Radicalism and Corporate Social Responsibility: unlikely partners?

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Abstract

Radicalism and reformism provide a dichotomy in the CSR/sustainability literature. Adams (2001) describes the reform position as mainstream, where sustainability is delivered by governance mechanisms, regulation and planning, internalising costs and redesigning industrial processes. It is technocentric in approach and, for business, is described by the framework of ecomodernity. Radical critiques of this position argue that reformists have 'claimed' the CSR debate and therefore disempowered those who would bring about more fundamental changes. The alternative radical position is described as a countercurrent, an ecocentric approach requiring change in economic and political systems. Adams describes three responses which may result in more radical change: adaptation (to livelihood changes, for instance as a response to climate change), resistance (against capture by the status quo) and protest (more proactive and direct than resistance).

In this paper my own varied research – from ecopreneurship, multinational CSR reporting to community gardening - is re-examined to assess whether a truly radical position is possible to affect change, or whether the forces of incrementalism allow gentle resistance to the status quo which will be more effective in closing the sustainability gap.

Key words: corporate social responsibility, incrementalism, radicalism, sustainability

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INTRODUCTION:

This paper concerns itself with the response of companies to their responsibilities to society and to nature – their corporate social responsibility or CSR. It questions what business can (or cannot) do to improve their CSR and make a contribution to sustainability. The paper is based around ideas of sustainability and its concepts and models. It uses analyses of these concepts that the author has explored in various aspects of her research, which has covered CSR in small and medium companies (SMEs), CSR reporting in large companies and societal responses to sustainability through community activities. When reviewing this body of work it became apparent that different researchers took different aspects of sustainability as explanatory bases for their work, and when these were examined, their perspectives could be regarded as 'reformist' and 'radical' (or 'transformative' as Hopwood *et al* (1995) would term it). Taking this further the paper attempts to position these differences so that an assessment of the possibilities of radicalism in CSR can be explored.

THE COMPLEXITY OF SUSTAINABILITY

Clement (2005) sees sustainability as having a compromised nature. What follows here reveals how complex the concept is and therefore it is no surprise that there has to be some compromise in order for people to engage with its ideas. This leads us to a position that many (Owen, 1993, Everett and Neu, 2000, Adams, 2001, for example) have termed 'mainstream' or 'reformist'. This is also called 'technocentric' (O'Riordan, 1981) because it uses practical steps involving measures such as regulation and planning, governance, internalising costs and modifying industry. The alternative is a 'radical' or 'countercurrent' approach (Adams, 2001) which is ecocentric and seeks deep change to political, social and economic structures.

This tension is evident in much of the sustainability literature and the debate emerges from time to time in the social and environmental accounting, auditing and reporting (SEEAR) debate. Owen, writing in 1993, outlined the perspectives of the radical and the reformist, and argued that the pragmatic approach of the reformist was likely to deliver more tangible results in the move to a more sustainable world, especially in the

accounting for sustainability. This is a view that has prevailed in much of the empirical work in SEEAR. However this has been criticised: Everett and Neu's paper (2000) can be used here to summarise the apparent dichotomy and to illustrate the tension. The authors argue that the work of Gray, Owen and colleagues have taken a value position that allows them to justify the reformist approach as the one which will achieve sustainability. They term this a 'discourse of pragmatism' (p15) with which proponents have been captured, and that there are unintended ideological consequences of such a position. In doing so, the position will prioritise nature over (certain) people and maintain the power inherent in First World systems.

Adams (2001) argues that sustainability needs to be 'claimed' (p370) if we are to move to a more radical position, and he describes three responses that can be taken to make the claim. He outlines the three as:

- Adaptation is a response – that which is taken to livelihood changes.
- Resistance against 'capture' by the ruling systems is a further response.
- Protest is a further response. This is perhaps the most radical response and requires more direct action and demands change.

This will be reflected upon later when the models for CSR have been examined.

CSR AND SUSTAINABILITY

The public status of business (i.e. through their visibility) may be regarded as a means by which they can dominate society; if this is understood, this domination (that is, the economic priorities) may be de-emphasised or reduced and other priorities – environmental protection, social justice – may be introduced. So, we need to establish the role and responsibility of business in society. There are differing views of this, from the traditional neo-classical view that a business has a responsibility only to its owners – to stay in business and generate rewards for the provision of capital by the owners - through to the view that a responsible business has rights and responsibilities as a responsible citizen. This progression may follow the following lines:

