) to a preferred situation of sustainable consumption. For this to happen there needs to be a re-assessment of how we, human kind and organizations as part of this reached this situation of risk society (Beck, 1992). What role is there for marketing communications in such a change

4 Hyper consumption, a product of the commodification of life, exists when consumption has no referent to the natural law of value. There is no logical connection between the thing consumed and the consumption act itself, i.e., it is consumption for its own sake.

5 The 1995 Oslo roundtable discussion on sustainable consumption is a progression of earlier calls for sustainable development. A detailed summary of the document can be found on the world wide web (see http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/consume/consume.html). Clearly there is a major global task at stake here in discussing this new ecological imperative of sustainable production and consumption, as well as how to share responsibility for this challenge. Sustainable consumption is given a working definition by IISD (1995) as ‘the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations.' The reader should note these concepts, especially sustainable consumption, are relatively new modifications of previous terms, like sustainable development, and so far there are only working definitions which should be subjected to fuller academic scrutiny in the future.
process?

When one runs an introduction to marketing communications course, on either an undergraduate or postgraduate programme, the student inevitably asks which one text s/he should buy to get the best contemporary definition of marketing communications. When students go to a marketing text book they normally find a distinction between promotion management and marketing communications (cf Burnett, 1990; Engel et al., 1994; Rothschild, 1987).

To date, for the marketing communication student a holistic discussion of the subject has not taken place and their studies have focused for the main part on the coding of marketing messages. The latter has been at the expense of considering the the role of reader of encoded messages (O'Donohoe 1995) and also wider ecological and/or socio-cultural implications (cf Goldman 1992; Williamson, 1978). This is an important concern if one expects existing theory to now adequately accommodate the concerns of ecocentric thought, stand the test of time, and progress to be useful in bringing about ecologically sensitive change, whatever that may be in the future. Outside the marketing academy marketing communications (MC) is acknowledged not purely as a managerial tool for sending out persuasive messages but also as a process with profound socio-cultural implications (see Coblentz, 1996; Fiske, 1982 or specifically Goldman, 1992:2), where the search is for the underlying social grammar of meaning in ads as an essential step toward grasping the deeper ideological significance of ads in our cultural and political lives.

In such an analysis it becomes evident that whilst we do have pioneers in the marketing academy their focus may be more likely to be on consumer research (see for early examples Hirschman, 1989; Holbrook, 1984) and what new MC theory creativity exists is limited (see O'Donohoe, 1992; Ritson and Elliott, 1995) in its ecological offerings. Those outside our closet have long since addressed many issues before us and by inference our theories are still in a time warp in only relatively recently allowing for a more sociological perspective, no matter about a ecocentric perspective. Indeed recent claims of a great new development in MC theory are that of integrated marketing communications offering little ecological consideration:-

The process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs with customers and prospects over time (Shimp, 1996).

In re-introducing such a basic definition in the paper the author asks the reader to begin a critical re-examination of marketing communications, and its ecological worth, at a time when society is still grappling with complex notions of sustainable development as illustrated in the opening quote to this paper. The latest desired shift to sustainable consumption requires a fuller consideration of 'self' than marketers have until now given. The anthropocentric view of it only being the 'planet at risk' misleads many. It is 'the self', specifically humanity which is most at risk from an ecological disaster, the planet, the 'other' will no doubt
change to accommodate new climatic conditions! Reliance on existing theories of marketing communications and media has resulted in the situation that the more confidence people have in the economic and political institutions, the less concerned they are with the environment (see Kilbourne and Mc'Donagh, 1996; Grunert-Beckman and Kilbourne, 1997;1997a). The implication of this faith is that when confronted with environmental problems, solutions will be sought within the dominant social paradigm (see Kilbourne, et al. 1997). However this is quite simply ecologically naïve and inadequate.

Developing a Communicative Process to Facilitate Ecological Change: Sustainable Communication

The work of the following academics supports the claim that green concern is not a passing fad (Coddington, 1993; Mc'Donagh and Prothero, 1993; Peattie, 1992; Welford and Gouldson, 1993; van Dam, 1997). Shrivastava (1994) also strongly counters the fad argument by stating the implications that the environmental challenge has for organization studies (OS):

Organizations can no longer be treated primarily as rational, neutral, technical systems of production, as is done in traditional OS. They must also be seen as systems of destruction. They systematically destroy environmental value. This destruction cannot be dismissed away as an ‘externality’ of production. Organizations must become accountable for these externalities, which are a central and systematic feature of organized economic activity. (p.721)

This is clear confirmation that other specialist areas are taking the environmental challenge seriously in their debates. It is nonetheless implicit that a radical new way of communicating sustainability needs to be conceptualized and problematized. In considering the key empirical findings of this study this paper attempts a theoretical construction of how it is possible to classify Sustainable Communication.

In order to theorize for change toward sustainable development or consumption we need more ecologically robust theories of communication. Furthermore, in order to operationalize any new theory of communication predicated in ecological change, studies are needed into those people, activities and organizations who presently work to subtly subvert the communicative act for ecological change, such as the IISD call for sustainable consumption. One such organization is the case investigated in this study which, in conjunction with the activities of what Beck (1992) calls new social movements like Friends of the Earth or the Institute for Progressive Communications, takes on higher ecological credibility than existing institutions. These new social movements are marketing alternative solutions to the problems and bring fresh insights to the ‘eco-discourse’. This might well be why these organizations are actively sought out by citizens seeking reliable information as to what is really happening in the risk society. Also the interest expressed in these movements indicates a lack of
trust in present institutions and suggests the need for an expanded domain of inquiry.\(^6\) As a result marketers have a duty to themselves and their students to try to theorize how such activities might led us to alter marketing communications. In doing this can marketing communications be made a more useful tool for ecological change in society? Drawing on the present study, and with a focus on engendering positive ecological change, the author attempts such a transformation of traditional marketing communications theory by describing a new social process called Sustainable Communication. The next section summarizes the present study.

