The Social Dimension of Sustainable Development: Guidance and Application

André Benaim, Amber C. Collins, Luke Raftis

School of Engineering
Blekinge Institute of Technology
Karlskrona, Sweden
2008

Thesis submitted for completion of Master of Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Karlskrona, Sweden.

Abstract:
In the shift towards a sustainable society, there have been varying interpretations of what this will mean for the social sphere. Using the parameters for social sustainability presented in the framework for strategic sustainable development (FSSD), this research sought to assist sustainability practitioners in identifying and eliminating the creation of or contribution to barriers that undermine the individual’s capacity to meet their needs. In doing so, the researchers explored the processes of social systems and employed a systems thinking perspective to examine how an organization could, through the intentional structuring of its processes, work to eliminate their contributions to barriers. From this research, characteristics of processes that move an organization towards socially sustainable development were identified as cooperation, transparency, openness, inclusiveness and involvement, around which a guidebook was developed to promote organizational reflection and examination of processes in regards to these characteristics and fundamental human needs.

Keywords: Social Sustainability, Human Needs, Social Systems, Systems Thinking, Structural Barriers, Social Sustainable Development, Process Characteristics, Strategic Guidance.
Acknowledgements

This work has greatly benefited from the feedback of our advisors Fiona Wright and Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt as well as Merlina Missimer, who, though not officially our advisor, provided useful questions and comments about our work. We deeply appreciate their efforts in generating reflections and light on our ideas in order to make them clear, aligned with the FSSD, and meaningful for those who will read this thesis.

A special thanks to Deborah Mathews, Minister of Child and Youth Services of the Province of Ontario, Canada, who’s suggestion of a topic was the convening force for this group and pointed us towards the subject that developed into this thesis. Her ideas greatly complemented our own and initiated valuable reflection.

Our sincere thanks to David Cook, Chief Executive of TNSI; Åsa Stenborg, Program Director of TNSI; and Simone Ramounoulou, Executive Director WHH/TNS-Brasil for their feedback on our ideas and support with the understanding and phrasing of our critiques.

For their time and availability, we thank everyone who helped us to create our cases studies by detailing their occupations, projects and processes: Edgard Gouveia Jr., Wilson Bessa, Suzanne Lair, Lori Nikkel, and Tatum Wilson.

We would like to thank all those who reviewed our guidebook, whose critiques served to strengthen our document. Of these, we especially appreciate the advice of Georges Dyer, Hetty Einzig, Regina Hauser, Johannes Fruehmann, and John Manoochehri.

Finally, to our beloved bubble, the MSLS class 2008, without whose insulating support of love, friendship, and advice this would not have been possible, we extend our heartfelt gratitude.
Statement of Collaboration

We affirm, with satisfaction and joy, the involvement and inclusion that was able to come about through the open and transparent process of cooperation that the three of us, Amber C. Collins, André Benaim, and Luke Raftis went through in order to co-create this thesis.

In saying so, let it be known that we all collaborated to this work in equal shares, giving the best of our skills to overcome our limitations and understand those of others by expanding our perspectives. Through dialogue we were able to go beyond our individuality and give birth to ideas that were of a higher order than any one of us could achieve on his or her own.

The journey was empowering and along it, much was learned. Our relationship was strengthened by the trust, honesty and goodwill of its committed members. This strength helped us to move together in the search for a meaningful outcome for our work.

André Benaim          Amber Collins          Luke Raftis
Executive Summary

This thesis aims to provide useful guidance for transforming organizational processes to better reflect a consideration of human needs. It seeks to address structures which act as barriers to the capacity of people to actualize\(^1\) their needs, and proposes a set of characteristics of processes that help to eliminate these barriers.

Introduction

Human needs are an integral part of sustainability issues. The Brundtland definition of sustainability, perhaps the most widely used, defines sustainable development as that which: “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (WCED 1987). Traditionally, sustainable development initiatives have focused on ecological sustainability, with their main emphasis being how not to destroy the biosphere for future generations. There has been less emphasis on how to meet the needs of the present or an official acknowledgement of what those needs might be.

Human needs are a conceptualization of well-being that reflect conditions that must be satisfied for people to stay physically and mentally healthy both individually and on a societal level. This is contrasted with the idea of a ‘want’ or unnecessary desire. This research used the conception of needs put forth by Manfred Max-Neef, characterized by nine fundamental categories of needs: *Subsistence, Affection, Freedom, Protection, Creation, Idleness, Participation, Identity, and Understanding* (Max-Neef 1991). While these needs are universal, how they are met varies greatly between and within cultures.

For this reason among others, the approach to sustainability can be a complex task. This research used the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) as a background reference to assist in viewing sustainability from a strategic perspective. Furthermore, it was meant to

\(^1\) As Max-Neef asserts, human needs are satisfied through processes rather than by objects. For example, a paintbrush does not satisfy the need of creativity, but the act of painting, which uses the object can. As the result of these continual processes, it is therefore more appropriate to speak of needs as being actualized rather than met.
strengthen the strategic guidance within the FSSD while integrating human needs into planning for sustainable development.

FSSD is a method for strategic planning within complex systems that sets the minimum conditions for attaining sustainability, as derived from basic scientific principles. Through a five level framework, the FSSD provides the understanding of the system, sets the constraints of sustainability as its definition of success, and, through planning at a strategic level, suggests actions and tools that best fit the plan.

For the ecological side of sustainability, these principles come from basic physical laws, such as the conservation laws and laws of thermodynamics, whereas for the social side, the concept of fundamental human needs is the starting point. The definition of success within the social system is that “people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs” (Ny et al. 2006). Being a minimum requirement, social sustainability is not about ensuring that everyone’s needs are met. Rather, its aim is that the conditions exist for everyone to have the capacity to realize their needs for themselves, if they so desire. Anything that impedes this capacity is considered a barrier, and needs to be addressed in order for any organization or community to make progress towards social sustainability. Barriers can be something obvious: dangerous or exploitive work arrangements, or failing to provide proper safety equipment for workers, but they can also include the structures, ideologies, and hierarchies that shape the relations between people and the processes that occur within organizations. This thesis focuses primarily on providing additional guidance to support the identification and transformation of structures which act as barriers to the capacity of individuals to meet their needs.

Understanding the nature of social dynamics and how these structures emerge from a systems perspective is of great importance to this topic. While social systems exhibit some of the properties of their constituent parts, they also exhibit emergent properties which are not deducible from lower-level phenomena (Capra 1997, 29). This is a critical point for looking at social systems, and especially for understanding the nature of structures. Structures consist not only of their physical manifestations (hierarchies, power structures, organizations, or policies), but also the mental models, values, beliefs, and ideologies of all the participants which play a role in
upholding or changing them. The interplay and interactions between these two represent ‘life processes’ that are constantly underway.

These life processes have characteristics that create conditions which either undermine or promote the actualization of needs. The focus of this research was on what characteristics these life processes need to have in order to create the conditions for the actualization of human needs. The implementation of these characteristics will require structural changes, both of the physical manifestations and of mental models. However, it would be overly prescriptive to specify what this change might look like in either realm, and hence the emphasis has been on processes and the questioning of mental models, hierarchies, etc., based on the outcomes of the processes they produce.

From these assertions, the research question for this thesis is as follows:

*What guidance can be developed for the social dimension of sustainable development and how can this better operationalize the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development?*

**Methods and Results**

Our research was structured into four main stages: study of the FSSD’s Fourth System Condition for a sustainable society and its background, study of the processes of social development, identification of process characteristics and development of a guidebook, and the integration of expert feedback.

Research was conducted on the development of the current structure of the FSSD, how it evolved, and, in its current form, how it relates to different types of barriers. This was compared with research into the processes of social development, and the shared characteristics of processes, actions, or initiatives that worked well to eliminate barriers to individuals meeting their needs. Research in both of these areas was done by interviews with people working within the social dimension of sustainability, extensive literature reviews, and examining relevant case studies which acted as success stories.

This information and insight was used to develop a set of characteristics present within processes which helped to remove barriers to the capacity to realize human needs. The characteristics of cooperation, transparency,
openness, inclusiveness, and involvement were found to work together to shape processes that guide socially beneficial development, and are further elaborated in the ‘Discussion’ section of this thesis.

A guidebook “So You Want to be Socially Sustainable: Exploring the Social Dimension of Sustainable Development”(see Appendix A) was developed to help relay these characteristics, along with a series of other supportive characteristics that foster the removal of barriers from organizational processes, to sustainability practitioners. This booklet was meant to be used as part of an exploratory process to help organizations understand how their processes positively and negatively affect the human needs of those involved. It is meant to address primarily the barriers to human needs that are less tangible and, in particular, the ways in which structures can act to restrict people from meeting their needs. Though the guidebook does not include specific actions that the organization needs to take to address structural barriers, the characteristics are meant to provide guidance as to the direction the organization needs to take to better create the space for human needs to be satisfied.

A preliminary version of the guidebook was sent to experts in a variety of fields related to social development for feedback. Input was gathered on the accuracy and applicability of the guidebook, including the set of characteristics, and was incorporated into the guidebook to the best extent possible. Feedback was generally positive, though the limits of such a document were explicitly noted. Many respondents wanted a resource that went further; more explicitly guiding organizations towards actions, making it designed for implementation as well exploration and understanding. While it is agreed that this would be a useful document, it would require a larger guidebook and represents an area essentially beyond the scope of this thesis.

A series of case studies were also undertaken to develop a few examples of how the proposed process characteristics could be operationalized. These are meant to show the interconnectedness of the characteristics, and to demonstrate the synergistic nature of benefits seen by the processes in which they occur. These are listed as Appendix B through E.

viii
Conclusion

The set of characteristics developed during this thesis represents qualities of processes that help remove structural barriers to meeting human needs. These characteristics (Cooperation, Transparency, Openness, Inclusiveness, and Involvement) are all closely related and work together to create the space for human needs to be satisfied. They can be used as goals or ideals to implement when changing or developing a program or organization, or they can be used to assess the current situation, to more clearly view how it relates to human needs. They are meant to indirectly question existing structures, mindsets, and beliefs, based on the nature of the processes they generate.