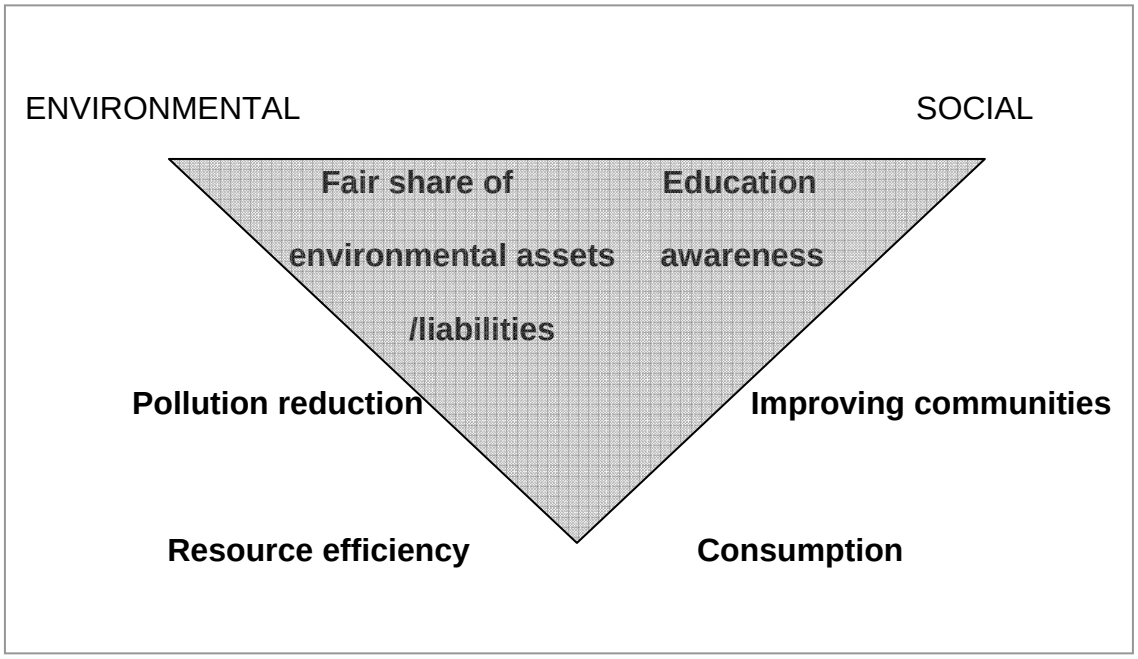
- Businesses recognise that there are a range of responsibilities – ethical, legal, economic, philanthropic – that are mutually accepted both by the business and by society;
- Businesses need to maintain behaviour established by mandatory and voluntary codes;
- There is a greater recognition of the public role of private business entities, so that such organisations are citizens of society and this is a valid way to understand CSR. (McIntosh, Thomas, Leipziger, and Coleman, (ed), 2003).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) may be regarded as something a business does (or doesn't do) to or for society. The disadvantage with this term is that, whilst it suggests strongly that business has a responsibility to society, it implies that responsibility is not owed to other organic or non-organic entities. This would create a conflict with the more radical views of what sustainability might mean. McIntosh *et al* (2003) use the term 'corporate citizenship'. The concept of citizenship may be more usefully linked to sustainability as it implies partnership, responsibility, active participation (perhaps) and equality (in that business is not separate from other citizens in society). It remains an anthropomorphic idea – business as 'human' citizen, but does allow us to make the demand that business be responsible for all its activities, whatever these affect. The partnership aspect may be particularly pertinent as business can be encouraged to build relationships with other members of society to determine how sustainability may be achieved.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

The graphical representation of sustainability in its simplest form is often given as a Venn diagram where the intersections of each circle (economic, social, and environmental) represent sustainability. This may also be shown as a triangular representation where elements of each of the three aspects taken from the literature (see, for instance Lélé, 1991, for a review of this) may be represented along the sides and where all need to be present for sustainability to exist (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: Aspects of sustainability



However, it is not sufficient for our purposes merely to represent the elements of sustainability; we need to be able to analyse the concepts more fully to enable us to envisage how it may be embraced in practice – how we may move to a more sustainable world. What follows is a discussion of some of the models and key concepts which may help that process.

The Brundtland report – a landmark in policy development?

Awareness of environmental issues, in particular, begun to be raised in the 1960s and 1970s with publications such as 'Blueprint for Survival' (Goldsmith *et al*, 1972) and 'Silent Spring' (Carson 1962). However, for many, the key response was that of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), published in 1987, and also known as the Brundtland report (after its Chair). This set the terms by which sustainability – or more properly sustainable development[1] – could begin to be

[1] There is some confusion between the terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' and sometimes these are used interchangeably (Bebbington and Gray, 2001). For the purposes of the discussions presented here, the term sustainability engages with the concepts involved, and sustainable development attempts to describe how sustainability may be achieved in practice through mechanisms, tools and

operationalised. Before and at the time of publication in 1987 the WCED report was considered radical (see, for instance, Redclift's 1987 comments). This was because, although the term had been in use for some time, the discussions around what it meant *in practice* had not taken place and had certainly not engaged an audience. There was therefore no previous framework with which to debate the concept and the business world in particular had ignored any call for a limit to growth, especially as the 1980s was a time of unprecedented economic growth in developed countries such as the US and the UK. The ideas that such a limit might be needed flew in the face of much economic thinking at the time.

The key features of the WCED report are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The WCED and sustainable development (after Baker, 2006)

KEY TERMS IN WCED	EXPLANATION OF TERM
Sustainable yield	Allowing natural regeneration of resources
Environmental sustainability	Preservation of systems and processes
Sustainable society	Setting of ecological boundaries; social justice
Sustainable development	Maintaining a positive process of social change

The WCED report attempted to articulate how sustainability needed to be regarded as the combination of environmental, economic and social factors, where none of these was given priority over the other two.

