

Sustainable Innovation Report

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A summary of the discussions and conversations taking place at the 2nd *Sustainable Innovation*, 19th of November 2002, a one day creative workshop initiative by the Sustainable Marketing Knowledge Network.

Organisers

The Centre for Sustainable Design
Department of Marketing, Strathclyde
University

Facilitators

Martin Charter
Ingrid Kajzer

Location

The Centre for Sustainable Design
SIAD-UC, UK

Participants

Andre Malsch	Manager	Steelcase
Atsushi Inabi	Director	AIST
Caroline Elliot	Consultant	European Marketing Confederation
Elizabeth Mills	Development Consultant	NMSI – Science Museum
Julia Ridsdale	Secretary General	European Marketing Confederation
Kate Larson	Marketing Manager	Future Considerations
Kazuhiko Nakayama	Manager	AIST
Mark Graham	Project Manager	Cleveland Innovation
Michael Merck	Marketing Manager	Steelcase
Mike Shield	Managing Director	Cleveland Innovation
Mona Craven	Designer	Must be the best
Paul Collingwood	Director	The Futures Group
Paul Jackson	Director	Thought Forge
Philipp Hutterer	Co-ordinator	TU Muenchen Product Development
Rebecca Dawson	Sustain Development Co-ord.	NMSI – Science Museum
Sandra Clarke	Owner	Smadar Strategies
Thomas Hessling	Research Assistant	Technical University of Munich



Explore
Experience
Expand



How can we move
beyond
environmental
product
declarations?



How do organic
processes transfer
to strategic
thinking?



How can we
reinforce
sustainable brand
value?



Dear Participant

Sustainable Innovation was a collective endeavour between Professor Martin Charter at The Centre for Sustainable Design and Ingrid Kajzer from the Marketing Department at Strathclyde University. This one day workshop was an unique event, looking beyond current workshop approaches to sustainability. So far, numerous initiatives have focused on contaminated land, legislation and resource minimisation strategies. *Sustainable Innovation* was one of the first of its kind, focusing on creativity and innovation.

This is a summary of the conversations taking place throughout the day as well as solutions created in the various workshop activities. It reflects the overall learning and the main conclusions reached from the workshop.

The objectives of the day were:

- >>> To experience different ways of thinking about sustainability and marketing
- >>> To explore sustainability and marketing through novel creative methods and design solutions 'on the spot'
- >>> To facilitate co-operation between marketing, design and environmental professionals
- >>> To present and explore critical business and research examples of sustainable marketing and design

It is hoped that this document will inspire you as a reader, to view sustainability with enthusiasm and encourage you to recognise the opportunities that are available to us. We would also like to take the opportunity to thank all participants for your vital input in this workshop

Martin Charter & Ingrid Kajzer

>> thoughts on the day

'I found useful the process by which we examine our relationship to objects and what we expect of them'

'Today reconfirmed my determination to keep on battling within the marketing community'

'I am taking a feeling of encouragement with me'

Structure of the report

This online report of the 2nd *Sustainable Innovation* workshop will provide you with the following:

A brief background to *Sustainable Innovation* and the need for new approaches to sustainability.

Discussions and dialogues arising from the day such as *'inspired by nature'* and *'design on the spot'* as well as the final 'discussion' session.

An overview of the prototype-solutions created by the participants.

In addition, you will find some links and references throughout the report, encouraging you to explore certain areas further.

Finally, facilitators details are given at the end.



New ways of thinking about sustainability

We live in a world where organisations of all kinds have to be more creative in finding new ways of doing business that are compatible with achieving a more sustainable society. We need to look at not only what we are doing but explore ideas and experience images of the future and what could be!

A new trend is emerging, the next evolution of '*sustainable*' is moving beyond eco-friendliness to organic inspiration where our businesses, strategies and products actually live and breathe. A number of forefront organisations are now turning to nature, not to extract but to be inspired and learn from natural design principles. Biomimicry, integrated biological systems and adaptive enterprises are emerging business vocabulary.

This workshop was created to provide space to create images of the future and explore marketing as a '*living process*'. It was intended to invite you to think more deeply about marketing and sustainability by challenging traditional thought and move beyond conventional business practice.

A diverse range of participants were purposely invited as we would argue that generating ideas and achieving a sustainable future is not just a technical matter. It requires co-operation between stakeholders from different knowledge areas.

What if?

What happens if we take an ecological perspective to marketing and innovation?
What are the benefits of cultivating such a growing mindset?