The Discussion section describes the benefits of the five main process characteristics and elucidates their relation to human needs. The guidebook then runs the practitioner through a series of questions to determine the extent to which the characteristics are integrated within their organizational processes.

System Condition Four, like the other principles of sustainability, is phrased in the negative, requiring the elimination of contributions to barriers to the actualization of human needs. The proposed characteristics take the next step in presenting qualities for processes to embody in order to avoid unintentional contributions to barriers. These characteristics are phrased in the positive in order to give a better understanding of what would be involved in the removal of barriers, while still being sufficiently general as to not prescribe any specific actions. This research is a stepping stone towards a more operationalized understanding of how to create processes that allow for the actualization of the full spectrum of human needs. There is much more that needs to be done in this area to better understand barriers and how they are manifested and eliminated from organizational processes. The characteristics themselves should be more rigorously studied, as well as their interrelation in progressive organizations. This would be greatly benefited by more extensive case studies or other action research. Finally, there is much to be done in terms of practical application of these characteristics, and understanding how to transform structures. This is an important area of research, and one that is just beginning to be explored.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. iii

Statement of Collaboration ........................................................................................................ iv

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................... v

    Introduction ......................................................................................................................... v

    Methods and Results ............................................................................................................. vii

    Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... ix

Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................... x

List of Figures and Tables .......................................................................................................... xiv

1  Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

    1.1 Human Needs .................................................................................................................. 1

    1.2 Strategic Sustainable Development ................................................................................. 3

    1.3 Current Status of the Social Dimension of the Framework for SSD ................................. 5

        1.3.1 The Social System .................................................................................................. 6

        1.3.2 System Condition Four .......................................................................................... 6

        1.3.3 Mechanisms for Success ....................................................................................... 7

        1.3.4 Strategic Guidelines ............................................................................................... 8

    1.4 Issues with Current Situation ........................................................................................ 9

    1.5 Research Question ......................................................................................................... 10

    1.6 Research Scope and Limitations .................................................................................... 10

2  Methods ............................................................................................................................... 12
2.1 Research Approach................................................................. 12
  2.1.1 Validity.................................................................................. 13
2.2 Phase 1: Research........................................................................ 13
  2.2.1 History and Context of System Condition Four ............... 13
  2.2.2 The Process of Social Development ................................. 14
2.3 Phase 2: Guidance Creation........................................................ 15
2.4 Expert Feedback and Final Guidance ....................................... 15

3 Social Systems Theory and Sustainability .............................. 17
  3.1 Understanding Barriers............................................................ 17
    3.1.1 Structures as Barriers....................................................... 19
    3.1.2 Relation of the Proposed Guidance ................................. 20
  3.2 Understanding the Social System and its Development ........... 21
    3.2.1 Whole Systems and their Underlying Processes ...... 22
    3.2.2 Social Cycles: How a Society Constructs Itself ............ 24
    3.2.3 Social Processes: Dynamics of Reinforcement and Change.............. 27
    3.2.4 Intervening in the System............................................... 28
    3.2.5 Proposed Guidance, Social Dynamics, and Structural Barriers ................. 29

4 Results .......................................................................................... 31
  4.1 Structural Barriers................................................................. 31
  4.2 Proposed Process Characteristics for Socially Sustainable Development ........................................... 32
4.2.1 Proposed Main Process Characteristics .....................32
4.2.2 Identified Supportive Process Traits ..........................33

4.3 Social Dimension of Sustainability Guidebook .......................34
4.3.1 Format of the Guidebook ........................................35
4.3.2 Expert Feedback ..............................................37
4.3.3 Alterations to Guidebook Content and Questions ..............39

5 Discussion ...........................................................................40

5.1 Socially Sustainable Development ....................................40
5.1.1 What is Socially Sustainable Development? .................41
5.1.2 Socially Sustainable Development and Processes ..........42

5.2 Characteristics of Processes that Lead to Socially Sustainable Development .........................................................43

5.3 Proposed Main Process Characteristics ..............................44
5.3.1 Cooperation .........................................................44
5.3.2 Transparency ......................................................46
5.3.3 Inclusiveness .......................................................48
5.3.4 Involvement .........................................................50
5.3.5 Openness ..........................................................51

5.4 Proposed Supportive Process Traits .....................................54
5.4.1 Commitment .........................................................55
5.4.2 Dialogue ............................................................56
5.4.3 Empowerment ......................................................58
5.4.4 Qualities of Relationships ............................................ 60

5.5 Examples of Process Characteristics within Organizations ...... 62
  5.5.1 Grace Living Center....................................................... 62
  5.5.2 Instituto Elos, the School of Warriors Without Weapons ........................................ 63
  5.5.3 Bessa’s Cabeleireiro.................................................... 65
  5.5.4 Ontario Student Nutrition Program............................... 66

6 Conclusion ........................................................................... 69
  6.1 Recommendations.......................................................... 69
    6.1.1 Practical Application..................................................... 69
    6.1.2 Further Research......................................................... 70

References ............................................................................. 71

Appendix A: Guidebook ......................................................... 79

Appendix B: Grace Living Center ............................................ 102

Appendix C: Instituto Elos..................................................... 104

Appendix D: Bessa’s Cabeleireiro............................................ 109

Appendix E: Ontario Student Nutrition Program ...................... 112

Appendix F: Experts............................................................... 114
List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1: Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD)…..4
Figure 2.1: Phases of Research………………………………………………12
Figure 3.1: Proposed New Method of Classification of Barriers………19
Figure 3.2: Individual and Collective Reinforcement…………………24
Figure 3.3: Interrelation of Social Dimensions…………………………25
Figure 4.1: Sample Questions from the Guidebook..........................37
1 Introduction

Human needs are a central part of the sustainable development agenda, which aims to reconcile meeting human needs today with preserving the biosphere so that future generations can meet their needs (WCED 1987). Humans and their environment should not be seen as separate entities, but rather as an interdependent whole (Jarvis, Pratt and Wu 2001, 130). It is therefore crucial to sustainable development that we have a well-developed understanding of human needs, and how they are satisfied or undermined.

Humans are born with the capacity to meet their fundamental needs, however there are countless situations where needs are not being met. Even in the industrialized world where the problem is generally not a societal lack of physical or financial resources, levels of happiness are no higher, and in many cases lower than much less affluent areas (Ng 2007, 436-439), an indicator of needs going unsatisfied.

This indicates that the problem is not primarily a lack of resources, but rather a societal structure which promotes the pursuit of ineffective or false ways to satisfy needs. We believe this is due to several reasons, not the least of which is the lack of societal understanding about how human needs are satisfied and their role in the economy and society, reinforced by a traditional reliance on misleading aggregate indicators, such as GNP and income. While this has historically been the case, this view is now being questioned, and a renewed emphasis is being placed on the study of human needs in a societal context (Dolan, Peasgood and White 2007; Ferrir-i-Carbonell 2004; Zidanšek 2006).

1.1 Human Needs

We use the term ‘human needs’ here to describe a conceptualization of well-being that reflect conditions that must be satisfied for people to stay physically and mentally healthy both individually and on a societal level. This is contrasted with the idea of a ‘want’ or unnecessary desire. This research used the conception of needs put forth by Manfred Max-Neef, characterized by nine fundamental categories of needs: Subsistence, Affection, Freedom, Protection, Creation, Idleness, Participation, Identity,
and Understanding (Max-Neef, 1991). This theory of human needs was used, rather than more well-known conceptualizations such as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, in order to demonstrate an equal emphasis on all needs, where the inadequate actualization of any need is considered a poverty. The term ‘poverty’ is employed here beyond its traditional use as possessing insufficient resources to meet the need of subsistence, and can be used to refer to any category of deficiency in the satisfaction of any one of the fundamental human needs. Hence, when any need is going unfulfilled to some degree, we speak of a ‘poverty’ that exists in that area, which is broader than traditional economic poverty.

In cases of extreme poverties, human needs may have to be addressed according to level of acuteness; the deprivation of satisfaction of some needs is felt more immediately than others. Therefore, individuals will attempt to satisfy the need of which they are most severely deprived. This being said, though some are more readily apparent than others, all needs are equally important. Human needs are non-overlapping, so the inordinate use of concentration and resources to meet one need cannot be substituted for a deficiency in another. Therefore, beyond a certain point, aiming to only satisfy subsistence becomes fruitless, and will not make up for other needs which are not being met.

There are five types of ‘satisfiers,’ labels that describe how a certain thing (action, mechanism, object, policy, etc) either helps or hinders people from meeting their needs. Pseudo-satisfiers are promoted as a way to satisfy a human need, but in reality, only generate a false sense of satisfaction, satisfying no needs. Destroyers are applied with the intended result of satisfying a human need, but end up eliminating the possibility of satisfying it over time, along with several other human needs. Inhibiting satisfiers address one need to excess, at the expense of several others. Singular satisfiers satisfy one need, and are neutral on all others. Finally, synergistic satisfiers meet their intended goal of satisfying a certain need, and have positive side-effects for other needs. We therefore want to promote singular and especially synergistic satisfiers.

These needs are finite, few, and universal. They do not vary between cultures or within cultures. What does vary is the way in which they are satisfied. Each need is satisfied in a different way, through a combination of
certain relationships, interactions, activities, qualities, and material necessities. Human needs reflect the result of the process of interaction and relationships between the individual and society which are in constant flux. Therefore, it is misleading to speak of needs being ‘satisfied’, and it is better reflective of the process to speak of actualizing one’s needs.