Unfortunately the terms used in WCED's report are ambiguous and inconsistent. This was in part deliberate, because the report was designed to promote debate and engagement, and was not intended as a definitive guide to sustainable development.

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processes (which may include the ways in which people think about sustainability). Hence the theoretical approaches are, where appropriate, likely to engage with the principles of sustainability, whereas the practical applications will demonstrate the ways in which sustainable development may be achieved or worked towards.

Operationalising sustainable development was considered a matter for negotiation between individuals and institutions; the report was an encouragement for innovation. However, this led to contradictions in practice – whether deliberate or accidental. For instance, technology may be employed to preserve environmental sustainability and provide a sustainable yield, but if environmental assets were removed from a community to provide resources elsewhere, social justice (the right of the community to enjoy its assets) would be challenged. An example of this would be the development of palm oil plantations for biofuel production – new technology providing a renewable source of power but displacing indigenous species and communities (Friends of the Earth, 2007). Baker (2006) argues that the WCED report, whilst radical in nature, has not been adhered to in spirit, and its principles have not always been recognised or implemented. In contrast, Dobson (1998) argues that Brundtland has been influential because it includes competing conceptions of sustainability to provide solutions, and, where there are conflicting 'ideals' (i.e. alternate models of sustainability) Brundtland nevertheless uses both.

In summary, then, the WCED gave an impetus for society (through its institutions) to begin to engage with sustainability, both at the theoretical, intellectual level and at the practical.

Capital maintenance within sustainability

Early analysis of what sustainability was incorporated ideas from ecology and economics. Ecology tells us that nature, undisturbed, is a self organising system which changes (evolves) and has no obvious objectives or goals – a dynamic system rather than one in equilibrium (Carpenter, 1995). The idea that ecological systems provided 'stocks' of ecological goods which need to be maintained and preserved is echoed in the economic analysis that economic capital needs to be maintained to provide a basis for wealth creation. In ecology, the reduction of stock – say, a reduction in biodiversity – affects the ability of the remaining stock to develop, to reproduce or to survive. In economics, a reduction in capital reduces the amount of wealth that can be created from it.

Hence this connection between ecology and economics in terms of the understanding of the need to maintain capital has been a useful way of understanding what sustainability may or may not be (Grima, Horton and Kant, 2003).

Interspecies equity moves the sustainability analysis into more radical areas because it requires giving equal consideration to non-humans, whether these be sentient beings, other living organisms or, in some analyses, non-living substances (rocks, the water in streams, the sky, the mountains in Leopold's (1947) view). Non-humans are granted equal consideration as part of the whole of natural capital, and sustainability begins to move away from an anthropocentric (human-centred) position to one that is more ecocentric (although whether a position that is defined by humans can ever be completely free from human bias is debatable). If natural capital is thus comprised, a question is then posed: at what resolution does the equality begin? Do we consider that individuals of a species are granted equity? Does this extend to whole species or should we consider that an ecosystem is the unit of natural capital? If the stock of natural capital is large, presumably there will be more available to occupy by a greater number of species, and the result is biodiversity at its optimum. However, a mature ecosystem may contain only a few dominant species – does this evolutionary process enhance or inhibit interspecies equity? Where such stocks are more limited, environmental pressure may reduce the number of occupying species, and this may result in the need to protect individual species. This protection may actually cause the demise of another species, so equity is not served by such intervention. This is where the position begins to resemble an anthropocentric one, where humans are making the decisions on behalf of other species. The maintenance of such capital, then, in order to preserve a level of equity, itself compromises that equity.

Intragenerational equity requires that we take note of the demands of all humans wherever they are, and have regard for the amount and types of capital available. Jacobs (1991) would argue that this equity is best served by making the distribution of environmental consumption more equal. Pearce (1995) argues that a concern for the

environment, and therefore a subsequent attitude towards it, may be determined by where you are and what monetary income you have. There is an elitism among rich environmentalists in the developed world – it may be said that one cannot be concerned about wider environmental issues if one is concerned about day to day survival. Similarly if a majority world dweller is faced with the choice of fuel wood or forest preservation, the survival instinct would make the immediate choice – actions about the future are less important. Compare this situation with the poor in a developed country whose backyard is a dumping ground for toxic chemicals (Bullard, 2004)(environmental 'bads' often finding themselves sited in poor neighbourhoods). Here the environmental concern is less global and theoretical than local and actual.

There is a conflict between intra- and intergenerational equity, often faced by those who can least afford to delay their environmental concern. Being fair to the future will require reducing one's own impacts; survival may dictate that future generations are not granted consideration, and that there is a trade-off between current and future generations. Hence the maintenance of capital for the future may be compromised by the needs of today.