**The Present Study: Sources of Data and Method**

The author acknowledges that the ecological crisis is socially constructed (see also Hannigan, 1995) but argues that any forward looking ecological vision must establish what that crisis is in relation to human production (see Bellamy and Foster, 1997). In seeking to investigate how institutions or organizations in society might respond to such a crisis one begins to take a self-reflexive or critical approach. This is at least for two reasons; firstly, a self-reflexive approach allows one to call into question the present way of doing things, it permits insight into the communications of complex social phenomena. It also favours a more critical perspective, with which this author finds sympathy, as found under critical theory\(^7\) where the central concepts are those of totality, consciousness, alienation and critique (see also Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and is heavily influenced by the writings of Lukács, Gramsci, Marcuse and Habermas. Secondly, any new work needs to ground itself in how issues of sustainability are presently constituted and this author tried to combine both the grounded approach with the critical perspective. The assumption here is that organizations in risk society need to subject themselves to critical scrutiny in the light of three key questions, with a particular focus on the communicative acts of organizations:

1. What is understood to be the crux of the ecological crisis (or issues of sustainability) for those involved in certain forms of communicative acts such as animal, personal health and planet preservation?
2. What happens when one relates these issues of sustainability to what we call marketing communications?
3. How are organizations currently implicated in the ecological crisis and what are their future roles in engendering sustainability?

This case study provides the reader with insight into areas already deemed important by other authors in the academy from a ‘green’ content perspective.

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\(^6\)To facilitate ecological change it is argued what is needed is increased awareness of the relationship between technological, political, and economic institutions and environmental deterioration. Knowledge of this relationship by the general public is currently at a low level (See Grunert-Beckman and Kilbourne 1997).

\(^7\) For those interested in an authoritative introduction to this area see O’Neill (1989)
(See Iyer and Banerjee 1993). It is important to note that nobody else has to date provided such accounts and thus a gap in the literature has been addressed. The author adopted a grounded theory approach (See Glaser and Strauss 1997) with over 50 personal interviews, numerous sites visits and depth observational work, including, for instance, attendance at weekly staff meetings. The author also observed the juding of the case organization’s national media and environment awards. The reader should note that the work uses such an interpretive research methodology, much underused to date within the academy (See O’Donohoe, 1995) when the study was undertaken. Thus the work goes some way to addressing this methodological deficiency in the academy. The research focuses on a leading edge environmental and social justice communications consultancy with offices in London and New York. The chance to study this organization represented an historic opportunity for this researcher and it not only provided a clear focus for the study but also offered an important information gateway.

This research strove to investigate, due to the complexity of the environmental issues, the process of developing communications relating to issues of sustainability or ecocentric concern and thus needed to be investigated in great detail before explanation was attempted. Along with historic documentation of the communications campaigns selected, the author sought explanation by those involved in the development of the campaigns (see also Guichardaud, 1962; Silverman, 1985). In exploring the research issues there was much to be gained from using the broad categorization of the Iyer and Banerjee (1993) method, which they used in analyzing print adverts in the USA. This work centred around placing ads into three categories judged appropriate by the researchers, Animal, Personal Health, and Planet preservation. The author has used these three categories as proxies for the dimensions of ecocentrism noted earlier.

The researcher used a theory notebook and ideas booklet during data collection to write memos to himself, which were used in conjunction with the transcripts of personal interviews to sort and sift through data materials. This was an attempt to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes and distinct differences between subgroups and common sequences (Miles and Huberman 1994). Such data reduction is an iterative process and the researcher took many patterns and processes identified back into the field to discuss with the subjects and thus attempted to build meaningful theory. It is important to remember as Miles and Huberman (1994) note that the apparent ‘simplicity’ of qualitative data masks a good deal of complexity, requiring a good deal of care and self awareness on the part of the researcher. For this reason the researcher chose to be a complete observer in the data collection process (see Gill and Johnson 1991) as it permitted ease of access to the social phenomena of interest. Complete observation also permitted the researcher to gain access to various organizational documents and staff meetings which supplemented the data gained from depth interviews.

The Case Organization

The case organization’s work highlighted the fact that many organizations have
sought out and found experts in understanding the complexity of the environmental issues concerned. As such the case organization is performing an important clearing house function and thus merits closer investigation. It published its commercial charter for the environment in 1992 which established principles designed to help ensure that the pursuit of legitimate commercial communication does not harm the environment. The principles acknowledge *inter alia* that the communications industry should be able to establish the legitimacy of link between the environment and any products or services it promotes. Also no association should be made where the environment is damaged; nor should those who cause significant damage be portrayed as caring for the environment; misleading packaging like advertising should be banned. Furthermore wild species should not be used to communicate selling ideas; companies which despoil the environment should not seek to purchase or predicate a positive environmental image by sponsorship, patronage or support to environmental organizations or educational activities rather by action to fully remedy the damage their business creates. All the clients documented noted that the case organization has an in-depth understanding of the issues that they are trying to communicate but it is also a consultancy which charges reduced rates to Non government organizations (NGOs) with small budgets so it does not adopt a traditional profit making orientation typical in an advertising agency. The uniqueness of this is augmented by the fact that the case organization has a supporter base of around 1200 who work in mainstream agencies but are willing to offer their services, at a greatly reduced rate, for its clients, which range from The Rockefeller Foundation, the African Medical and Research Foundation, and Greenpeace to The United Nations refugee agency or the International Committee of the Red Cross. It has performed wide ranging work including market research, advisory and corporate positioning relating to sustainable development, anti-personnel mines, tropical timber harvesting to global warming and migratory pressures in Eastern Europe. It has what is called a contemporary loose organic structure (see Daft 1993).