Strategic Overview and Sustainable Marketing

Here participants were introduced to current trends and concepts related to sustainability. This is a short summary of key issues discussed.

- Uncertainty:** There is an uncertainty over operationalisation of business sustainability
- Outsourcing:** There are considerable shifts of outsourcing manufacturing to south and south-east Asia
- PR:** 'Producer responsibility' laws are extending companies traditional responsibilities
- Eco-efficiency:** There is an increasing recognition of the need for resource and energy efficiency
- Human rights:** Human rights and environmental non-governmental organisations are gaining more influence
- Soft:** Social performance is a difficult area to measure – especially in relation to products
- Fishbowl:** There is a growing scrutiny of companies social and environmental performance accelerated by internet
- Japan:** Environmental laws are being used to strengthen Japan's long term competitiveness
- Value:** There is an emerging understanding of the need to determine sustainability impacts throughout the value chain

Short thought provoking exercises were carried out with participants, which illustrated

- >> How difficult it is to let go of existing thought patterns
- >> How we tend to think and approach problems in a similar way
- >> How we need to look beyond legislative compliance and a 'do nothing' attitude
- >> How we need new business models to enable and support sustainable innovation
- >> How we need to move beyond planned product obsolescence and design for longevity
- >> How we tend to separate marketing and new product development
- >> How we often tend to block creativity within organisations
- >> How we need to move away from using jargon





Landfills around the world are swollen full of dishwashers, televisions.. computers..bicycles etc. Each of which having spent a year or so conscience time in the garage as a stopover. Many of these products still function perfectly and most definitely haven't been consumed or 'used up' at all. So what have these apparently indispensable life-changing products ceased to do in order to be granted a 4000-year death sentence of painfully slow bio-degradation?....



...however, until products (what we do) embody a transient flexibility to shift and adapt in sync with us we will always be adding to an immense landfill of transferred matter whose only crime was a failure to adapt and grow

Jonathan Chapman, 2002

Rethinking Products

It is clear that we have to rethink the way we look at products and how we market them. Following the evolving trend to use nature's design principles participants were asked:

What is a product in nature?

What happens if products are living?

Looking at products from this perspective may introduce us to ideas on how to improve the durability and increase the meaningfulness of products. The following extract is a summary of what participants collectively generated throughout the day.

'A living product is something that is one with us, a part of creating our world. They are born, we feed them, they grow, evolve, and they die. They are intelligent, adaptable and they interact and learn. They are living because they give us some benefit, some nourishment. Living products become heirlooms and we have stewardship over them. We do not own them. Living products have a consciousness, and show respect for nature, they are nurturing products. A living product has a life cycle and deserves a decent burial. It has to die, but when does it die? What do they need to survive?'

>> Questions

- 1 Do you think products today are 'living'?
- 2 Is this idea of 'Living Product' different or similar to the way you look at sustainable products today?
- 3 Is it of any use or relevance?

>> Explore further

- >> Biomimicry - inspired by nature
- >> Integrated Biological Systems
- >> Industrial Ecology
- >> The Living Product*



Critical Discussion

Identifying our relationship to products was revealing to many participants and encouraged us to start to think about how products fit into the wider environment. The new product solutions discussed focused on continuously changing relationships which allowed the consumer to adapt and extend the product, to grow it into a new form. As a user you would have stewardship over the product for the next generation. Such a notion goes beyond the focus on environmental compatible material.

At part the discussion was controversial and raised a lot of questions such as '*why do we want to own things?*', '*what other ways can we relate to products?*' and finally '*is it not dangerous to encourage people to get emotional about an inanimate object?*'

Further discussion also illustrated:

- >> A disagreement on how much importance are or do we want to place on products
- >> The risk of translating it into a 'marketing nonsense' or a 'marketing thing'
- >> The risk of highlighting only the positive element of nature
- >> The difficulty to think beyond recycling of products towards a holistic view
- >> The need to change the product development process, not short vision, but long vision.
- >> The potential of a psychological view of towards products

>> Your comment

What is stopping us? I like my car, I like my freedom, and I like bananas!

>> New words used

- >> '**Void** and **emptiness** are what might happen if we do not embrace sustainability'
- >> 'You have to have **differences**, not all one way, open your brain to different opportunities'
- >> '**Metamorphosis**- a continual cycle of changing'
- >> 'To keep going you need to keep **reflecting**'

>> Your interpretation of Co-evolution:

Sharing pathways, sharing the space and the planet, parallel development, dependency, partnership, changing, compromise, synergy, harmony



Mobility Solutions*

A group of participants were seeking to create a sustainable mobility solution and their discussions generated a number of initial ideas some of which are illustrated below.