1.2 Strategic Sustainable Development

The term ‘sustainable development’ was first used by the Brundtland Commission report of 1987, entitled *Our Common Future*. Sustainable development refers to ensuring that as a society, we “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The concept of needs is central to this idea of sustainable development, which is, in effect, an effort to meet human needs in both the long and short term. Although the phrasing refers to meeting human needs, in the long term, this will be unachievable if we do not preserve the earth’s biosphere, hence the importance of social and ecological sustainability to meet human needs.

*Strategic* sustainable development (SSD) refers to an approach to move towards socio-ecological sustainability in a planned, systematic, and scientific way. It proceeds from scientifically-derived principles about the minimum conditions for sustainability and supports the development of plans to meet them. The principles for socio-ecological sustainability, which were the result of a consensus process, are as follows (Ny et al. 2006):

“In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing…

I…concentrations of substances extracted from the earth’s crust

---

2 These refer to the ‘existential axis’ of Max-Neef’s matrix of human needs. Ways in which needs are satisfied are classified into categories of being, having, doing, and interacting.
II...concentrations of substances produced by society

III...degradation by physical means

_and, in that society...

IV...people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

These are known as the _system conditions_ for sustainability. When interpreted to inform the planning of an individual organization, they guide actions by setting the removal of the organization’s contribution to each of the principles as the goal.

---

To further guide the planning process by providing a structured approach to strategic sustainability, a framework has been developed. The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD- See Fig. 1.1) is used to organize and relate relevant concepts and information to help provide a broad and structured perspective (Robèrt et al. 2002). This structure relates the fundamental principles and laws about how the biosphere and human...
society operate (System Level) to the basic conditions that the planning process is working towards (Success Level), the aforementioned sustainability principles. From here, strategic guidelines (Strategic Guidelines Level) guide the selection of specific actions (Actions Level) that are developed to support the transformation towards the goal. Finally, tools for measurement or planning (Tools Level) are chosen to help inform and guide the process.

Each level informs, and is informed by, all other levels to help provide direction, relevance, and feedback to the planning process. The FSSD is designed to illuminate the difference between current realities and a sustainable future, and to then provide guidance on how to reach that goal. It has been shown to be a useful planning tool for planning the transition towards socio-ecological sustainability (Waldron et al. 2007).

The system conditions for a sustainable society form the cornerstone of the Framework for SSD, as they describe the ultimate goal: meeting the basic requirements for sustainability. These four conditions, that would necessarily be adhered to in a sustainable world, guide and inform all other strategies and actions in the strategic sustainability process, and are therefore of crucial importance. For any individual organization, the conditions that define success with respect to their strategic sustainability planning (Success Level) are stated as the organization eliminating its contribution to violating each of the sustainability conditions. Stated this way, the conditions for success are known as the sustainability principles, and it is the Fourth System Condition which is the focus of this research.

1.3 Current Status of the Social Dimension of the Framework for SSD

The framework elaborates the Brundtland definition of sustainability “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, through two concurrent tracks of social and ecological sustainability. Though they are interrelated, social

---

3 These are usually classified as strategic, system, and capacity tools
and ecological sustainability require two different approaches. Work towards ecological sustainability involves altering how human society structures its processes to be within the constraints of the biosphere. Social sustainability, on the other hand, involves changing how we interact with one another in order to see tangible impacts in terms of human needs. The SSD framework outlines the minimum conditions required to not preclude sustainability in either domain, and are hence stated in the negative, specifying the minimum of what must not be done.

1.3.1 The Social System

The first level of the FSSD relates to the analysis and understanding of the system in which we operate. For the social dimension, this includes an understanding of human needs as well as the general characteristics of living systems.

The study of living systems teaches us that systems at all levels share many of the same traits, including self-organization, interdependence, and diversity (Capra 2003). These characteristics have been observed in social systems at all levels and serve to impart a level of natural resilience. To be self-organizing means having the ability to choose actions and adapt to different situations and contexts rather than acting only in a pre-established way. Social systems have differing levels of interdependence among themselves, their members and with their environment which come about through dynamic relationships. The diversity of a society, its differing skills, perspectives, abilities, and weaknesses contributes to the overall fitness and resilience of a system, which allows societies to develop and adapt. It is through the preservation of these traits coupled with an understanding of human needs that helps outline the most significant qualities of the human social system within the current structure of the FSSD.

1.3.2 System Condition Four

Within the FSSD, the conditions for success in the social sphere are defined by the Fourth System Condition. For an organization, Sustainability Principle Four instructs them to “…eliminate their contribution to
conditions that systematically undermine people’s capacity to meet their needs.” The term *human needs* is often elaborated by the aforementioned conception of human needs as put forth by Max-Neef. This condition resides at the “Success” level of the framework for the social realm. It is based on the idea that everyone is endowed with the capacity to actualize their own needs, therefore according to the FSSD, the minimum requirement for sustainability in the social dimension is to not contribute to conditions that prevent people from actualizing their own needs.

It is important to note that, as it is phrased in the negative, the language of the condition is not prescriptive, rather it defines the minimum conditions for social sustainability. In stipulating that organizations or communities not contribute to conditions which undermine the capacity of individuals to meet their human needs, it leaves them open to generate their own strategies to address this.

### 1.3.3 Mechanisms for Success

The framework also specifies what are considered to be the *mechanisms for success* within the social system (Robèrt et al. 2007, 147). The mechanisms, like the System Conditions, are phrased in the negative and placed at the Success Level of the FSSD. This implies that these mechanisms are both necessary and sufficient for attaining the conditions for success. They focus on the notion of abuses of power, as it is those people and institutions with significant power that have the greatest potential for affecting human needs positively or detrimentally. In order to not be considered an abuse, exercise of all types of power must take into account and respect the inherent properties of social systems: self-organization, interdependence, and diversity, as well as human needs (TNSI 2006, 15).

*Abuse of Political Power.* This includes politically-sanctioned actions in the broadest sense, governmental and management. Examples of abuse of political power are legislation, policies, corruption, and discrimination, or any actions that are contrary to established charters, declarations, or conventions regarding human rights. At the level of the organization, this includes actions such as barring people from organizing themselves in unions, discrimination, enforced labor, humiliating treatment, or exploitive supply contracts.
Abuse of Economic Power. Economic power can be abused by governments, corporations, and individuals. Examples of this abuse are limiting the availability of credit or loans, use or support of child labor, payment of wages that are below local standards for living and tax evasion.

Abuse of ‘Environmental’ Power. Environmental power refers to the exercise of power affecting the circumstances and settings (i.e. physical environment) in which people live and work. This can include the effects of pollution on people (especially in areas where citizens lack the capacity to fight the pollution), failure to provide sufficient protective equipment to workers, or through the built environment, if urban planning or architecture makes it difficult for people to develop healthy social bonds, comfortably work throughout the day, earn a living, or gain access to natural spaces.

1.3.4 Strategic Guidelines

Currently, the ‘Golden Rule’ stated in the negative sense (‘do not do unto others as you do not wish them to do unto you’), is used a guiding principle or a test of individual decisions. This has been a fairly common ethical guideline in society, as well in several religious traditions. It is a way of sensing whether the effects of our decisions on others are generally acceptable. However, it is necessary to look at the collective decisions we make, in order to ensure compliance with the mechanisms for success and avoid any abuse of power. To do this, it is important to address organizational processes by applying the ‘Golden Rule’ to determine if the level of each of the following characteristics would be sufficient if it we were involved in the process. These identified characteristics are participation, transparency, responsibility/accountability, and honesty (Robèrt et al 2007, 147), and can be used to provide a quick understanding of a few key traits. Other ‘social principles,’ such as dialogue/encouragement and transparency (Robèrt et al. 2002, 202) have also been suggested, but are not yet adopted.
1.4 Issues with Current Situation

Although the current system conditions are precise and we do not feel that they state anything incorrect, we think additional guidance could be developed at the strategic guidelines level of the framework to help users to understand the social realm and serve to better guide them in addressing barriers to human needs. While the current system condition may correctly specify the minimum conditions for sustainability, further supportive material is needed to help operationalize this, to make it more understandable.

Planning within social systems is, understandably, quite complex, as decisions can be heavily subjective due to a reliance on social constructs. For example, without a comprehensive list of exactly what constitutes an abuse of power, what is labelled an abuse will vary between companies, cultures, and time, since the term ‘abuse’ is itself a value judgement. This can be problematic from a human needs perspective, since conditions and relations that are culturally accepted may or may not result in conditions that actualize the needs of those involved. For this reason, the so-called ‘Golden Rule’ is often used as a test of whether an action or relation is in-line with one’s personal sense of what is acceptable. This sense is shaped by social norms, however it does have the potential for judgements which go beyond them. Asking ‘what would society consider acceptable’ is not the same thing as asking ‘would I want it to happen to me’. There are many relations which are considered socially acceptable built into the structure of societies and organizations that systematically undermine people’s ability to meet their needs which can sometimes be identified by applying the ‘Golden Rule’. Though this can help to identify situations in which we would not want to be, we may not be able to recognize the overarching structures that shape these situations, or understand how to remedy them. This is an issue that needs to be better addressed and is discussed in section 3.1.

All of this is not to say that any of these mechanisms for success are incorrect, just that they will mean different things to different people, and so their application will be a reaction to the cultural context in which they are applied. As general conditions for social sustainability, the mechanisms for success do not provide practitioners with guidance on identifying or removing barriers. This role falls to the strategic guidelines, to provide users with a better sense of where to look for possible contributions to
barriers and assist them in determining how to eliminate those contributions. It is because of this reliance on the guidelines that further research to develop characteristics of systems that better address the capacity to meet human needs was deemed necessary by the authors. Some guidance can be provided by the ‘Golden Rule’, but to be operational, it requires further support.

The concept of *barriers* is also central to social sustainability. As defined in System Condition Four, success is the removal of barriers that impede people from actualizing their needs, as opposed to directly meeting people’s needs. This is an important distinction, and it means that the focus is really a better understanding of what constitute barriers to the actualization of human needs, as well as how to address them. For this reason, a central focus of guidance on social sustainability is to help organizations understand how their actions contribute to barriers, so that they can then address them.