Jacobs (1991) has taken the requirement for intergenerational equity as the basis for sustainability. His basis for this is that sustainability equates with environmental management and protection, which takes place over time, and therefore over generations. He also links sustainability with environmental consumption, and the capacity and availability of natural capital to allow consumption. Hence his analysis relates to the ability of humans to limit their
own environmental consumption so that future generations can enjoy the same levels of environmental consumption, as currently enjoyed. Hence the actions of current generations should recognise the debt owed to future generations – not inheriting from the past but borrowing from the future.

This view is refuted by Gilpin (2000) – an environmental economist - who states that the current generation owes the future nothing. This is because, he argues, the needs of

future generations are uncertain and unpredictable and so cannot be appropriately provided for. What future generations do inherit from us are the developments in science and technology which will enable them to apply the solutions generated to live more sustainably. Hence it could be argued that there is no requirement to build up or maintain capital stocks for the future but for the present to use capital or maintain it for others to use. However, it seems that this approach maintains the short-termism that is evident in much of economic analysis, and assumes that a technocentric approach (O'Riordan's 'almost arrogant….assumption that man (sic) is supremely able to understand and control events' (1981, p1)) will be sufficient to deliver sustainable development to the future.

There is a relationship between human and natural capital: poverty, for instance, creates environmental degradation and resource over-exploitation or should this be vice versa? A degraded environment leads to poverty where people lack education and skills to prevent this (Veeman and Politylo, 2003). Education and skills development increases human capital (Ekins *et al*,1992). It is considered that where there are high levels of human capital, reductions in environmental capital are less likely to be disruptive (Veeman and Politylo, 2003). For instance, people who have a high level of skills in the areas of environmental management and protection will be able to put processes in place to halt any further damage. However, in practice what often happens is that this compensatory activity displaces the environmental degradation to those areas which already suffer from it – the areas where human capital is also compromised. We can see this in the area of global climate change where developed countries are seen to export their own environmental damage to less developed areas – those which already struggle to develop either human or natural capital.

One of the assumptions in all of this is that the substitution is between human-made and natural capital, and if this is the case, it raises other issues: for instance, what is the nature of human-made capital? Is there an element of natural capital incorporated at some point within human-made capital, and if so, is all capital not essentially natural?

Conversely as economic ‘progress’ has exploited, or will exploit, the natural capital it needs to increase human welfare, isn’t all capital human-made?

Similarly, taking the prominence of intergenerational equity as our starting point, future generations will require a total stock passed to them which will include human and social capital, some of which – technology, for example – which will help to preserve natural capital (as Gilpin proposes). Hence current generations have a duty to pass on different types of capital, and this again raises the issue of whether there is substitutability between human-made and natural capital: is total substitution allowed (so that, for instance, technological advances in energy will compensate for the reduction in fossil fuel availability)? Therefore does it matter whether we can distinguish between human and natural capital, in this type of analysis?

Instead of dividing capital between human-made and natural, perhaps the analysis should be between exhaustible and reproducible capital, in which case either of the former can be included in either of the latter. This will then define what can and cannot be substituted, but there still remains the problem that whether we take a strong or a weak position, the decline of exhaustible capital is not allowable in the framework of sustainability.

Weak vs strong sustainability

The differences in emphasis and definitions have led to typologies which describe sustainability as ‘weak’ sustainability, ‘strong’ sustainability, (see Jacobs, 1991, Pearce, 1995,Gray and Bebbington, 2001, Baker, 2006) and even ‘absurdly strong’ sustainability (Daly, 1995, Holland, 1997). These are often distinguished by their treatment of the possibility of substitution of capital, and their acceptance (or otherwise) that some types of capital need to be maintained regardless of other substitutions. This is shown in Table 2.

The central theme of sustainability addressed in this way is that nature, represented by capital, can be regarded as a commodity and thus traded as such. This has the positive

benefit of recognising the effects on nature as an economic 'good' or bad', (how else can humans account for what is done to nature?) but economic rationality, rather than human intuition, will determine how the commodity is used. (It will not be argued here that economic pricing and the valuation of nature are, or are not, the same thing, nor that economics is not equipped to deal with all of the effects upon nature). This leads to the concept of *offset* so that an aspect of capital, priced or weighted economically, can be substituted for another of similar price or weighting.

Table 2: sustainability paradigms (after Baker, 2006)

PARADIGM	CHARACTERISTICS
Weak sustainability	Nature is given a price, which is used in Cost Benefit Analysis Allows environmental management, environmental impact assessments, taxes and permits
Strong sustainability	Environmental protection needed for economic growth to take place Existence of critical natural capital Precautionary principle From quantitative to qualitative development

Here the weak and strong 'split' comes into play. In 'weak' sustainability, offset is possible in all cases of capital, as long as an economic advantage is gained from the substitution, and, as Beckerman (1994) analyses it, as long as there is no decline in human welfare. In Jacobs' (1991) analysis (because his begins with intergenerational equity) weak sustainability means that future generations should not be faced with environmental catastrophe, and that present generations have a duty to prevent this, but anything less than this is allowable. Hence this allows not only for offsets, but for an amount of depletion in natural capital.