The following section outlines the development of new theory relating these issues to the communicative act drawing on the study. Appendix One summarizes the main findings presented in the study drawing together the essence of observations and data from the empirical study accounting for communication by the case organization and several of its clients, including an animal welfare organization with UN recognition, the world's oldest human rights organization, a fair trade company producing coffee products and a major UK capital project costing £125 million aiming to build an educational site promoting the practicalities of sustainable development. The appendix presents a summary of insights by the author in this study, it highlights the poise of what one means by the social construction of the ecological crisis and how this is evidenced in the communicative act. One can also note from the appendix that the case organization promotes a form of social equity in buying media services for those with small or limited budget spends. In relating environmental issues, as contextualized in this study, to marketing communications there is a key
departure from the historic marketing communications theory noted in the *Introduction*. Clearly historic theory construction has been human centred (anthropocentric). Typically the organization communicates with strategic intent to the market place which is evaluated in terms of feedback or specific market research projects. This already has been challenged by a number of writers who question the intent and effect of communications from marketing origins (see Goldman 1992) on the grounds that it perpetuates the commodification of life (or McQuail (1992) on the issue of the public interest). Neither of these authors though challenge marketing communications on ecocentric grounds. Marketing communications can easily be challenged on ecocentric theoretical grounds and to overcome this, the author maintains, requires the challenge of introducing sustainability. This would need to be achieved much more explicitly than has been the case up to now in order to seek ecological solutions to humankind's problems, thus giving us a new dimension and role illustrated in Figure 1 below for the basis of theory construction:

**Figure 1. Introducing Sustainability**

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Sustainability:
  Planet, Animal,
  Personal Health
  Preservation

Organization   Market place
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In this respect the hierarchy imposed is not a human one but a natural order with this being represented by 'Sustainability' heading this diagram. A more ecocentric way of depicting things, if we were to follow on from Merchant's (1980) work, would be to imply that the organization and market place only exist as part of the biosphere.

**Articulating Sustainable Consumption Through Sustainable Communication**

While the case organization cannot be classed as such a new ecological movement, as discussed in the introduction, it does share many of their sympathies. The case organization staff describe their work in what could be said to be the organization's mission statement or statement of objectives:
What we do, and why we do it, has not changed over the last year. We are still committed to providing professional media work and communications work at greatly reduced rates to people and organizations working in the social justice and environment fields (Promotional Bulletin 13).

So what lessons are there for those interested in marketing communications theory development from the insights of this study? The author suggests, upon reflection, a communicative process for ecological change, namely Sustainable Communication. This process can be linked to ideas of ecocentrism and nonhuman human interconnections already discussed in the ecology literature (see Ekersley, 1992; Merchant, 1980; 1992), which suggest that in order to improve the state of the natural environment one must, it is argued, consider the restructuring of society (see for example, O’Connor, 1994; or Bookchin, 1980). Sustainable Communication, as argued here by the author, could be one of the processes facilitating the move to sustainable consumption and making the environment culturally significant in the public domain.

If a radical restructuring of society is to occur, the process of Sustainable Communication (see Figure 2 below) would indeed become vital, an ecological bridge from the present to the future. In depicting the process thus the author has forced himself to reflect the traditional ‘organization<->publics’ form of diagram to which those in marketing communications relate. This should not mislead the reader to thinking of the process as simple. This process is not just for the more ecologically enlightened companies but also for those seeking to make a positive ecological difference. However it is not an easy option for a naïve company to pursue. It will have maximum effect however if radical restructuring occurs elsewhere. The process is articulated as, and mapped out in a schematic (see Fig. 2.) :-

Sustainable Communication is an interactive social process of unravelling and eradicating ecological alienation that may occur between an organization and its publics or stakeholders. Based on the notion of totality or holism it embraces conflict and critique through information disclosure, access to and participation in organizational policies and processes and structures allowing open-ended dialogue. Thus by use of ‘green, eco or environmental (marketing) communications’ the organization builds trust in the minds of those in society and permits the approach of a utopian situation of high levels of environmental consciousness and consensus as to how humankind should exist in order to engender ecological sustainability.

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8 I note this is somewhat clumsy but it offers the reader of marketing communications a link which borrows heavily on the logic to which they are used. One reviewer cautions on the danger of this being taken as a recapitulation of pluralism, but the distinction is that the focal point of the communicative act is ecological sustainability. So Figure 2 is a deliberate modification of the typical transmission model of MC theory to allow readers more familiar with these to appreciate the nuances of the ecological shift.
The main focus of Sustainable Communication is predicated on working towards a situation where humankind can preserve rather than dominate nature. It aims to give the business organization an insight into, and focal role for, the tasks of communicating ecological sustainability credibly with citizens in the 21st century and beyond. In this respect it represents a switch away from both the dominant perspectives present in existing institutions, discussed earlier, in favour of a more ecocentric perspective. This role has not been suggested before for business organizations. Without something resembling Sustainable Communication one has the problems associated with a society of at least conspicuous (Bocock, 1993) or hyper consumption (Kilbourne et al., 1997), and marketing and marketing communications' 'complicity' in this. It should be noted that this process, with the inclusion of competitors, is very different from what others have termed relationship marketing (Gummesson, 1994). Nor is Sustainable Communication to be misinterpreted as a form of existing social marketing which is clearly anthropocentric and defined by Andreasen (1995) as "the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programmes designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society (p.7)."

This process of Sustainable Communication, the reader should note, has ecological sustainability as its focal point not the business relationship. This process would seem to be broadly matched with what Welford and Gouldson (1993) suggest is a direct outcome of green marketing practices with consumers demanding that companies give information about their environmental claims on a right to know basis. They infer that "this means that firms must be both open and honest in their communication with the public." This is allowed for in Figure 2 below.

The framework is also consistent with other work such as the definition of green marketing by Peattie (1992) and the trend that Clutterbuck et al. (1992) have noted as the socially responsible activities yielding 'mutual benefit' with both companies and voluntary organizations seeking genuine partnerships. Similarly it allows for Bernstein's (1992) request to make communication participative wherever possible. This would be important for public participation in sustainable development.