### 1.5 Research Question

The purpose of this research was to explore and facilitate progress towards the social dimension of sustainability. In doing so, characteristics of social systems and their interrelations were researched in order to answer the following question:

*What guidance can be developed for the social dimension of sustainable development and how can this better operationalize the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development?*

### 1.6 Research Scope and Limitations

It was the intention of this research to examine the concept of social sustainability as put forth by the FSSD and generate guidance on its implementation. In doing so, the most effective leverage points for change were identified to be the processes that serve to create and reinforce the physical and ideological structures within any social system, be it a business, NGO, or community. As a result, this research focused on
characteristics of processes that create and reinforce structures that fit within the constraints of the social dimension of sustainability.

To assist in examining their processes of any social system, this thesis sought to provide a lens, shaped by sustainability constraints, human needs, and process characteristics, through which an organization or community could view their processes. It was the objective that, in looking through this lens, sustainability practitioners would begin to question established structures and ideologies and identify all types of barriers which their organization created or contributed to. In presenting this lens, guidance is provided on shaping processes so that they work to eliminate barriers and raise awareness as to how to create the space for the actualization of human needs. While working within time constraints and narrowing the scope of research to the examination of processes that create and reinforce structures, parameters of the study were set.

Perhaps the main area outside of our scope, and hence not comprehensively addressed was the contribution to the so called ‘conventional’ violations (as shown in Figure 3.1). By approaching contributions to barriers from the perspective of processes, we did not expressly focus on changing behaviour within current ethical norms, but rather on how to generate new structures and processes aligned within the constraints of sustainability.

Limitations were also encountered in terms of the evaluation and practical application of the guidebook. As it sought to be applicable to all manners of social system, and each system has its own unique properties and issues, metrics for evaluation would need to be tested out through implementation. This would undoubtedly be a worthwhile area of study, however it was beyond the scope of this research.
2 Methods

Our research was structured into four main stages: study of System Condition Four and its background, study of the process of social development, guidance development, and expert feedback (See Figure 2.1).

2.1 Research Approach

The research question was developed through an iterative process, as described in Maxwell interactive Model for Research Design (2005). Information came from a variety of sources and fields, and included both a review of relevant literature and interviews. As shown in Figure 2.1, the approach was structured into three phases of Research, Guidance Development, and Feedback/Final Guidance.

![Figure 2.1: Phases of Research](image)
2.1.1 Validity

Validity is, of course, a major concern in research design (Maxwell 2005). This was addressed by using information from a wide variety of sources and fields, in order to reduce the risk of collecting evidence from biased sources.

What we have proposed is guidance on one method for assessing and planning in a social system that advocates the consideration of human needs within processes. This does not preclude that other methods with different approaches could also achieve the same task. This document is meant to provide further guidance on the application of System Condition Four of the FSSD, and this does not imply that it is the only way to proceed, or to understand the situation. Nonetheless, it is essential that any form of guidance not rest on false pretexts, such that it not misleading, and can be used in a meaningful way.

2.2 Phase 1: Research

2.2.1 History and Context of System Condition Four

The earliest stages of our research were devoted to investigating the development and current status of System Condition Four. As this condition has undergone fundamental changes since it was first proposed, our early research was meant to clarify the thought processes that occurred during the evolution of the condition from its earliest beginnings to its current form. This was done through a literature review of documents written about the topic throughout its history, as well as interviews with some of the people involved in development of the FSSD. These came from published peer-reviewed journal articles, books, as well as unpublished documents, such as discussion drafts provided to us from those involved. This gave us a background as to what was and was not considered in the development of the condition and helped us to understand the approach taken in the development of the framework, and the mental models that shaped its current form.
We also conducted interviews with people currently involved in working with System Condition Four to understand how they use it, any shortcomings they felt existed, other methods and tools they used, and where they felt improvements could be made. Furthermore, we developed an idea of the ways in which it is currently applied in different places, and how interpretations of the condition vary between practitioners. This was used to help get an idea of how System Condition Four currently translates into real-world applications, and areas in which it might be further supported. In doing so, we developed a different perspective on the how to view barriers to the actualization of needs. This preliminary result helped to shape the focus of our research towards removing contributions to what we identified as structural barriers.

2.2.2 The Process of Social Development

In order to create informative guidance for the social dimension of SSD, the factors that advance the processes of social development must be understood. These characteristics were assessed through literature review, examination of case studies and interviews, involving practitioners acting in a variety of fields. This is an inherently interdisciplinary field of research, and as such, our research involved literature from a variety of fields; psychology, labour studies/industrial relations, sociology, strategic sustainable development, philosophy, organizational learning, and game theory, to name a few.

All of these areas investigate aspects of the interrelation of personal development and human needs with social structures from a different perspective, and typically use different language to do so. This method was highly useful as a form of triangulation (Fielding and Fielding 1986) to reduce the chances of systematic bias from any one method or field of research. By conducting a review of relevant literature, we examined theories and concepts that analyze the process of social development as well as those that exemplify how the development process can be perpetuated. The ideas derived from this literature assisted in the formation of our guidance.

The following search methods were used: ELIN (Electronic Library Information Navigator – provided by Lund University), Libris (provided by
In order to thoroughly analyze initiatives that promote the development processes, real-world case studies were examined. Through the understanding gained from these cases, common traits and successful initiatives were identified. Comparisons were then drawn between their practices and results and the ideas found during the literature review to determine how this could be related to strategic sustainability planning.

2.3 Phase 2: Guidance Creation

The second stage of the project was to use the information and understanding acquired in the first phase to better develop guidance for addressing structural barriers. This phase included the development of our identified process characteristics, as well as the guidebook. The guidebook is meant to be a simple assessment tool which briefly expresses our identified characteristics, as well as provides a series of guiding questions in order for an organization to view their processes in relation to both these characteristics as well as human needs. The guidebook and identified characteristics were viewed in relation to case studies, in order to verify the relevance of our guidance, and to get a better understanding of how they might be applied. This was an engaging and iterative process, which overlapped with our research phase, as new insights continued to further develop our understanding of human needs, processes of social development, and the interaction between the two, as viewed from different perspectives.

2.4 Expert Feedback and Final Guidance

Once the guidebook was drafted, it was sent to a series of sustainability practitioners and other experts that deal with human development issues for evaluation. We sought out the opinions of those already familiar with
FSSD, as well as those who do not actively work with the framework, but have implemented social development actions within communities and organizations. By having people who work with social sustainability on a regular basis evaluate our guidance as to its true applicability; we gained a better understanding as to its strengths and weaknesses.

After the feedback was received, the guidebook was re-examined. The thorough evaluation of their advice, critique, and support, led to further research being carried out, and certain aspects of the guidebook were altered. Through submitting our work for scrutiny and then incorporating the recommendations of others, we believe the end result is a document that is strong and able to provide effective guidance to those who use it.
3 Social Systems Theory and Sustainability

In order to answer the research question and work to further operationalize the Fourth System Condition of the FSSD, the first stage of research was to gain a deeper understanding of the social dimension of sustainability at the systems level. This consisted of research into the concept of barriers within the FSSD and developing a new perspective of how to view one’s contributions to them. Through examining the properties of systems in general as well as those specific to the social realm, we were able to see the bigger picture and identify where the significant opportunities to influence the social system lie.

3.1 Understanding Barriers

While the elimination of the three abuses of power (political, economic, and environmental) are meant as mechanisms for success, things that we must not do in order to attain social sustainability, they also play a role in helping people understand what things (actions, rules, infrastructure, systems, etc.) undermine people’s capacity to meet their needs. These barriers to human needs constitute anything that acts as an impediment to people meeting their needs, so having removed all barriers is analogous with having reached social sustainability.

These three abuses of power are also a way of classifying barriers, since, under current terminology, any barrier is caused by an abuse of power, and therefore, must fit into one of the three categories. Due to the very broad nature in which these abuses of power are conceptualized, it is conceivable that any possible barrier could fit into one of these categories; political, economic, or ‘environmental’ abuse of power. What is important for applicability, however, is not whether every barrier can be attributed to one of these categories, but rather, to what degree understanding the nature of these categories helps people to understand what aspects in the real world need to be addressed in order to remove barriers that prevent to human needs being actualized.
Another way to classify barriers, which we believe helps to broaden their understanding, is to look at the different levels of barriers. As we see it, barriers to social sustainability exist at three levels of understanding (See Figure 3.1). Firstly, it is generally easier to understand barriers that are created by the active contributions of an organization. Many of these barriers are some of the most obvious ones, such as sourcing from areas with child labour and low safety standards, overworking employees, exposing people to dangerous environments, paying unfair wages, using misleading advertising, and so forth. These come from all three types of power abuses, and are all easy to understand. At a second level however, barriers can be created by failure to provide something that the company could reasonably be expected to provide. This may include failure to provide sufficient training or equipment to work safely, failure to provide sufficient information or access to healthcare.

Since the system conditions are written in the negative sense (not contributing to barriers), it needs to be made explicitly clear that one can contribute to barriers not only by doing something, but also by not doing something. To eliminate one’s contribution to barriers might require an action.

Both of these first two levels contribute to what we have called conventional barriers to the actualization of human needs. The term ‘conventional’ is meant to imply one of the ways that individuals can contribute to barriers is by working within the established system without questioning it. What is considered a barrier on these two levels is admittedly a result of social norms- what is considered acceptable or reasonable. Without further guidance, this surface level of understanding will be the extent of many people’s understanding of social sustainability and it is at these levels that laws and regulations apply. By providing and describing a level of contribution that goes beyond social norms, it provides an impetus to question convention from a human needs perspective.