In ‘strong’ sustainability, the offset has limits. Here, critical natural capital (that for which there is no human-made substitute –examples may be the ozone layer or an individual species) should be maintained regardless of what is happening to other forms of capital. Hence, there may be substitution between, say, a standing forest, felled to provide building materials, and the subsequent dwellings so constructed, but if this threatened a species’ or an ecosystem’s existence, then no substitution is allowable. If we base this in consumption terms (Jacobs, 1991) then ‘strong’ sustainability will be served if future generations have the opportunity to experience the same capital consumption as the current generation has been allowed. This implies that future generations will determine their own ethical position – the current generation has no place in issuing a moral imperative to the future in regard to the current levels of environmental consumption. This position also implies that if future generations are to inherit the same capacity to consume the environment, that it is the total stock that matters, and therefore substitutability is possible regardless of the types of capital involved. However, Jacobs (ibid) argues that sustainability based upon intergenerational equity is essentially an ecocentric approach because it requires environmental protection of species and of ecosystems, and aesthetic preservation.

Holland (1997) argues that there are flaws in the division between the weak and strong approaches, and that, in effect, they are the same. In the strong form of sustainability, critical capital has to be maintained because there is no human-made form to be substituted. However, if this action were to be contemplated under a weak sustainability paradigm, a decline in (any) capital would lessen human welfare and would therefore not be tolerated. Hence non-substitutable capital cannot be eroded in either paradigm. This is supported by Jacobs (1991) who uses the terms ‘minimal’ (for weak sustainability) and ‘maximal’ (for strong sustainability). These terms reflect the level of environmental capacity passed on to the future. Because of the current level of today’s environmental degradation, there may be little difference between the two states (ibid).

The following discussions are of aspects of sustainability which have their roots in the foregoing discussions but which have been specifically developed as models. It is to these the paper turns to assess their likely impact on CSR practice and understanding.

Environmental sustainability and social justice

Environmental sustainability may often be regarded as only one aspect of sustainability, but for Dobson (1998) (among others) it is regarded as the key to understanding sustainability and encompasses sustainable development. Dobson states that sustainable development is one form of environmental sustainability, which, for him, therefore includes social justice. He proposes three 'conceptions' of environmental sustainability to explain how the concept can be envisaged. The first ('conception A') allows economic considerations to direct the thinking; recognising the need for 'critical' nature to be reflected in the anthropocentric view that this is critical for *human* survival; this prioritises humans over non-humans. 'Conception' B takes the idea of value further to allow for certain aspects of nature to be valued for their own sake, which allows for a greater consideration of biodiversity. This concept is also more firmly fixed in the present generation which is prioritised over future generations. 'Conception' C is much more ecocentric in that it promotes intrinsic value in nature (Dobson, 1998), a 'natural value' (p53 in Dobson) that is not substitutable. This Dobson reconciles to Norton's (1989) extensionist-preservationist position, and, as can be seen later, Norton's work has been linked to that of Milne (1996) to establish a framework for sustainability reporting (see later).

Eco-modernity

Proponents of the eco-modernity model cite the WCED report as support for this, stating that it flows directly from the recommendations that WCED put forward. Ward *et al* (2004) suggest that eco-efficiency is the way forward from A21 for business. In other words, the business contribution to sustainability is via resource management and efficiency. Hence (in this understanding) business is delivering sustainable development. However the ways in which this is happening must be examined. Certainly if we consider that sustainability is concerned with the ways in which capital is

utilised, developing a more efficient approach would seem to suffice. However, this cannot incorporate *eco-effectiveness* or *eco-justice*. Efficiency has its roots in traditional economic models of optimum allocation of resources, and these can be any type of capital, substitutable or critical. Indeed this has been taken further by such proponents as Weizsacker *et al* (1997) who argue that by being more resource efficient, wealth can be increased. However, the question remains – wealth increases for whom? At what cost to those left behind? In order to increase wealth, demand must be maintained or even increased, and so limits to growth have to be set aside. It is also a model that suits the 'developed' or rich world very well, but ignores the needs of large parts of society to protect their own environment. It also has little if nothing to say about environmental justice (for instance the right to use resources in different ways as appropriate to the needs of different parts of society) and it says nothing about social justice at all. If one takes the simplest model of sustainability – a combination of economic, environmental and social factors, eco-modernity addresses the first to the largest extent, the second to some extent and the third not at all. Eco-modernity will address some of the issues around the use, appropriation and substitution of *environmental* capital but cannot begin to (indeed ignores) the issues of *social* capital.

The Ecological Footprint

Another mechanisms which attempts to enhance environmental sustainability is the Ecological Footprint methodology. The EF principle has been written about since the mid 1990s and the paper gives some indication of the range of publications in the area. Most agree (for instance Holmberg *et al*, 1999, Wackernagel *et al*, 1999) that the EF is an accounting and auditing tool – that is, it can be used to measure and monitor resource use. Its value lies in the way in which it can open up alternative possibilities (ibid) and allow planning and policy development to close the 'sustainability gap' (Barrett and Scott, 2003). It has ecological meaning and becomes a starting point for decisions about resource use, ecological flows and services and about sustainability generally (Wackernagel *et al*, 1998). It can then contribute to a wider framework of sustainability which can then be engaged with. It therefore is proposed as a very valuable tool to begin to understand sustainability.