This process of Sustainable Communication however differs from the former suggestions on one crucially important dimension in that it accepts the argument put forward by Goldman and Papson (1996:213) that green marketing by hailing and naming the consumer as environmentally aware, legitimates consumption as environmentally positive. The process of Sustainable Communication is presented as a way of helping society move from hyper consumption to sustainable consumption. This process could aid the incorporation of the principle of 'less is more' in society. The situation depicted in Figure 2 illustrates how the process would have the organization interacting with its various publics

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9 For a history of the subject see Elliott (1991)
Figure 2. The Process of Sustainable Communication

An Ecocentric Organization

Environmental marketing communications
- Cause-related marketing
- Corporate philanthropy
- Greener Advertising
- Ecologically responsible sales promotion and packaging
- Ethical personal selling
- Environmental Public Relations, sponsorship
- Community Involvement
- Socially responsible consumption

Conflict and Feedback

Stakeholders
- Stakeholders
- Critics
- Consumers
- Media

Publics
- Humanitarian issues
- Environmental groups
- Participative ecological sustainability
- Justice
- Fair play

Investigation involvement
- Eco-Disclosure
- Interaction and consensus
- Eco-Access
- Eco-Dialogue

EcoTrust

Competition
- Suppliers
- Distributors
- Investors

Government
- Legislators
- Watchdogs

Lobbying

Awards

Monitoring and forecasting geoindicators

- Humanitarian Recruitment
- Environmental management systems (i.e., production, accounting)
- Environmental policy document
- Corporate Environmental reporting
- Nonhuman and human impact assessment
or stakeholders (the list cited is not meant to be exhaustive). This interaction is
highlighted by the overlapping circles at the centre of the illustration. It is at this
focal point that Sustainable Communication is occurring. This is drawn from the
central principle that for effective communications both senders and receivers of
messages need to share overlapping fields of experience. By this messages can
produce meaningful responses (Munter, 1987) but in terms of geoindicators and
issues of sustainability.

In this respect it is important that the gap between what the organization's
publics expect from greener marketing communications and what they are
getting in the overall process of Sustainable Communication is negligible (Kim,
1991). This attempts ecological credibility. The next section lays down some
foundations towards building a robust theory of Sustainable Communication.
The main principles are developed from the study and are discussed next with
the author placing in italics illustrative findings from the study which relate the
issues to the communicative act.

Building blocks: towards a communicative theory for issues of sustainability

It should be appreciated that the four principles of Sustainable Communication have to be played with to work towards creating a new theory. In
this sense the reader is referred to the fact that theory is taken by this author to
be the discursive resource we use to describe the world. The principles are:-

1. Ecological Trust; with the continuing loss of trust and confidence in
businesses and business leaders leading to an ecological legitimation crisis,
Sustainable Communication aims to rebuild that trust, if it ever existed, and
establish it in society generally. Several people interviewed discussed the
implications of this principle:

   In terms of our partners overseas, one is actually in a two way process
   because one is actually trying to persuade them to give us information
   that we can use. Once we build up a relationship of trust, as we do, then
   they will give us information when something has happened and ask can
   you do something with this? (Communications Assistant Human Rights
   organization)

   I think that trust did exist! Umm but perhaps what we need to do is to get
   out to new target audiences. (Communications Officer Human Rights
   organization)

   Oh nobody trusts PR companies they are like 'what do you call its', like
   lawyers if you like. You know 'good loyalers', stand up in court and lie
   through their teeth to get their client off the hook and be believed.
   (Environmental Campaigner Ex-Case organization)

2. Ecological access; in the risk society the issues of openness and
disclosure of information has become a discussion point in terms of being a mark of organizations seeking to create and build trust. Several people interviewed commented on this principle:

_The way in which we have people interns and volunteers working and take quite a lot of responsibility often within the organization, that is I suppose something again which is strangely new for the organization (Chair Human Rights Organizing Committee)_

There is some demonstration here of a real willingness to openly engage with outside citizens.

3. **Ecological disclosure**: it can be argued that more and more organizations are being publicly assessed by publics. They are judged by what they are freely prepared to reveal about their activities. This is evidenced by the trend of corporate environmental reporting which is receiving much discussion (Beecham & Sustainability Ltd, 1991; Elkington 1998; IIID, 1996). This may have a direct consequence on how they are perceived in such things as the Corporate Standing Monitor (Sturges, 1992); it is felt that companies who have disclosed the truth about what they do are more likely to be trusted than those organizations where the truth has been found out. People might feel that in the latter case there is much more hidden by the firm. Several people interviewed in this study discussed this principle and its implications with the researcher illustrating the work of major retail traders:-

_Where it is interesting with B&Q is that clearly growing out of that campaign they include now, in their charters, the labour practices of their suppliers. (Communications Officer Human Rights organization)_

4. **Ecological dialogue**: another principle of the Sustainable Communication process is that of ecological dialogue (by an organization with its publics on issues of sustainability). In this respect it mirrors a Habermasian ideal speech act (see Habermas (1984) or White (1988) for those unfamiliar with Habermas), but for ecology. Companies that are to be trusted and wish to engage in Sustainable Communication with their publics need on-going dialogue to help them understand the issues, and become ecologically meaningful. Also the related benefits of displaying to your publics that you are an equal opportunities employer, which works in a democratic and non-exploitative way, can be highlighted in such an eco-dialogue. In the future the ability to get publics convinced of the ecological worth or value of the organization will be increased as publics can air their views directly to members of the organization and see how the organization reacts. The organization can account for its impact on the human and nonhuman world and demonstrate its use of geoindicators in its planning. In this respect companies will, in this process, draw their audiences into the decision making process. This would be the most far reaching alteration of the Sustainable
Communication process which would ultimately lead to a situation of management by external eco-consensus, based on indicators of sustainability. Again respondents in this study stated support for this principle in various ways:

Certainly we feel that we have to disclose as much information as possible and that we want people to actually participate in the whole process, I mean that's what fair trade is all about for me, it's about people becoming aware of what has happened to the product and to them. Also, that is a complicated process, ripping off producers of products, or the ingredients of products, should not be part of their lifestyle. (Sales Director Fair Trade Coffee Company)

But you have to go and you have to visit them again and again and again. So unless they write back and say 'no' we can't know. You have to go and see them and get a letter saying what you do wrong? You have to ask for that so next time you know what to ask for and how to do it. Then there is 3 month delay so you have to go again and they seem to forget (Chair Human Rights Organization Committee)

Yes, it helps them to feel more involved. We had our producer over from Mexico last year and he was explaining to a buyer what his environment was like and where it was exactly. (Sales Director Fair Trade Coffee Company)

So I think the watchdogs would I suppose be the fair trade foundation because they are monitoring fair trade and awarding fair trade marks. We have dialogue with them. (Fair Trade Expert)

The third quote here also represents the iterative process such dialogue might take and the continual need to re-emphasize the issues concerned. While there is emphasis placed on relationship building under Sustainable Communication the emphasis would be more on co-operation for ecological good. This then could be said to represent a more ecocentric perspective by the organization rather than an egocentric viewpoint.