Mobility as a 'energy loops'

Part of the discussion took place not on the level of a specific physical manifestation of mobility e.g. a car, rather on energy flows associated with moving things and people around. Are there ways we can make 'energy loops' for moving things? Could you harness the energy e.g. store it and use for other things?

Local 'people mobility'

The ideas are built around people 'moving' less supported by a mutually owned and used transportation system with 'no one owner but a lot of users'. People live, work, holiday and eat things locally. Technology is enabler in this solution and many commercial transactions are taking place in the virtual world. The benefits of this is that you have lesser emissions and a stronger community system, a stronger local economy.

Key words: leased, borrowed, rented, shared

>> Challenges

- >> Requires change in definition and perception of personal 'freedom' and 'ownership'
- >> Requires us to create a way of making using, eating, staying local attractive
- >> Need to change our relationship to 'material' transportation

'Why do we need to move, what is the point of moving?'



*It should be noted that these group activities around mobility, food and furniture solutions were intended as introductions for participants to think in a systemic way and therefore the proto-type examples are first attempts, and that should be kept in mind when reading.





A Global Business Solution

Another group was working on creating a sustainable food solution. They focused their energy on looking at the role of global businesses taking a *big business point of view* rather than local agendas and action. The discussion evolved around how food affects us in terms of the way we treat food, right to its source to our concerns about additives and chemicals.

The idea created was to set up an international organisation bringing together some of the major brands in the world today, working together to assure that the 3^d world has access to clean water and better living standards. Big corporations have the resources, they have the technology, they have the political and economical power to help the 3^d world to have access to clean water. Collectively they have the ability to start to implement change.

Rather than changing the business agenda this group choose to capitalise on current business mindset driven from increasing how much they sell. Many of the big branded companies are now starting to look at the 3^d world as a potential new market for their goods and services, seeking to create new markets. The reason for bringing clean water to the 3^d world would not be to gain instant 'good' PR for the next year rather in the long term this would allow these communities to start to prosper, leading to greater disposable income. Eventually they would be able to afford to buy products that the bi corporations produce.

'I guess our scenario for a sustainable future is lets use the power of global business and show them that this is in their economic benefit to actually put something back to the globe, which would not only benefit them but also other people.'

'1/3 of the world's population do not have access to clean water'

>> Open for debate

Capitalising on big business agendas of creating new markets to sell more goods may be beneficial in the short term and may well be the most realistic option. However will we really reach a sustainable future by encouraging the 3^d world to consume more and more? And will they be in debt to these big corporations?



Furniture Solutions

'One element that we all felt quite strongly about was that we would not want to lie in someone else's bed, or sit in someone else's chair. Your ideal of the recycled furniture it goes so far, we are not "goldie locks"!'

The furniture co-op

This furniture solution is based on the idea that people do not own their furniture. As a 'consumer' you would buy into a company and in effect you would become a shareholder. It would work as a co-operative where the members provide the capital with which the design would be made of. For instance for a chair or for a sofa the co-operative would remain owner of the structure and the only element that people would have to buy is the stuffing and the covering. The furniture parts would be recyclable, ethical suppliers would be used and natural finishes used rather than industrial varnishes.

As a user you can maintain the personal aspect and choose the covering and the colouring and the style. The essence behind this idea is a local system for providing furniture which at the same time allows people to change their furniture as their tastes or family and living situation change. It is flexible and self-renewing system, promoting diversity as it gives you choice. Once you become faithful to the co-op it is in the users interest to not go to a rival one, you stay within the scheme. Marketing activities would focus on solving the inconveniences of having and maintaining possessions rather than directly seeking to overcome our obsession with ownership.

>> Key barrier

- >> 'The issue of ownership which is fundamental to the capitalist, competitive, consumption orientated society we live in'
- >> How to create something that change and evolve
- >> Governance issues of the co-operative

>> Questions asked in the design process

- >> 'What are the reasons why people need to change furniture from time to time?'
- >> 'What would the criteria be to get closer to the customer, maintaining that relationship, because as a business we need to be?'
- >> 'Should we be producing furniture that is built to last or fulfils a function for a certain period, and which then can be traded in for something else?'