Many papers are examining the EF methodology in national or regional contexts (for instance, Holmberg *et* al, 1999, Rees and Wackernagel, 1998, Robins, 1995, Wackernagel and Rees, 1996, Wackernagel *et al*, 1998, Wackernagel *et al*, 1999, Wada, 1996) or from an activity perspective (such as transport – see Barrett and Scott, 2003) or an individual resolution (Simmons and Chambers, 1998). Some research has attempted to examine the business aspect – for instance the work of Chambers and Lewis (2001) (cited in the paper) and Barrett and Scott (2001) but these have attempted to link to the debates about the public (and other external stakeholders') awareness of environmental impacts of business. In this way the EF is a means of education and awareness –raising for those outside of the business. The EF can also be used as a means to raise internal stakeholder (i.e. management's) awareness. This is essential if the business and its managers are to move towards better environmental management to close the sustainability gap.

Milne's (1996) model of accounting for sustainability

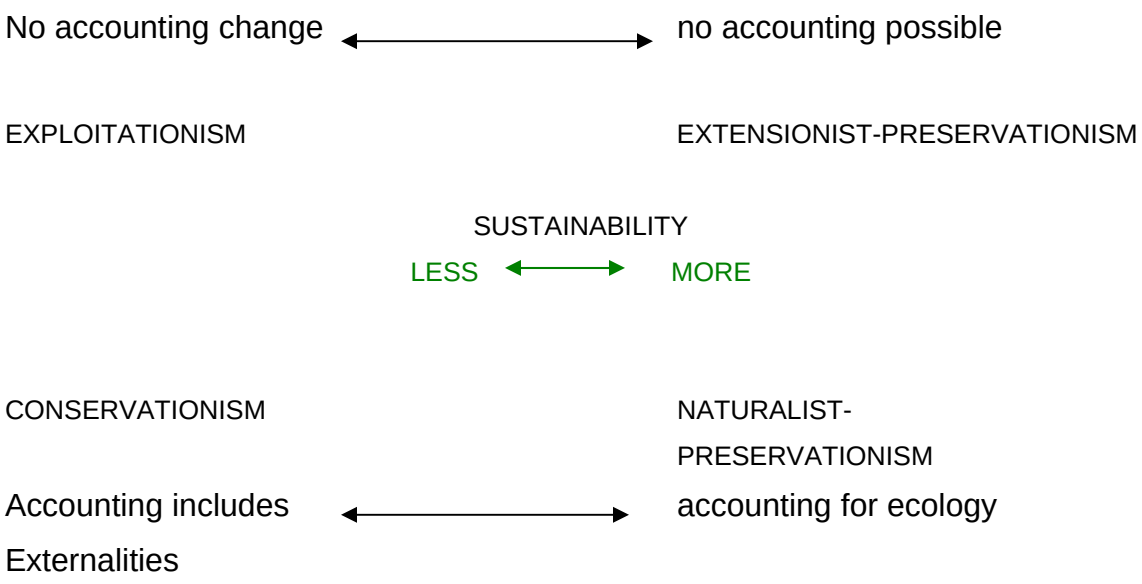
The business and accounting literature contains a growing body of work on how accountability can be operationalised through accounting mechanisms. There is a growing recognition of the radical nature of the sustainability project, through academic publications in journals such as *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* and *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability*, but there is a broad range of viewpoints which also encompass a more managerialist position. These all reflect the underlying values and philosophies of the researchers.

However, research in the area of environmental accounting and reporting has focused on the necessity of reporting as a means of delivering accountability. Sustainability has less often been either the desired outcome of reporting nor its raison d'etre. Indeed, Bebbington (2001) argues that much work in this area has not engaged with sustainability or how reporting demonstrates sustainability activities by businesses. There have been attempts – for instance by Milne (1996) – to model what or where sustainability may be reported but this has not been followed up by research which

shows the model in action. He categorises 4 positions – developed from Norton's (1989) work (cited in Dobson, 1998: see earlier) - which reflect stages of accounting activity, from 'business-as-usual' to 'non-accounting' for nature. These can be described as:

- **exploitationism** – based on neo-classical analysis and requiring no change to current accounting practice;
- **conservationism** – recognising that business activities impact upon the wider world and that it is possible to account for these externalities;
- **naturalist-preservationism** – a constraints-based approach which considers the possibility of substitution between capitals, and leads to an accounting for sustainability;
- **extensionist-preservationism** – where intrinsic values in nature prevent human-centred decision making and require an ecocentric approach, where accounting cannot provide an adequate framework.