5. Promotion; there is still acknowledgement of the fact that most marketing communications in Western capitalistic society is to increase levels of consumption. Whatever the company discloses about its organization is with the commercial intent of promoting its product to the end consumer and/or its other publics. It is noted that under Sustainable Communication this promotion will be fundamentally different and incorporate both the 'less is more' and basic 'human rights' principles. Several interviewees noted the importance of this as difference:
Now if you were a press officer you'd never be allowed to get away with a definition like that. Having said that taking your broad definition of green, and therefore in that sense including the human rights campaigns, we get into actually talking about changing people's perceptions and therefore their behaviour. Therefore changing it at a fairly deep level, it is not therefore simply saying 'oh yes that's a new packaging and that's new on that shelf so I'll give it a whirl this week'. (Communications Officer Human Rights Organization)

The sorts of things that were confusing are the corporate philanthropy, there I would associate that with a company that was trading for a profit, giving a tie to charitable causes! I couldn't see how we could be involved in that for example. (Communications Assistant Human Rights Organization)

It would appear that for the process of Sustainable Communication to be working organizations need to be involved in facilitating positive ecological change in their own and citizens' behaviour. As a result it would be crucial for an organization to actively manage its green communications gap with the audiences through the process of Sustainable Communication. The reader should note the lack of public understanding about the notion of sustainable development (See Macnaghten and Ury, 1995; Macnaghten and Jacobs, 1996; Macnaghten et. al., 1995) is not to be underestimated. The evidence above suggests that Sustainable Communication should not be misconstrued as a quick fix or 'green wash' activity but a radical departure from present communicative practices. It is self evident that a truly interested audience in ecological issues will eventually find out about your organization's impact on the nonhuman world and appreciation of sustainable development. The Chair of the General Committee of the Human Rights organization argues:-

Exactly of course because if you aren't coming up with the truth then you get found out then you have wrecked the whole thing!

While another experienced environmental campaigner suggests:-

If you see any TV talk show, where they are discussing the issues, there are a lot of people of early to late 20's involved with this sort of thing. They are very aware and their initial awareness and understanding of these concepts are much higher than the people actually give them credit for, and that emerged out of the green movement in the 80's (Environmental campaigner Ex Case Organization)

Another respondent commented that the multinational conglomerates of this world aren't simply going to go away, and doubted that in 10 to 15 years time they would be seen to be more ecologically responsible and open:-
I doubt that firms will become more responsible (laughs) because you know they have a pyramidal structure, if you like, and so much of their activity is based on increasing consumption destruction. You know there'll be a bit of greening around the edges but whether it will necessarily be incorporated that much is doubtful!

Clearly the ecological challenge for any communicative act is immense and the embryonic nature of things is notable, as two respondents remarked in the course of this study:-

Yes people think they are doing the right thing. I think a lot of people genuinely do want to help whether its environmentally or ethically, just they are not sure what that is. (Fair Trade Expert)

We could be sat here (in 5 years time), God forbid in Cardiff again, having the same conversation! Oh yeah because it's a long ongoing process but I think things are definitely shifted and there is going to be a huge conceptual shift around the year 2000 which is stupid because it's just a bloody number. (Environmental Campaigner Ex Case Organization)

As with any way of communicating there is this still tension and ecological risk with this new suggested process. This is allowed for in the feedback and conflict loop in Figure 2. But, under a situation of Sustainable Communication, as improved eco-information becomes available informed consumers and citizens can prove powerful change agents. As one fair trade expert remarked to the researcher:-

the influence that sector (fair trade) of the consumers can have is far beyond the actual purchasing power of those individuals; things are influenced, such as the growth of vegetarianism

Having clarified for the reader what this new process is and is not to be, how does the author view its contribution to marketing knowledge represented by this theory? The next section problematizes this issue.

**Problematizing Sustainable Communication**

The author envisages, not surprisingly, several obstacles to the process proposed and has grouped them together under three broad areas for the reader namely, societal, organizational and marketing. These are open for consideration for those interested in the development of theory in this area.

**Societal barriers** that immediately come to mind are:-
1. Sustainable Communication (SC) being perceived as a model of revolution against capitalism itself and thus not being trusted by capitalistic organizations. This was a notable theme in the study as the following illustrates,

In a sense technology becomes our master and one of the things that the ‘green’ movement should be able to say is that we are talking about human beings and their empowerment. If we are talking about human beings who are enslaved we are talking about their empowerment and their ability to become free wage earners. If you want to begin with in poor countries their wage would be a pittance! But it would be a step along the way. (Chair General Committee ASI)

2. Sustainable Communication may be interpreted by environmentalists as communication by capitalists with strategic intent.

3. Even with a democratic unfolding of interests implied by dialogue it does not immediately follow that this will lead to a commitment to an ‘ecological common good.’ People have their own agency and life interests which they place before ecological concerns. These tasks were described by respondents stating-

people are definitely more informed than they used to be but the amount of information that is firing around is such that you feel that you know nothing, although in fact you know a lot more. So you know people actually do know there is a certain amount of muddling up between ozone depletion and global warming. But you don’t expect the average member of the population with their own lives, interests and specialties and all the rest of it to make major shifts. (Environmental Campaigner Ex Case Organization)

It is actually saying and trying to get over a message that one’s behaviour does have an effect and therefore your point about trust and dialogue is very important because the, let’s use the word consumer here, in the broad sense may be alerted to something happening. S/he may want more information and will really want to trust what is being said to him or her as true, and also that his or her actions will have an effect! I think then the idea of trust and dialogue does become very important and it’s something which doesn’t exist if you are actually marketing a washing powder. Because if you don’t like it the first time around you don’t buy it the next time around but what one is actually trying to do here is a sustainable change of behaviour. (Communications Officer Human Rights Organization)