Discussion

The *Sustainable Innovation* workshop ended with a dialogue session where emerging issues from the day were discussed. Some of the themes touched upon were:

Let's wait and see attitude

It was raised on several occasions that it was difficult to convince Marketing professionals of the benefits of sustainable innovation, and that many had a *'Let's wait and see, does it sell product'* attitude. The participants agreed that marketing should take a lead however as the wide range of quotes illustrate it is not an easy matter:

'Who will advocate that marketing works for sustainability rather than against it? Who will jump first?'

'How can we bring the sustainability idea into marketing?'

'What does marketing mean? Does it really have any great influence?'

'If sustainability has to come at the cost of limited choice and personal freedom, it will be a very hard concept to sell to the public'

Putting your head above the parapet

The issue of the individual's role towards greater sustainability was discussed on several occasions in terms of:

- >> The personal challenge about how far you or your organisational culture allow you to go;
- >> The risk of jeopardising individual reputation and putting your head above the parapet;

The question 'How does one free up creativity within the organisation?' was raised and the importance of creating a culture that enable change agents was also mentioned.

Need for consumer activism

It is often suggested we need strong governmental leadership and legislation to take us forward. However, the final discussion session highlighted that the market, the consumers need to ask for the products and services that are currently not available. This brings us to a more *'activist shareholder model'*. How we can mobilise this activist spirit was an issue of concern and an important source for future debate.

'There is not enough of us asking the questions'

Is it a cultural thing?

The particular characteristics of the British culture and its impact on the sustainability agenda was brought up. For example the lack of physical relationship to nature, infrastructure for recycling and British legislation were areas mentioned. It was suggested that *'we need to find a way that applies to the UK'* as opposed to looking at other countries, as their different cultural characteristics will not always make their solutions applicable to the UK. In other words *'we need to find a way to harness the positive energy'* of the British culture in our quest towards a sustainable society.



Key Learning points

The key learning points from the day are illustrated by short summaries or quotes from participants

Relationships to objects

'The things I found useful was the process by which we examine our relationship to objects and what we expect from them. I do think we take them face value'

The fundamental use of language

Language emerged as an important issue. A lot of jargon is currently being used and one participant explained *'There is a fundamental language issue and what I mean by that is the style of language that marketing has used today. It is not about media, new ways of communicating – we need to review how we use language or styles of communication'*.

The role and nature of marketing

One participant explained *'many of us that have worked in big and small organisations are implementers, interpreters, we are not dictators. We work under very tight constraints'*

'My clients ask how can you commit yourself to that subject area (sustainability)...what I am coming across is what people actually see as marketing and what they see as being ethical and sustainable, those two just do not match in their minds. There seems to be some fundamental barriers'.

Senior management

'Who ultimately is it that is going to influence the greater acceptability and embracement of sustainability? The greater influence will come from the shareholders. Frankly, as much as we fiddle around on the edges, unless we get them, well. We need senior management's heart and minds'

Feeling of encouragement

A number of participants expressed that they day had reconfirmed their determination to keep on battling to integrate sustainability in their professions. A feeling of encouragement and sense of community was shared by seeing other people's affection for sustainability. Many felt inspired by ideas and new words introduces.

'The potential for change is enormous, what we need to do is work together'

Other learning points:

- >> Looking at technological development and change more holistically
- >> Making the link to change management
- >> Experiencing the different ways you can look at sustainability
- >> Opportunities to use technology as an enabler



Future Agendas

In the light of the positive response from *Sustainable Innovation* other workshops are planned for 2003. In October 2003, The Centre for Sustainable Design will be organising a high level conference *Sustainable Innovation 03* in Sweden, <http://www.cfsd.org.uk/events/tspd8>

>> What's next?

Throughout 2003, The Centre for Sustainable Design, as part of the Sustainable Marketing Knowledge Network, will organise a series of workshops in association with University of Strathclyde and other partners aimed at stimulating sustainable innovation and 'out of the box' thinking among marketing and sustainability professionals. Smart: Know – Net will extend this by producing a toolbox and additional training resources designed to focus on the real issues being faced by marketing and communication managers.

Throughout 2003, Ingrid Kajzer will also be finalising her doctoral research project focusing on sustainable marketing and innovation. A summary will be available with conclusions and recommendations based on company case studies, the Sustainable Innovation workshops and a Sustainable Design project with the Product Design Department at Glasgow School of Art.