A third level of understanding of barriers is therefore proposed. It is in this level that individuals begin to see their role in overarching structural barriers. Structural barriers are those which are built into the relations, norms, and configuration of the political, social, and economic systems that govern the allocation of goods, resources, power, and opportunities and the relationships between them (Brand-Jacobsen 2003; Schirch 2004, 22). This level is perhaps the most difficult because it is not as obvious and simple as
implementing a program. Truly addressing social sustainability involves tackling abusive structures that have been in place for so long that they may be nearly invisible to us. Furthermore, they also shape our worldview, and influence what sort of actions and relations we consider ‘acceptable’ or ‘normal’. Since these structures have been ingrained into societal, organizational and governmental operations, individuals do not feel personally responsible for them. When society is unable to pinpoint who is responsible for the reconfiguration of different structures, the result is often that no one takes on the challenge. This is, however, of critical importance to social sustainability. Oppressive structures will continue to undermine people’s capacity to meet their needs, even if those in power are not being particularly ‘abusive.’ The best way to prevent abuse of power is to change the structure that permits or creates it.

![Figure 3.1: Proposed New Method of Classification of Barriers](image)

### 3.1.1 Structures as Barriers

Although humans are a social species and naturally self-organize, this is often not done in a way that provides the opportunity for everyone to meet all their needs. If this were so, the concept of barriers would not exist, and neither would the need for this research. Many of these barriers are the result of structures that emerge as a result of organization. Structures can act as barriers to human needs, even if no one is doing anything generally considered ‘wrong.’

Needs are actualized largely through social processes with others, through individual relationships, as well as through organizations and institutions. For example, one might actualize needs of affection or identity through individual relationships, whereas needs of participation or subsistence might come from involvement in a larger group or organization. The structures of organizations inform how these interactions occur, so it is
necessary to change structures to change processes if they are creating barriers to the actualization of human needs.

To remove structural barriers, the structures themselves cannot simply be ‘removed’. These structures were established to perform a function and, regardless of any restrictions they may place on people, their intended function is still generally something that needs to carried out. For this reason, oppressive structures are not dismantled, but rather transformed into new structures attuned to human needs. It is to assist this transformation that our proposed guidance is meant to be used.

Structures consist not only of their tangible manifestations, such as power structures, hierarchies, organizations, and policies, but also the mental models, values, beliefs, and ideologies of all the participants which play a role in upholding or transforming the structure. As such, to change processes will require change not only of the more tangible aspects of structures, but also mindsets, values, and beliefs.

We feel that the structural issue is of critical importance and is not sufficiently addressed in the current social dimension of the framework for SSD or in the accompanying mindsets. Being in a position of power and not actively working to eliminate oppressive structures or policies could conceivably be included in the abuse of power category, though we feel this is not immediately apparent.

## 3.1.2 Relation of the Proposed Guidance

The guidance we developed focuses on characteristics of processes and structures that remove barriers, thereby creating space for needs to be actualized. The minimum requirement for social sustainability is to remove one’s contribution to barriers, but when this comes to the way in which processes are organized, this might require a change of structure. To guide this transformation, the guidance is meant to get people thinking in terms of human needs and how to best create the space for others to actualize their own needs. Though characteristics that promote the actualization of needs and remove barriers are the basis for the guidance, they do not prescribe specific actions. This is left up to the discretion of those involved in its implementation. Furthermore, they do not dictate what degree of each of the characteristics is appropriate. They are meant to be an elaboration of the
existing strategic guidelines, though they do place emphasis on different characteristics.

The proposed guidance is based on an interconnected set of characteristics: cooperation, involvement, inclusiveness, openness, and transparency. These are not ‘mechanisms for success’ in that having sufficient levels of each guarantees the elimination of all barriers to human needs, however, they are meant to be applied in combination with negative constraints of the FSSD in order to guide organizations towards organizational structures and processes with a consequential significant improvement in the capacity of members to actualize their needs.

3.2 Understanding the Social System and its Development

To understand the concept of barriers, specifically structural barriers, as well as how to address them, further investigations on the system level were necessary. In addition to the general characteristics of living systems (self-organization, interdependence, and diversity) we feel that human social systems have additional specific qualities that need to be studied in greater depth. For this reason, along with human needs theory and the current content of the FSSD, this research also examines system thinking and theories of social dynamics; the processes that constitute society. The objective of this section is to show the role that these theories play and to clarify the importance of looking at processes by understanding the components (or parts) and processes that constitute social phenomena.

These background theories are related both to the recent paradigm shift spanning multiple scientific disciplines and to the perspective of systems thinking. These theories are a step away from the mechanistic worldview, and instead adopt a more holistic perspective.
3.2.1 Whole Systems and their Underlying Processes

From a holistic perspective, it is realized that, contrary to the traditional mechanistic view, the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Capra 1997, 29). In this sense, the whole has different overall properties than its parts which are formed by the specific set of relations that underlie the whole. In this sense, they are emergent properties that come about from the relations between the parts, as affirms Gharajedaghi, “the compatibility between the parts and their mutual interaction creates a resonance, or a force, which may be an order of magnitude higher than the sum of process generated by the parts separately,” concluding that “emergent properties are spontaneous outcomes from ongoing process” (1999, 48). It is in understanding the ‘whole’ of society that one can begin to work towards social sustainability.

Approaches to Understanding the Whole. Through the lens of the new paradigm, there are two ways of approaching an object or ‘whole’. The first is to understand the unique properties of the whole itself, while the second is an examination of the processes taking place within the whole that serve to sustain it.

Properties of the Whole. The emergent properties of the whole are not deducible from the individual properties of its parts (Gharajedaghi 1999, 45). In this sense, to understand the whole, it is necessary to approach it with a different method than the parts. If the qualities and properties are different, then the required approach will also be qualitatively different (Harman 1998, 90).

As in biology; the cell has different properties and needs than those of the molecules that constitute it and each warrants its own field of study. This observation follows the holistic worldview by understanding that an object is a whole in itself and, at the same time is a part of a larger whole. For this reason, reality can be understood as a complex web of systems within systems or a ‘holarchy’ (Harman 1998, 90; Wilber 2000a, 40). Within the realm of social sustainability this approach analyses the ‘whole’ of society to determine the extent to which the conditions necessary for the actualization of human needs are being created.

Processes within the Whole. The second possible approach to an object or whole is to examine why and how the whole gains its specific properties. In order to do this, one needs to focus on the underlying processes and the web
of relationships that constitute the whole (Gharajedaghi 1999, 48-46). This way of viewing systems represents a fundamental change in scientific thinking, a *shift from structures to processes* (Capra 1992, 115). When we focus more on the relations that underlie and constitute the whole, one begins to perceive the dynamics within that sustain it, keeping the whole alive. The awareness of this dynamic is the shift from perceiving the whole as one concerted ‘thing’ to perceiving it more as a set of processes, an *emergent* property of underlying and ongoing processes (Kaplan 2005, 74).

This second approach provides an understanding of how the whole has developed and maintained its current properties. It is by changing the underlying relations of the ‘whole’ of society that its properties will be changed. In this sense, to promote significant changes that turn society towards sustainability, it is necessary to rephrase the underlying relations that constitute it as it is now.

*Processes of the Whole and Social Sustainability.* These two approaches to understanding the whole are important and complementary. Because this research is focused on social change towards sustainability, it is important to understand the properties of the whole in order to see how the social system creates conditions that undermine people’s capacity to actualize their needs. However, in order to intervene within the whole and its properties, the set of relations, or the ongoing processes, which underlie the whole need to be reconfigured.

In order understand the relations and processes that constitute the whole, it is necessary to examine three key aspects of living systems: *patterns of organization, structures, and life process* (Capra 1997, 156). *Patterns of organization* are related to the configuration and qualities of relationships that determines the system’s essential characteristics. In human society, this is represented as values, culture, beliefs, mental models, etc. *Structures* are the physical manifestation or the embodiment of the system’s patterns of organization. In society, they are manifested as organizations, hierarchies, behaviours, policies and laws etc. *Life process* refers to the continual interplay between patterns of organization and structures that shape the evolution of both entities (Capra 1997, 155-157).

From this, it is important to understand how these three aspects manifest themselves in society so as to better inform the process of social sustainable development.
3.2.2 Social Cycles: How a Society Constructs Itself

In order to recognize social dynamics, the underlying processes that constitute society, one must delineate and understand the interrelation of the theorized “dimensions” or “spheres” (parts) of this whole called Society.

**Social Dimensions and their Interrelations.** In society, one can delineate two main parts or dimensions; the individual and the collective, which influence each other simultaneously (as shown in Figure 3.2). The collective consists of characteristics which are a result of common values and interactions between individuals. At the same time, an individual learns values and develops their subjective aspects and behaviour from these interconnections to the collective context, structures, common goals, and values (Stacey 2003, 326).

The mutual influence of the individual and collective spheres on each other can be further elaborated if we understand that each of these parts has an *objective* and a *subjective* component (shown in Figure 3.3).

The individual subjective aspects include mental models, values, assumptions, worldviews, knowledge, etc. These mental models create or manifest themselves in concrete forms of behaviour, the opposite of which is also true (Wilber 2000b, 63-75). For example, if we make a child behave in a certain way, this behaviour will implicitly form and inform child’s worldview and other subjective aspects.

These subjective and objective components are also valid for the collective sphere. Here, the objective structures are the concrete forms of organization, repetition of behaviour, and processes. These are the physical manifestations of the goals and ideals that the culture, the collective’s subjective quality, provides. In turn, social structures also define and put
limits to cultural ideals. In other words, knowledge systems and beliefs shaped modern society; at the same time, modern society has shaped and influenced its own knowledge and belief systems (Harman 1998, 22-28).

![Interrelation of Social Dimensions](image)

**Figure 3.3: Interrelation of Social Dimensions**

In viewing the social dimensions and their interrelations from the perspective of the living systems and their three aspects (patterns of organization, structures, and life process), the subjective component represents patterns of organization while the objective component represents structures. The passage from the former to the latter is what can be defined as life process. These elements can be synthesized as follows (Wilber 2000a, 42-53; Wilber 2000b):

*Collective Subjective.* Culture: the predominant second-order thinking of a group, it is a mental model through which the world is seen, analyzed, and interpreted. Culture is a complex of values, aspirations,

---

4 Knowledge systems refer to the ways we structure our understanding of the world and the current valid explanations that constitute a field of study. For example: algebra, notion of causality, etc. (Harman 1998).
shared meanings, and assumptions. It promotes the societal ideals and goals to be pursued (Gharajedaghi 2007, 474).