4. Society’s social construction of its relationship to nature cannot be separated from its relations of production and their inherent social conflicts. In this respect this author argues that it is not so easy to isolate
ecological from existing debates such as the Health and Safety at Work issue. This is problematic as noted by one respondent in relation to the ecological disclosure principle:

This part of the equation we're not so keen on supplying information. The government and legislators I think in this country at the moment there is almost no chance of getting them on board with the political sort of atmosphere (Fair Trade Expert)

Thus upon reflection of the societal issues we are minded of the following statements firstly, by Demirovic (1994:256) "New problems, new social relations and new models of action are not easily dealt with by systems of norms that have been handed down over the years". Secondly this also finds sympathy with a point made by Descombes (1993:133) "Whenever a modern culture and a traditional culture come into contact, the modern one provokes the other into re-establishing its collective identity through the invention of more or less felicitous syntheses between elements of the modern culture and elements of its own". In the light of these comments then we should not expect the process of Sustainable Communication to be easily developed or indeed immediate, but its value is in providing a yardstick against which to benchmark corporate communications about sustainability and bring about conditions for its achievement.

**Organizational barriers** to this communicative process which this author foresees include:-

1. Calls for higher degrees of **openness** and **collective decision making** does not necessarily mean a more thorough consideration of ecological interests.
2. Organizations may prefer to settle for what I call the **procedural approach**, adherence only to the law which exists when dealing with communication on ecological matters. In this respect lobbying may not get any more than compliance from organizations.
3. Sustainable Communication may be feared as the first step to a system of **management by consensus** and resisted accordingly.
4. **Structures**: new structural changes required by Sustainable Communication may be viewed as prohibitive, frightening and over costly in the short term. As one respondent noted earlier:-

From one side, the environmental group side only, and to a limited extent because it's (the Case Organization named) and it can't tell people that they should disclose stuff; but it does help with access only to a certain point. The organizations have got the structure to actually provide that access. So you are not talking about, you can put the message across, like 'we are the listening bank' but without the facilities to be listening, or whatever, or without actually listening just hearing. Then it doesn't matter how well you've
got that message across. I would say that certainly access is a structural phenomenon, trust is an end product and that information and dialogue are something which are the means to trust, or whatever it is. (Ex Case Organization Campaigner)

5. **Time:** sensitive environmental information may need to be disclosed, in the first instance, to employees before external scrutiny by other stakeholders.

6. **Agency power:** in embracing Sustainable Communication the organization may feel it will become too dependent upon the communications agency which compiles or advises on its corporate messages.

7. **Deception:** the organization may deceive its agency or distort the truth to their own advantage.

Several respondents stated to the researcher of the proposed theory:-

Well if you took for example Oxfam, who in certain aspects of their work may be in competition for funding because we would be working on similar projects they might also be giving us funds at the same time possibly even for the same project. Well what I'm trying to say is our idea of a competitor is not as adversarial as perhaps in a war type term. (Communications Officer Human Rights Organization)

So it's also a holistic approach but it is actually one where the rich North has got to really confront within itself what the needs of the poor South are! Thus not shirk responsibility and in that sense, what I would say in your definition is that it reflects really the concerns of the rich North. (Communications Officer Human Rights Organization)

**Marketing barriers** are considered finally, but by no means least, representing the following hurdles for implementation of Sustainable Communication:-

1. Sustainable Communication may be rejected by the marketing academy and practitioners as too radical/impenetrable/too much jargon/not relevant?

2. **Control of messages:** with the Sustainable Communication process it becomes less easy for marketers to manipulate the image of their company in the eyes of the company's publics and disclosure may be resisted. As one respondent noted earlier:-

Well, I don't think there has to be more honesty, but we do have obligations to everybody else I suppose. I think you have to, I think one of the problems is credibility. Its confidence as much as anything. (Marketing Manager Animal Welfare Organization)
3. **7Cs**: There are seven dimensions to be wary of namely, complexity, cacophony, credibility, confusion, cynicism, co-ordination, commercial confidence (see also Peattie 1995:216). As one respondent remarked:

*We don’t have a written policy we are not big enough to do that, but we attempt to recycle waste paper as much as we can, we also use recyclable toners and printing to try and get the best sort of paper we can use which does least damage to the environment. Yeah but that, at the moment, is something we are a little bit confused about because of the sort of the conflicting aspects of paper making* *(Communications Assistant Human Rights Organization)*

4. **Fear of ‘Green Awards’**: Firms may shy away from awards which can be negative, such as the Friends of the Earth ‘Green Con of the Year’, as well as constructing positive images such as the British Environment and Media awards or the Annual Anti-Slavery International Award.

5. **Unconvinced**: micromarketers may still view environmental issues as a fad which periodically comes and goes and, as a result, not worth changing the way communications systems work at present.

*So there is a bit of co-operation (between two Animal welfare organizations) there but its all for commercial gain really, its generally accepted as a profitable way to find new supporters* *(Marketing Manager WSPA)*

In order to introduce Sustainable Communication we need to explicitly acknowledge ‘ecologicalism’ or ‘ecocentrism’, itself no easy task, which calls for fundamental changes in the structure not only of business, and thus marketing communications, but also for changes in the organization of government, the economy and society generally. The elimination of the barriers outlined above needs to be considered by those working in the marketing communications industry and academia, if they are to contribute more actively in the theoretical development of Sustainable Communication.

**Discussion**

When looking forward into the future those people communicating marketing messages must consider the principles of Sustainable Communication highlighted in this study, if only to see from where they can be criticized, whilst leaders of ecological change should begin to dismantle the barriers to its implementation. This point is also made by van Dam (1997) who argues for a multi-disciplinary analysis for ecological corporate decision making that seeks policy by mutual arrangement. As Giddens (1993:110) reminds us the production of interaction as ‘meaningful’ depends first on the mutuality of uptake in communicative intent, in which language is primary but not the only medium. He argues that in all interaction there is a constant interest in, and ability to disclose,
modes of understanding of the conduct of the other apart from uptake of communicative intent, such as understanding the motives. He cautions that that in everyday situations of interaction the will to speak is also sometimes the will to baffle, puzzle, deceive or be misunderstood. As such any research into such interaction needs to recognize that ‘meaningfulness’ is actively and continually negotiated not merely the programmed communication of already established meanings.