>>Further information and knowledge needs put forward by participants:

- >> Ways of changing our relationship to products
- >> Explore cultures that are less materialistic
- >> More examples that spark imagination
- >> Put our perception of freedom under microscope
- >> Strategies for change of consumer value systems
- >> More research into new alternative business and governance models
- >> Ways of marketing sustainability as a life style
- >> Procedures how to standardise recycling
- >> Best practice sustainable design guide
- >> Mistakes and lessons learned in sustainable design

begin the journey



Further reading and exploration

Here are some selected books and websites. For more sources of inspiration have a look at the Smart: Know-Net resource list at <http://www.cfsd.org.uk/smart-know-net/index.htm>

>> Books/Articles

Charter, M & Tischner, U., 2001. **Sustainable Solutions**, Greenleaf Publishing

Clippinger, J., 1999. **The Biology of Business**. Jossey-Bass Publisher.

De Geus, A., 1999. **The Living Company**. Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd.

Hawken P. 1993. **The Ecology of Commerce: a declaration of sustainability**. HarperBusiness: New York.

Natrass, B. & M. Altmore, 1999. **The Natural Step for business: wealth, ecology and the evolutionary corporation**. New Society Publishers.

Senge P, Carstedt G. 2001. **Innovating our way to the next industrial revolution**. MIT Sloan Management Review, Winter: p. 24- 37.

Walker S. 1998. **Experiments in sustainable product design**. The Journal of Sustainable Product Design October: p. 41-50.

>> Websites

Biomimicry 'Inspired by Nature'

Rohner Textil

Interface Inc.

Alliance for Global Sustainability

World Business Council for Sustainable Development

McCann Erickson's 'Global Citizen Campaign'

Project Sigma

McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry

The Complexity and Management Centre

Zero Emissions Research Initiatives

<http://www.biomimicry.org/>

<http://www.rohnertextil.com>

<http://www.interfacesustainability.com>

<http://globalsustainability.org/>

<http://www.wbcsd.ch/linkages/un.htm>

<http://www.mccann.com/campaigns/gc1.html>

<http://www.projectsigma.com>

<http://www.mbdc.com>

<http://www.herts.ac.uk/business/centres/cmc.html>

<http://www.zeri.org>

>> Journals and magazines

The Journal of Sustainable Product Design

Tomorrow Magazine

Greenleaf Publishing

<http://www.cfsd.org.uk/journal/index.html>

<http://www.tomorrow-web.com/>

<http://www.greenleaf-publishing.com/>

begin the journey



>> Participants thoughts

'Is behaving more sustainable like giving up smoking? i.e. acknowledge problems; take a day at the time; never forget you are a smoker underneath?!

'Make sustainability user friendly! Talk my language, understand my world, come and have tea!'

'Market the need to the consumer, rather than accept that the need does not exists for sustainable products'

'As part of the marketing process for sustainable products and services, we need to think about how we use media channels e.g. is it a good idea to use tons of paper for a billboard campaign for a green car?'

'Why do we keep repeating our mistakes?'

'How long have we been talking about shared transportation systems for and it has not happened. Why hasn't it happened yet? How do we make the 'tipping point' come closer?'



Martin Charter

Martin Charter is the Director and Visiting Professor of Sustainable Product Design at The Centre for Sustainable Design at the Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College. Since 1988, he has worked at director level in 'business and environment' issues in consultancy, leisure, publishing, training, events and research.

Prior to this he held a range of management positions in strategy, research and marketing, in business and consultancy. Martin is presently editor of the Journal of Sustainable Product Design and was the launch Director of Greenleaf Publishing and Marketing and Communications Director at the Earth Centre. He is a member of numerous advisory boards and judging panels. He is the author, editor and joint editor of various books and publications including Greener Marketing (1992 and 1999), The Green Management Gurus [e-book] (1996), Managing Eco-design (1997), Sustainable Solutions (2001) and Sustainable Value (2003).

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Ingrid Kajzer

Ingrid Kajzer is a Doctoral Researcher in the Marketing Department at University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. She has been researching on sustainable marketing issues for 3 years and it is partly on this work that this workshop is built upon. She is experienced in using various techniques such as mind mapping, scenarios as creative tools for envisioning, imagining and finally developing and implementing ideas. Her work has involved writing numerous articles and presenting at international conferences.

Previous research projects include an analysis of how three multinational companies (Volvo Cars, Electrolux and Novartis) integrate the environment into their marketing. She has also been involved in organising and facilitating group based teaching and discussions within the Department for 2 years. As a native Swede she has worked and travelled extensively abroad.

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