If these are positioned alongside the sustainability continuum, the following matrix emerges:



Participatory mechanisms

Participation is a key element in sustainability. The principle is set out in Agenda 21 (A21) and followed through in Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Participation and community development have a long interconnected history (see, for instance Midgley *et al*, 1986, for a discussion of how the two have emerged). Participation is considered emancipatory – removing the centralised, bureaucratic and impersonal influences and allowing communities to develop in the ways that best fits their locality, activities and lifestyles. Participation involves notions of self-determination and creativity in problem-solving and decision-making. Indeed it is widely recognised (see, for instance, Grima *et al*, 2003, Veeman and Politylo, 2003, Young, 1997) that participation empowerment is essential if sustainability is to be delivered at the local level.

Since the 1970s the environmental agenda in the UK has encompassed community involvement and democratic participation (Young 1997). Coupled with the introduction of LA21, this has led to innovative participatory mechanisms, including those between (possibly) unlikely partners (ibid). Participation may arise not initially (or at all) because of an interest in sustainability but because of an interest in local democracy or governance (Young, 1997). Szerszynski (1997) lists activities such as Local Trade and Exchange Schemes (LETS), credit unions, housing co-operatives, etc., as local voluntary organisations which encourage participation and local action which, although neither participants or onlookers may recognise it, are contributing to sustainability, especially the social and economic spheres. He discusses the nature of voluntary associations which reflect the nature of everyday life and therefore promotes the sort of sustainability which works with people's needs. Such associations create trust and co-operation (necessary to overcome the individualistic behaviour of free riding and the tragedy of the commons) which enable sustainability to develop (ibid).

Finally, LA21 was developed to encourage 'bottom-up' strategies that are explicitly inclusive of marginalised members of the community – for instance women and young people – as this is the best way to associate with local people's perceptions of local needs and issues (Young, 1997). Hence local needs can be met with local resources (Ekins and Newby, 1998).

Porritt (2006) asserts that public awareness is raised when (a) the government provides funding to promote sustainable activities, (b) business provides access to such activities, and (c) non-governmental organisations provide content and integrity to them. However, Holland (2000) also demonstrates that individuals can engage themselves with activities which then in turn raise awareness of other issues and of the possibility of engaging with those activities. This is an important conclusion because this seems to be a cost-effective way of promoting and engaging and one which could result in a broader understanding. The model put forward in the paper is one of 'spring-boarding', that is, using one activity to promote thinking about the concept as a whole and of the practical ways to put the concept into practice.

Devkota (2005) states that local people work towards sustainability knowingly or unknowingly, and that often local activities may exhibit 'strong' sustainability because this is what is required. Local knowledge may inform change, which becomes optimal (Grima *et al*, 2003) and local people best understand the context in which they operate and therefore understand how their basic sustainable needs can be met (Redclift, 1987).

Hopwood, Mellor and O'Brien: 'mapping different approaches'

In their 2005 paper, Hopwood, Mellor and O'Brien outline the various definitions that they have studied and conclude that they lead to a confusion surrounding sustainability which is unhelpful to those wishing to develop policy or offer advice. Their aim is to emphasise 'sustainable livelihoods' and 'long term environmental sustainability' by mapping the trends and partnerships/movements that have emerged over the last 30 years. The methodology attempts to show these developments against two axes – reflecting socio-economic and environmental concerns. The map they create presents each development described by its contribution to the problems of well-being and equality (the social axis) and its approach to environmental concerns (from a basis of no concern through the categories used by O'Riordan (1989): techno- and ecoecentric). An elliptical area in the centre of this map represents those actions which can be described as sustainability – so, for instance this area contains Brundtland, WBCSD,

Schumacher and social ecology. Outside of this area are approaches which are not sustainability – neo-liberal economists and deep ecology are two examples of this. Overlaid on this map are three regions – the status quo, reform and transformation. These represent views on the changes that are needed to achieve sustainability. The status quo is represented by the region of lowest concern – low social equality and an approach to environmental concerns from low concern to a technocentric one. A reformist position represents medium concerns, and a transformative position is where high concerns are demonstrated. Each of these regions contains developments which *are* or *are not* sustainability, so that the authors can determine whether a particular stance, movement or philosophy is describing sustainable development. This means that a clearer critique of a wide range of positions is given to reveal those developments which have been wrongly categorised as sustainable development – those that may be described as radical as well as those considered more mainstream. Some examples are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples from Hopwood *et al*'s sustainability map