Furthermore Sustainable Communication has clear implications for marketing and management in contemporary organizations. As is noted above from a marketing perspective the process that is presented here allows the organization to discuss legitimately and operationalize any major change programme which would involve a transition to more ecocentric management practices. It is noted in the emerging literature (see Carlson et al., 1996) that environmental performance may be a source of competitive advantage. The authors suggest that organizations that make products that are less environmentally harmful and substantiate it in their adverts may have a competitive edge over US producers using claim types that are less beneficial to environmentally astute consumers. Sustainable Communication would involve marketers in much more detailed market research to assess public attitudes on issues of sustainability and participation rates in organizational activities. One would expect such a process to yield a better chance of new products matching indicators of sustainability. This process of Sustainable Communication permits the development of communications that are credible, clear and avoid cliche images or meaningless statements. Over the longer term Sustainable Communication might well represent an isomorphic change (see Dimaggio and Powell, 1990) that brings sustainability centre stage in organizations, also representing some homogenization in dealing with the complexities of communication related to their human and nonhuman environmental impact.

Future work can benefit from a social constructionist approach as noted in the present study. So researchers may play with the ideas developed in a similar social constructionist way - here the author suggests there is benefit to be gained from a fuller insight derived from a longitudinal study. This might be over a two or five year period, dependent on whether the subjects are enlightened or not, using the comparative case method to assess progress to Sustainable Communication. There is the chance to bring some sectoral dimensions to such work looking at the challenges from a small, medium sized or large conglomerate perspective. Such work does not have to be limited to the individual researcher which in itself offers great potential. There would also appear to be scope for an ethnography of Sustainable Communication. Furthermore there is the opportunity here for a more logical empiricist approach which may wish to refine and test the theory of Sustainable Communication, which would be equally acceptable. The author sees one area within marketing thought where much progress can be made and that is in macromarketing discussed next.
The Future?

As noted in the Introduction the present crisis of industrial society is a crisis of success, not of failure. It is up to marketers to work out just what their role might be in the process of making the ecological issue culturally significant. They cannot be forced to do this but have the opportunity to try. As Beck (1995) maintains, the present institutions and systems need to embrace change. This it would seem also brings macromarketing to centre stage in the change process. There is already academic evidence that suggests this is occurring (see van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996; Kilbourne et al., 1997). Thus this researcher makes the suggestion that macromarketing set aside an area called 'Critical Macromarketing' to develop theory that examines the ecological crisis. This allows for one way of categorizing the many suggestions in the prescriptive literature. Additionally this permits those interested to reflect on the need for an over riding term to which we can refer when problematizing ecological issues and their impact on marketing (communications). This is suggested bearing in mind Enzensberger’s (1974) critique of the environmental/ ecodevelopment discourse. It was stated that it is important to insert ecodevelopment strategies into a process of social struggle to strengthen communities for the self-management of natural resources and the construction of a new productive rationality.

In a similar vein critical macromarketing should acknowledge its ecological values and desire to bring about the ecocentric situation of sustainable consumption through say the process of Sustainable Communication. Because the problem and the solutions are embedded in the established institutions of industrial society, the radical change required in these same institutions cannot be legitimated. The change required will transform both the institutions and their agents for whom such change is anathema. Some of the less radical but significant changes are provided by Beck (1995). Beck concludes that, beneath the surface of conformity, ecological criticism has indeed entered all areas of activity with its characteristic interrelatedness surpassing nationalities, destabilizing routines, splitting industrial sectors, and leaving parents to deal with their children’s penetrating questions.

New Critical Macromarketing theory might develop around a contemporary response to the ecological crisis and what marketing’s role is to be in the emerging discourse on ecocentrism, sustainable development, and, most recently, sustainable consumption. Marketing research and reporting needs to focus more on the role of macromarketers in conveying the deficiencies of existing institutions, and also how it might influence the form of radical ecological change needed in transforming those institutions.

There then is a really exciting challenge for marketing communications theory to build new theory which both takes this more macro perspective and facilitates a process of ecological change. Such work could also parallel other research which questions resistance and the work of oppositional cultures in society (see Brook and Boal, 1995; Carlsson 1995; Desmond et al., 1997; Drew, 1995; Roach, 1997 for a fuller discussion). Future research can advance this theory construction using the author’s contribution of the theory of Sustainable
Communication as a starting point. It is exciting as we are minded of the advice of Craib (1992:250) in considering the use of modern social theory in such circumstances. 'Every time your view of the world shifts, however slightly, you begin to see things you did not see before: the connection between such shifts and action might be obscure, but it is none the less there.'

Feyerabend (1975) also makes the point, worth remembering here, that we would do well to consider when exploring notions of Sustainable Communication. His point is what we normally regard as the scientific method is restrictive and we should be concerned with the wilder ideas of science. As such the argument suggests no old theory should be abandoned and no new theory should be rejected; they should be worked with, played off against each other, and played with. Sustainable Communication, as articulated here, also has a role to play in contributing to the present debate about Citizen Science where Irwin (1995) problematizes sustainable futures, as well as permitting the corporation to take a proactive role in the field of sustainable communities with which as yet it has to engage. Ultimately we come back to a point made by Parsons in 1977 that the opportunity for a better human world belongs to us the working people who can make a more humanized nature and a more naturalized humanity.

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Appendix 1. A Brief Summary of this Study's Empirical Findings

Issues Raised

Case Organization

- There is indication that those who have worked in the case organization and its clients perceive the organization to be a 'Robin Hood' type organization offering professional communications services, at greatly reduced rates, to those wishing to communicate on issues of social justice and the environment.