**Collective Objective.** Social Structures: the concrete forms of organization and reiteration that seek to realize the cultural ideal. They are structures, such as institutions, policies, collective behaviour, or structures that are created as a result of the individual and collective understanding of the world.

**Individual Subjective.** Individual Subjectivity refers to interior awareness, degree of perception, and mental models. These worldviews and mental models shape the way an individual perceives the world.

**Individual Objective.** This refers largely to individual behaviour including all observable forms of relation response to stimulus and concrete actions.

**Simultaneity and Nonlinear Reactions.** Even though the different spheres or dimensions of society were expressed separately above, they are not separated phenomena; they all happened at the same time, influencing and reinforcing each other simultaneously (Stacey 2007, 328-9; Kaplan 2005, 72). This is another way to understand reality as a ‘holarchy,’ or as a series of systems within systems. Wholes (or systems) are outcomes of ongoing processes that occur in various levels simultaneously. By changing the quality of the relations that underlie them, the properties of the whole change as well (Gharajedaghi 1999, 46-47). These changes can spread throughout the systems due to the nonlinearity of systems such as the social system (Capra 1997, 290).

The understanding of the causality and relations between parts in complex wholes such as society can be difficult. However, a benefit of the nonlinearity within systems is that it allows for the possibility of focusing targeted interventions on the micro level to effect changes in the macro. In influencing societal change towards sustainability, this means concentrating on specific underlying societal processes in order to create change that can be seen throughout society.
By understanding the interrelation and parts of the social phenomena, we can then focus on determining the underlying processes of this ‘whole’ called society.

Relations and the Dynamics of Reinforcement. The four components of social phenomena influence and reinforce one another. The key aspect is the capacity of each to form and inform the others. This mutual formation and information leads to a certain degree of stability which allows for the ongoing incorporation of the system’s established patterns of organization (worldviews, beliefs, mental models, etc.) (Kaplan 2002, 93; Gharajedaghi 1999, 84-86).

The continual relations between the subjective and objective components are what represent the life process, which are the continual activities, concrete actions, and reiteration of patterns of relation that maintain the structures of societies. It is the set of relations that allows cultural ideals to manifest themselves in concrete structures. (Kaplan 2002, 93).

As exemplified by human societies, this process is dynamic, primarily because it is an ongoing process that reinforces itself, but also because, this process can be changed by being complemented, enhanced or interfered with by unexpected factors.

Dynamic of Change and Development. The spheres of social phenomena and their components (subjective/objective) can influence and reinforce one another through an ever-changing dynamic process. As mentioned earlier, it is the unfolding of these underlying relations that makes this dynamic happen (Kaplan 2005, 72, 87; Gharajedaghi 1999, 45-48). The dynamic of reinforcement, however, might require changes. These changes rely upon the understanding that even mental models, assumptions (patterns of organization) can require improvements or become obsolete.

The whole and its underlying relations, the ongoing processes, or the life process, are always developing. This development process follows certain patterns (Kaplan 2005, 87). The development of a new structure relies on the capacity created by its relations and ongoing process to transform themselves (Kaplan 2005, 108). This capacity for transformation has two main aspects. The first one is the capacity to become aware of one’s own
limitations by becoming more conscious of the implications and results of ones own structures and patterns of organization. The second aspect is related to the capacity that one has to refine and redesign those aspects (Kaplan 2005, 107-125).

Development here is used as the natural process of creation and adaptation of structures. In other words, it refers to a dynamic of change. This development might require the dissolution of old structures and a departure from the old patterns and paths, subsequently requiring the creation of new patterns, new processes, and new kinds of relations. These can manifest themselves in a number of ways. For a company, this could be a new product or service whereas for a community it could be new rules or regulations (Kaplan 2005, 111-112).

### 3.2.4 Intervening in the System

The previous sections point to two primary aspects of intervention in a process. Focusing on the objective components of the social realm, we can easily understand that change might be required due to inefficient or obsolete structures. This can relate to the creation of policies or behaviours that are more adequate, efficient, or more inclusive than the old ones. Making changes to the objective component can solve the problem. If so, the reinforcement dynamic takes place until change is required again.

However, it might happen that changing structures or physical manifestations is not enough, because the pattern of organization in itself has limitations that will not allow for the creation of a new structure. Here we have two options, one is to accept and not question the pattern of organization. The second option is to ‘rephrase it’ and search for new mental models and assumptions that will help the structures be more efficient and inclusive for all those involved (Gharajedaghi 1999, 84-86). Changes from this point generally have the greatest degree of influence in a system (Meadows 1999, 16-19).

Regardless of whether one chooses to focus on the subjective or the objective elements, a change of the nature of the underlying relations between the subjective and objective will occur as well. Simply because, changing one of the components also changes the way they both relate to one another. The present research defines characteristics which are likely
to create underlying relations that promote conditions which do not create barriers to human needs. This is done by transforming patterns of organization and physical manifestation to be aligned with processes characteristics that support socially sustainable relations. These characteristics are discussed further in section 5.2.

Social Dynamics and Structural Barriers. As mentioned in section 3.1, structures can refer to both the physical manifestations (objective components) and patterns of organization (subjective components). These structures become a barrier when their limitations or obsolescence is not acknowledge, blocking the development of society. In other words, structures, which are necessary and were established to perform a function, create structural barriers when the dynamic of change is either not recognized as necessary or is suppressed. This allows the perpetuation of the dysfunctional consequences of the structure by the dynamic of reinforcement, thereby creating conditions that systematically undermine people’s capacity to actualize their needs.

It is not a simple task to determine if a structural is dysfunctional or not. To overcome this difficulty, we have based our guidance on the understanding that the quality of underlying relations determines the properties of the whole (discussed in section 3.2.1). Because of this, instead of searching for definitions of dysfunctional structures, we focused on process characteristics that are likely to promote relations which create a whole with properties that do not create detrimental conditions and support the actualization of needs.

3.2.5 Proposed Guidance, Social Dynamics, and Structural Barriers

We believe that human society is in a historical moment that requires a revision of our patterns of organization. Our society is going down a path of decreasing natural and social capital most likely towards a threshold from which there is no turning back. This belief arises from the awareness that the present order does not serve people, communities, future generations, or the planet well (Harman 1990, 96).

Regardless of this belief, our guidance is not prescriptive. It is an attempt to describe characteristics of processes that are likely to support the analysis
and development of physical manifestations (concrete structures, policies, behaviours) and underlying relations (patterns of organizations) which overcome structural barriers by:

- Providing criteria to analyze the current reality which can reveal structures that create barriers and begin to question the mental models that created them

- Guiding the plan for future actions and informing patterns of organization and structures with characteristics that are likely to remove structural barriers while, at the same time, creating conditions that allow for the actualization of human needs
4 Results

Through the review of the fourth system condition of the FSSD, further investigation into systems theory, human needs theory, social processes and the evolution of structures, a new perspective was gained to answer the main research question:

*What guidance can be developed for the social dimension of sustainable development and how can this better operationalize the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development?*

The results of this research consist of three main facets:

1) Development of a new perspective on the understanding of barriers

2) Identification of process characteristics for socially sustainable development
   
   A) Proposed main process characteristics
   
   B) Identified supportive process traits

3) Creation of ‘Social Dimension of Sustainability’ guidebook

4.1 Structural Barriers

While conducting research to further understand the current phraseology of System Condition Four and its associated issues, a new perspective was developed which centres on the different ways to view contributions to barriers to people’s capacity to meet their needs. This perspective distinguishes between two levels of understanding those contributions: conventional and structural. The former relates to activity that runs counter to socially accepted or customary behaviour within a given context. The latter, structural barriers, is related to unquestioned patterns of organization and physical manifestations that are dysfunctional and whose reinforcement perpetuates conditions that systematically create conditions that undermine
people’s capacity to actualize their needs. This concept is explained further in section 3.1.

4.2 Proposed Process Characteristics for Socially Sustainable Development

Through research into organizational processes, five main characteristics of processes that help eliminate barriers and promote the actualization of needs were identified. The proposed characteristics of Cooperation, Openness, Transparency, Involvement, and Inclusiveness were found to work both individually and collectively to create the space for the actualization of needs. When applied to a process, these five characteristics are closely related to a series of other identified ‘supportive process traits.’ Together, these main characteristics and supportive traits work to shape processes that guide socially beneficial development. The characteristics are listed and defined below, and their justification follows in the Discussion section.

4.2.1 Proposed Main Process Characteristics

Cooperation. Cooperation refers to a relationship of mutual benefit, one through which both parties are better able to actualize their needs. The relationship is governed by mutual respect, as opposed to abusive power relations. A cooperative process provides the opportunity for both parties to actively and meaningfully contribute to the processes that shape their circumstances. Cooperation helps both parties to gain the benefits of working collaboratively without sacrificing individual autonomy to authoritarian relationships.

Openness. Within a process, openness means that a community or organization is willing to rethink and review its own values and methods of behaviour. In the context of social sustainability, this means that they are open to changes within their processes in order to better meet the needs of members and remove barriers that make it difficult for others to meet their
needs. Openness also represents the door to genuine understanding of others.

*Transparency.* Transparency refers to an ideal of communication and accountability within a community or organization. Far more than the obligation to disclose basic financial information, people are now provided unprecedented access to all sorts of information on corporate (or community) behaviour, operations, and performance (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003).

Participation was also found to be a shared characteristic amongst these processes. However, to classify it as a process characteristic might cause some confusion because it is also a human need. In order to better exemplify the multi-faceted nature of participation, it was separated into the elements of inclusion and involvement.