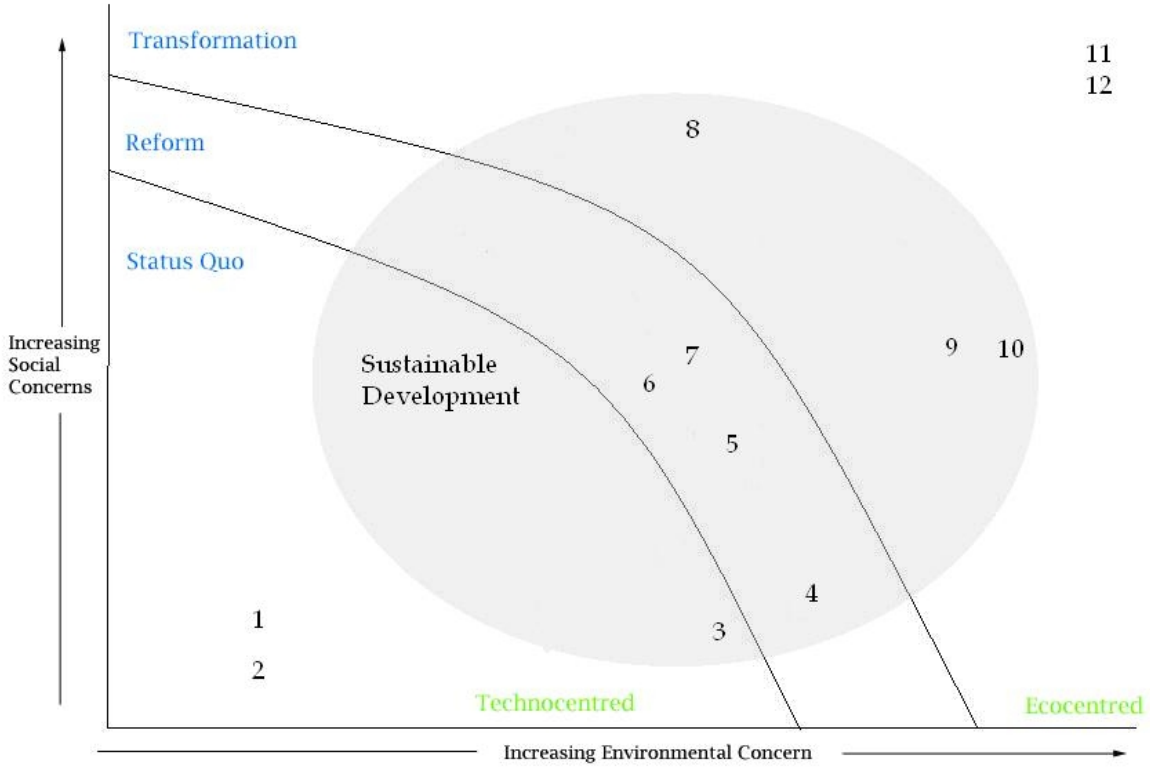
	Sustainable development	Position within SD	Outside SD paradigm	Position if outside
Transformative	Ecosocialist Ecofeminist	High env/social As above	Socialist cornucopia Deep ecology	High social/ low env High env/ low social
Reforming	Mainstream env groups Limits to growth (1992)	High env/med social Both med	Social reform Limits to growth (1972)	High social/ Med env High env/ low social
Maintaining status quo	EU	Both low/med	Neo-liberalists	Both low

	Forum for the future WBCSD	Med env/ low social Low social/ med-low env		

Hopwood *et al's* map is a useful way of examining the reform vs radical debate in CSR because it allows the positioning of models of potential CSR to assess their contribution to the radicalization of CSR in practice, and to assess their contribution to sustainability and sustainable development. Hence if the models examined in this paper are overlaid on Hopwood *et al's* map, it becomes clear which of the models are going to provide us with a more transformative CSR. This is shown in Diagram 2.

The diagram makes it very clear that the models we can currently see in practice are reformative in nature. For instance, Walkers Crisps in the UK label their product with an ecological footprint; companies use the term 'corporate citizen' in their communication media; accounting for externalities can be seen in the latest drive by companies to account for and disclose activities on climate change; many companies still use the WCED definition of sustainable development to begin their discussions on CSR activities.

Diagram 2: The relative position of each model in terms of its sustainable development content (after Hopwood *et al*, 1995)



Key to Diagram 2:

1. Dobson ‘conception A’
2. No accounting change per Milne, 1996
3. Eco-modernity
4. Accounting for externalities per Milne, 1996
5. Ecological foot-printing
6. WCED
7. Corporate citizenship
8. Participation
9. Dobson ‘conception B’
10. Accounting for ecology per Milne, 1996
11. Dobson ‘conception C’
12. No accounting possible per Milne, 1996

Hence if we want a more transformative or radical CSR we need to look at the models in the transformation area of the map. This would require a greater accounting for nature and an active participation from stakeholders. Hence our accounting and disclosure models would need to be more inclusive of non-financial information and would have to provide a far more holistic picture of what the company's activities involve and impact upon. This is not a new idea – Owen (2008) has traced research efforts (often in vain) to try to establish such an accounting. Similarly, research on the (non)involvement of stakeholders has argued for better mechanisms by companies to allow stakeholder inputs (ibid). Owen argues that accountability should be regarded as the central concept in CSR accounting and reporting, and as such is radical because business is not being truly accountable. This can be seen in the 'reformist models' above which are often one way processes – business to stakeholder, or internal to business – that cannot stand scrutiny as accountability mechanisms. If Adam's three positions are re-examined in the light of accountability we may have:

- Adaptation: of business to a more society-centred 'livelihood' i.e. one which takes account of stakeholder demands;
- Resistance to models which do little more than provide incremental change;
- Protest to force more transformative business activities.

This may then see a more radicalized CSR. In this way CSR becomes a meaningful concept where social justice and environmental protection are enshrined in business activity and move us all to a more sustainable future.

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Appendices

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Footnotes

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Figure Captions

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