- There are different interpretations of what 'green' communications can be said to represent ranging from the wide client typology of the organization, ranging from the Rockefeller Foundation to Unicef, to the themes clients interviewed expressed. These themes of Animal Preservation, Personal Health Preservation and Planet Preservation are developed in the analysis.
Appendix 1 cont’d

• The case organization represents an historic opportunity to access a green communications information gateway.

Animal Preservation

• The animal welfare campaign offers a clear illustration of how the case organization has improved the quality of bear welfare communications. The campaign, as identified by the researcher and initially facilitated by the case organization, has proved tremendously successful in both promoting bear welfare and introducing animal welfare organization to the general public.

• Not all staff accept the simple label of ‘green’ as a satisfactory explanation of bear welfare. Those who do, would qualify animal welfare issues as something which people wouldn’t necessarily see as simply green.

• Secondly, the communications campaign is used subtlety to politicize members about the interconnectedness between human consumption (of animal related products) and animal (bear) welfare.

Personal Health Preservation

• There is public confusion over both the meaning and extent of slavery and of fair trade.

• Related to this there are various levels of awareness of these issues.

• Furthermore, it would appear that there is stong evidence of the interconnectedness between issues of human rights and environmental degradation.

Planet Preservation

• The central theme behind this capital project owes much to the foreword of the 1987 Report Our Common Future by the Chairperson of the United Nations World Commission on Environment.

• One of the founders of the project states it is more beneficial to illustrate than define the notion of sustainable development.

• While the leading stakeholders in the project are encouraged to participate in the governance of the project, ensuring a broad range of input to overall policy and strategic direction, the local community have mixed feelings about the objective of the development. This reinforces the belief that there is ‘public confusion’ about the practice of sustainable development.

• The site itself will be transformed from an industrial waste land into a major tourist attraction following a key
Appendix 1 cont'd

grant from the Millennium Fund of £50 million and matched self raised funds.

Communicative Acts

The Case Organization

- Clients have given the key reasons why they choose to work with the case organization including the level of empathy with their own organization's work expressed by its staff.
- The organic and uniquely hybrid structure of the case organization facilitates connections with other communication professionals who are willing to help. The organization offers cost effective services for organizations facing very low budgets or needing to fund raise at the same time as communicating.
- The British Environment and Media Awards illustrate just how the case organization itself harnesses its network to award and encourage what is considered, by the media and communications experts, to be best practice when communicating on issues of the environment or social justice.

Animal Preservation

- The animal welfare organization investigated used a 'focus policy', whereby members are encouraged to get involved specifically with one campaign before introducing the other work of the organization and related issues.
- Key supporters demonstrate a high level of personal commitment to both the issues and the organization and assist in major fund-raising public events like 'bear picnics' which it deemed to be very effective.
- The conscious use of marketing techniques such as direct mail to alter consumers behaviour and opinions is an effort to offset budgetary constraints, and as a means of controlling how the message is communicated to the public. Communicating the issues in an informed way is initially seen to be more important than promoting the organization as a whole.
- The bear welfare campaign is one of the main 'brands' for this organization and performs and important fund raising role, in this income driven organization, by introducing the organization's work to the general public.
- Lobbying legislative bodies is seen to be effective for
Appendix 1 cont'd

issues of animal welfare and the campaign and its merchandising is deemed successful in this process.

Personal Health Preservation

- The main communicative acts noted relate to awareness raising and lobbying on issues of personal health preservation.
- There is an important role for fund-raising and in such a small organization award giving and related occasions can be useful for idea generation for future fund raising and communications.
- The case organization under investigation acts as a catalyst for both this clients’ ‘Read This’ campaign and the development of a campaign for a ‘Rug Mark’. The case organization has also assisted in the communications of a fairly traded coffee.
- Effective communications campaigning for a fair trade brand of coffee has, amongst other things, highlighted the influence of retailers on distribution and that you do not always need a large communications budget to be effective. Use of human rights leaflets, postcard campaigns and the effective development of posters by both the fair trade coffee company and the human rights organization illustrate the latter.
- The study also shows the distinctiveness of communicating in the coffee sector and given some insight into the view of those involved on what they call the ‘semi-ethical’ consumer.

Planet Preservation

- Much of the communication behind this capital project are still in the evolutionary stage, at the time of the study, due to its capital construction. The overall communications are still in the planning stages and involve a £2 million suggestion from one of the UK’s top advertising agencies.
- The fund-raising for such a large project has proved difficult with the overall project theme needing to be simplified in all stakeholder communications.
- The findings show that such a capital construction is a highly politicized process.

Theoretical Implications

The Case Organization

- The existence of this organization highlights the scope for a radical theoretical change needed to account for
Appendix 1 cont'd

those communicating issues of sustainability. This author describes such a process as Sustainable Communication.

- In some respects this self financing consultancy, i.e. the case organization, could be classed as a Sustainable Communication clearing house. It helps organizations which are issue based communicate with their activities to their publics. In so doing they are setting down guidelines for a process of Sustainable Communication to be considered as best practice on communicating ecological sustainability

Animal Preservation

- It would appear that one way to appear credible on this issue is to communicate with citizens in an informative manner using a focus of a single issue to gain their attention.
- The latter is done before gradually introducing them to more political aspects of this campaigning organization.
- Control of the message sent is important as well as having some way to substantiate points made and engender participation of citizens in what the organization seeks to achieve.
- There is active use of the lobbying process in compiling communicative acts.

Personal Health Preservation

- A notable discussion centred around the importance attached to how organizations disclose information about their activities and their products.
- It was evident that the great majority of the general public may be confused on these issues.
- Certain elements of the public, of a ‘semi-ethical’ inclination, may require communications to be more credible and seek confirmation, through trust and dialogue building acts. This is an effort to see that the organization is attempting to do something about issues of both slavery and fair trade in which it may be implicated.

Planet Preservation

- The findings of this theme illustrate the need for new communications theory to help demystify the concepts of any eco-discourse such as sustainable development and its successor sustainable consumption.
- The embryonic communication plans for this capital project indicate there are no ‘short cut’ answers but that public accountability and openness are considered important dimensions for the project’s survival and continuance.
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