*Inclusiveness.* Inclusiveness means working towards ensuring that processes acknowledge and respect the needs of all stakeholders even if they do not actively contribute to the process. Inclusive organizations are aware of different cultural nuances, and they use that awareness to plan and implement programs (Pease 2005).

*Involvement.* To take or be part of some action or attempt; this is active engagement in a process in which individuals bring their unique talents, ideas, and energy. Involvement is also a sharing, both of tangible items such as goods and services, or intangible aspects such as values and culture.

### 4.2.2 Identified Supportive Process Traits

In the application of the proposed process characteristics, a number of traits come into play. These traits: commitment, empowerment, dialogue, honesty, trust, and goodwill, both facilitate and emerge from the use of the main characteristics. Unlike the main characteristics, some of these traits are not something that can be specifically aimed for; rather, they manifest in processes which incorporate the main characteristics. These supportive traits, further elaborated in the Discussion, were included to acknowledge their importance in socially sustainable development while at the same time demonstrating their role in relation to the main characteristics.
Empowerment. Empowerment is the process that creates conditions where people can develop their capacities, thereby gaining the opportunity to work and enhance their individual situation towards a more complete actualization of their own needs.

Dialogue. Dialogue is an open communication. It promotes the free flow of meaning and allows participants to go beyond their individual capacity of understanding. It involves sharing perspectives and finding common meaning, which is reliant on the openness of both parties.

Commitment. Commitment, in this context, refers to the desire to remain and contribute to a process or organization because of its positive relation to human needs, so called affective commitment. People remain not because they need to or feel they ought to, but because they want to (Allen and Meyer 1990, 3).

Honesty. Honesty means being genuine, sincere, and forthright, as well as ensuring one’s actions are reflective of their intentions. Honesty is the main contributor to trusting supportive relationships, and a prerequisite to open and transparent organizations (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, 102).

Trust. Trust refers to one’s belief that individuals engaged in exchanges will make sincere efforts to uphold their commitments and will not take advantage of the given opportunity; in other words, it is one’s willingness to rely on others (Rousseau et al. 1998).

Goodwill. Reflective of an intention to ‘do good’, goodwill results from viewing a relationship in a positive light, and subsequently behaving in a favourable or constructive manner.

4.3 Social Dimension of Sustainability Guidebook

From the correlation of these characteristics with the actualization of human needs, they were determined to be an important aspect for any organization or community to consider and integrate in their work in order to develop in a socially sustainable manner. To assist in the realization and
integration of these process characteristics, a guidebook was designed entitled, “So you want to be Socially Sustainable?: Exploring the Social Dimension of Sustainability” (See Appendix A).

4.3.1 Format of the Guidebook

In the first section of the guidebook, the founding concepts of shared social system characteristics (self-organization, interdependence, and diversity), the nine human needs, and the five main process characteristics are briefly outlined. The guidebook then presents a series of questions for organizations and communities to ask themselves that help to gauge the extent to which these characteristics are incorporated within their organization. By asking themselves these questions, organizations will have the ability to see where their processes create barriers to individuals capacities to meet their needs as well as gain knowledge of the characteristics for new processes that both serve to remove barriers to and provide the space for the actualization of human needs.

Intended Audience of the Guidebook. The guidebook is intended to be applicable to all levels and types of organizations: small business, multi-national, non-profit or government. Every organization is a social system unto itself, interacting with other social systems within an ever-widening network of stakeholders. It follows that the vices and virtues of the system on the macro scale are likely to be present in and influenced by the relations and process characteristics at the micro scale. Furthermore, they all share the same characteristics of living systems and their members all share the same fundamental human needs. We feel that, when these commonalities are viewed through the lenses of process characteristics in relation to the nine human needs and with the use of a shared definition of sustainability, true socially sustainable development can occur within any organization.

While it is important for all actors to make socially beneficial choices for the health of the social system, this is not the focus of the guidebook. Rather, it demonstrates the nature of processes within a sustainable society and how individuals can create them within the organizations, workplaces and communities in which they live.
Guiding Questions. The first step in assessing an organization or community’s current reality in relation to any issue is to determine the boundaries of that system. For the social dimension, an organization or community’s boundaries are determined by the extent of their ability to influence and change the social systems in which it operates. Their sphere of influence will differ depending upon the type and size of an organization and so it is up to that organization to determine for itself what other businesses, policies, or social practices it has the ability to influence. In order to determine the parameters of the system and begin to examine its inner workings, the guiding questions have been structured into nine sections:

- Section 1: Determining your sphere of influence
- Section 2: Openness
- Section 3: Involvement and Inclusion
- Section 4: Quality of Relationships
- Section 5: Satisfaction, Quality of Life
- Section 6: Cooperation
- Section 7: Transparency
- Section 8: Equity, Distribution and Living Conditions
- Section 9: Reflection

These sections are structured neither according to the five main process characteristics, the nine fundamental human needs, nor the system characteristics of self-organization, diversity, and interdependence. This was intentional. As the guidebook was intended to show the interconnections between these aspects, it was felt that aligning the questions with one of them would give it undue emphasis, causing an unnecessary fragmentation between aspects. Inherent within the guidebook is the idea of looking at the whole and not just at its parts. By not directly aligning the guiding questions with any of the three aspects the guidebook sought to integrate, it is believed that the whole created by the areas of overlap and interrelations becomes apparent.
The guiding questions (See Figure 4.1) consist of two types, analytical and reflective. The analytical questions are asked together with a numerical spectrum so that the organization or community can better visually gauge their current behaviours and processes in relation to the proposed characteristics. The second type of question, reflective, is posed to promote reflection on the underlying nature of the processes that lead to their place on the spectrum. To end each section, there is a final reflective question that encourages consideration of how operations could be inhibiting the actualization of human needs and how those barriers could be removed.

**Expert Feedback**

Upon completion of the first draft of the guidebook, questions and explanation, they were sent on to sustainability practitioners for comment and review. These practitioners were from four countries and represented varying levels of knowledge of overall sustainability concepts and familiarity with the FSSD (See Appendix F). The following summarizes the feedback.

*Critiques and Weak Areas.* Reviewers cited the need for more detail in regards to the explanation of the FSSD; characteristics of living systems (self-organization, diversity, and interdependence), and the human needs.
“It is one of the challenges of the paper, it assumes the needs, realization of the needs, and then the process characteristics” (Hauser 2008).

Another recommendation was to make the proposed process characteristics sharply different. “These five are not distinct or different enough. It will be stronger if you can really define the differences sharply” (Einzig 2008). When asked what other characteristics could be included, honesty, accountability, commitment, and responsibility were suggested. “I think a section on honesty, and perhaps some tips on how to promote honesty (probably closely related to openness) would be useful” (Dyer 2008).

In regards to the questions, it was noted that there might be some resistance in some organizations to actually answer the questions, and within an organization, answers might differ quite a bit (Hauser 2008). It was also observed that, since the questions are highly detailed and do not seem explicit enough to do be gone through without assistance, “it will likely take some kind of outside impetus and skilled facilitation in most cases for groups to use it effectively” (Dyer, 2008). Several reviewers also suggested a more comprehensive method for analyzing answers, “you generate lots of reflection on what is going on, but not how this is good or bad, or how it can be changed - and that's the hard part” (Manoochehri 2008).

In order for organizations to better visualize how these characteristics play out in an organization or project, reviewers recommended either providing sample actions that would show how an organization could address the areas of concern they identified through their answers or case studies of what an organization that embodies these characteristics looks like. Another recommendation was to improve the user-friendliness of the Guidebook by “mak[ing] it look gorgeous” (Manoochehri 2008).

Identified Strengths. There was general agreement among the reviewers that this guidebook was easily readable and an interesting way to tackle social sustainability. “This is a good way to get at a big issue in a quick and concise manner, it is digestible and easy to understand, while still being practical and engaging, and keeping sight of the big picture. It’s an excellent resource, and I will be excited to use it” (Dyer 2008). The desire to apply the guiding questions was echoed by others who were eager to see organizations go through and reflect on the questions. In regards to the FSSD, one reviewer commented that, “the workbook is a major step towards systematizing the issue of how organizations, processes, and systems operate with respect to SC4” (Manoochehri 2008).
4.3.3 Alterations to Guidebook Content and Questions

From the recommendations of the reviewers, alterations were made to its overall format and content as well as to the guiding questions that serve to clarify meaning and enhance its applicability. A second edition has been developed, and an abbreviated version is in Appendix A. Notable alterations to the guidebook are as follows:

- A paragraph comparing the human needs theories of Maslow and Max-Neef was inserted to clarify how the concept is used
- Overlaps between characteristics were acknowledged and justified
- Additional process traits of honesty, and commitment were incorporated and mentioned as supportive process traits
- Summaries of case studies exemplifying the proposed characteristics were added\(^5\)
- Format was changed to be more colourful and user-friendly\(^6\)

\(^5\) Due to space constraints, these changes were not included in the abbreviated version in Appendix A.

\(^6\) Ibid.
5 Discussion

5.1 Socially Sustainable Development

Sustainability is the ability of an organization, social structure or individual to perpetuate or sustain itself over time without creating conditions that either systematically decrease the potential of natural systems to regenerate or undermining people’s capacity to meet their needs.

In this sense, one obstacle to a sustainable society is that the current volume of extraction and production, as well as their methods of distribution, are causing a systematic increase in the use and subsequent disposal of materials. As we live on a finite planet, resources are limited and it is impossible to continue escalating their extraction indefinitely. This, along with increasing rates of physical degradation, begs an essential question: Can human societies manage to sustain themselves if we continue to use the environment the way we do? In response to this dilemma, the FSSD establishes strong criteria to understand and alter our processes so that they work within the limits of the biosphere.

Another obstacle to a sustainable society stems from the nature of relations established within society. As explained in section 3.2.2, the social system is held together by interactions and relations which reproduce the assumptions and values that underlie society and vice-versa. Having structural barriers present within the system will serve to inhibit an individual’s capacity to meet their needs. In other words, the system can be solving problems on the one hand, but creating barriers on the other. Therefore, when structural barriers are identified, their removal will require new patterns of organization and physical manifestations.

If we consider that the purpose of human organization, and therefore the purpose of a sustainable society, is to promote the actualization of human needs, it becomes clear that the minimum requirement for all levels of society (individual, business, government, etc.) is to not create conditions that undermine others’ capacity to meet their needs. In doing so, it is important to remember that humans have needs other than subsistence and
these needs are actualized during processes, not by objects. The actualization of these needs\(^7\) is a consequence of the quality of our relations with the world, all people, places, and things, including ourselves and our community (see section 1.1). It is only through the acknowledgement and respect of all the needs that one can begin to truly move towards socially sustainable development.

5.1.1 What is Socially Sustainable Development?

As was mentioned in section 3.2.3., development is a process of change and improvement (Schirch 2004, 58). Sustainable development is the process of change, improvement, or even growth which is aligned with the Earth’s capacity without creating conditions that undermine the capacity of others to meet their needs.

While the boundaries of sustainability define the minimum requirements for social and ecological sustainability, sustainable development itself is a continual process. Our societies will continue to evolve and change even once the minimum requirements of sustainability are achieved. In this sense, social sustainability and social development are aspects of the same process where the former is reached so that the latter can continue to reach more effective structures (patterns of organization and physical manifestations) that increase the capacity of their members to actualize their needs. In doing so, the process of socially sustainable development also leads the passage from a fulfilling a minimum requirement to promoting a regenerative movement. This movement is the change, increase, or evolution of a social system or community that has transformed or improved its structures towards an enhanced quality of life (actualizing needs) for all its members without undermining the capacity of others to do the same.

---

\(^7\) With the exception of basic subsistence (Max-Neef 1991, 17).
5.1.2 Socially Sustainable Development and Processes

Social sustainability within the FSSD is a state in which no individual, organization, or society is creating or contributing to barriers. In order to become sustainable, the actions, behaviours, and structures that constitute these barriers must be identified and replaced. This research sought to create strategic guidance that would facilitate this identification and replacement by determining characteristics present in the processes that lead towards socially sustainable development and recommending their incorporation.

Currently, research into the Fourth System Condition of the FSSD has theorized that there are three main methods through which individuals, organizations, and communities contribute to barriers: abuse of political power, abuse of economic power, and abuse of environmental power, explained in further detail in section 1.3.3. While it is recognized that abuses of power do occur, this abuse begs the question of, “How are these groups or individuals in the position abuse this power? What (or who) gave the power to them?” The answer comes through the structures in which they operate. It is from the system that individuals and groups gain power and it is through the structure of the system that they are able to abuse that power.

It is the assertion of the authors that one of the primary ways economic and political power is abused is through the structures in which societies function. This being said, the structures themselves can be creating barriers to people’s capacity to meet their needs. If a society or an organization is set up in such a way that, even if no one is ‘doing anything wrong’ barriers are still created, the structure of that system is, in itself, a barrier.

By shifting the focus to the structures in which societies operate, it was then asked, “How are these structures perpetuated and reinforced”? This reinforcement occurs through the unquestioned process by which actions are carried out.
5.2 Characteristics of Processes that Lead to Socially Sustainable Development

The nature of a society’s development is determined through the ways that its processes are organized and carried out. By intentionally shaping processes so that they fulfil the minimum requirements of sustainability and do not create or contribute to barriers, socially sustainable processes become socially sustainable development. Through research into the aspects of processes that create barriers to an individual’s capacity to meet their needs as well as those which foster the actualization of needs, five major process characteristics were found to be present within the processes of socially sustainable development. When incorporated within a process, these five characteristics are supported by and generate six other process traits. Together, these main characteristics and supportive/emergent traits work to shape processes that are proposed to guide socially beneficial development.

The proposed characteristics and traits are phrased in the positive, as qualities to embody rather than those to avoid. In doing so, care was taken to avoid issues with cultural subjectivity. By providing detailed definitions of these characteristics, it is believed that they are able to be universally understood. As they do not specify actions to take, but rather present descriptions of how interactions between individuals can be shaped, these characteristics are meant to be sufficiently general as to cover most aspects of processes and be widely applicable.

These characteristics follow from taking a different approach (structural rather than conventional) to understanding barriers than did the derivation of the ‘abuses of power’, and are meant as a complimentary approach for understanding the implications of a process in regards to human needs.

This guidance does not advocate indiscriminate application of the characteristics. Real-world scenarios will have limitations on what degree of openness, transparency, involvement, inclusiveness, and cooperation are really ‘practical’. However, it is important to remember that curtailing these characteristics comes at the expense of human needs. Therefore, if an organization is concerned about the human needs of those involved, it should place significant emphasis on these characteristics, while still balancing with other pragmatic requirements as necessary.
5.3 Proposed Main Process Characteristics

5.3.1 Cooperation

“The only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation.” - Bertrand Russell

Self-organization, diversity and interdependence are characteristics that are prevalent in all living systems; hence, the FSSD notes that any exercise of power must take these system properties into account (TNSI 2006, 15). When considering the social level, meeting human needs is an end in itself, so the goal of any interaction in a sustainable society will be to help human needs be addressed, and will necessarily involve respecting self-organization, diversity and interdependence. It is our contention that the processes that best achieve this are, among other characteristics, cooperative in nature.

Definitions of Cooperation. In natural systems, interdependence comes in varying forms, many of which would not be considered cooperative. Persistent relationships between different species have tended to be labelled as symbiotic, meaning that both parties benefit. However, symbiosis technically includes all persistent relationships between different species, whether they are mutually beneficial (mutualism), benefit only one party and are neutral to the other, or aid one party at the expense of the other (parasitism) (Douglas 2007, 850). We mean to speak of the more specific definition of symbiosis, where both parties benefit, technically called mutualism.

On the social level, mutual benefit means working together in a relationship that simultaneously helps both parties remove barriers to the actualization of their human needs in a general sense, not simply a mutual economic benefit. This does not imply anything about the motivation for cooperation, whether it be purely self-interested or not, but it does view benefits from the perspective of human needs, moving beyond a one-dimensional concept of benefits, such as profit.

For the purposes of this research, cooperative relationships were defined in opposition to abusive structures where people do not have much control over their circumstances and have little to no influence in regards to the
direction of the organization or its processes. For this purpose, cooperation is not being used in the traditional economic sense, where any collaboration, regardless of how unequal or authoritarian the relationship, falls under the heading of ‘cooperation’. Rather, it is more in reference to a cooperative process, which provides the opportunity for both sides to actively and meaningfully contribute to processes that shape their circumstances, through positive human interaction. This is not to specify what shape this cooperation needs to take, in terms of the political (organizational) or economic structures, because these will, of course, vary by situation. However, relationships that have these cooperative characteristics are theorized to actualize human needs and act as a stepping stone for human development.

*Cooperation in Natural Systems.* Self-organization and interdependence are characteristics that are fundamental to all living systems, increasingly so at more advanced levels of evolution (Capra 2005, 12). These are such fundamental characteristics that their physical manifestations can be seen throughout the evolutionary process, to the point where *symbiogenesis* is a more accurate and descriptive term than evolution (Capra 2005, 26). Human structures and organizations are no different, and are co-evolved by their members through incremental changes in a web-like pattern of organization. This is what Capra identifies as the natural change process that organizations ought to incorporate into formal structures (2005, 87). This is diametrically opposed to the common view of scientific management, where the organization is viewed as a machine to be designed and controlled from the outside, removing the ability of its members to influence the process (Capra 2005, 90).

*Benefits of Cooperation.* The benefits of the type of cooperation described here come from the combination of: developing opportunities to actively and meaningfully contribute to the processes that shape one’s life, cultivating positive human interactions, and better providing the material necessities of life. While some of these may occur with other types of relationships, it is argued that cooperative relationships best address all three, with a particular emphasis on opportunities to contribute. Max-Neef asserts that interdependence without authoritarian relationships can combine the objectives of economic growth, personal development and freedom to achieve the individual and collective satisfaction of needs
The opportunity to meaningfully contribute helps stimulate individual autonomy\(^8\) with horizontal interdependent relationships, stimulating a sense of identity, creative capacity, self-confidence, need for freedom, and capacity for subsistence (Max-Neef 1991, 59).

**Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes.** Having these opportunities to contribute more directly has been shown to greatly improve trust within organizations (Brown et al. 2008, 48). This is consistent with what is arguably the most popular theory of employment wellbeing, which asserts that psychological wellbeing improves with a broader range of decision-making freedom (Karasek 1979). Furthermore, having interpersonal support in making these decisions further improves wellbeing, buffering the individual from the effects of stress (Karasek and Theorell 1990, 68-76). All this helps to engender a positive and collaborative work environment, with a more horizontal power structure, higher levels of trust, active and meaningful participation. This can help to generate positive feedback as people behave more fairly and constructively when transactions are determined by trust as opposed to hostile acts or power relations (Bowles et al. 2005, 21).

Cooperation is one general step in transforming a work environment to help remove structural barriers to human needs. It is intricately related to other characteristics mentioned in this section, as well as the notion of structures, described in the introduction. This does not infer the degree of change that is required, which must of course be determined individually, but it does infer a direction organizations can take toward removing structural barriers.

### 5.3.2 Transparency

“Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.” - Mother Teresa

**Definitions of Transparency.** Transparency refers to an ideal of communication and information availability in organizations and

\(^8\) This reference reflects the meaning, and not the specific word *autonomy.*
communities. As it is currently defined, transparency is allowing others to see the truth, without trying to hide or shade the meaning, or altering to put things in a better light (Oliver 2004). Far more than the obligation to disclose basic financial information, people are now demanding and gaining unprecedented access to all sorts of information on corporate or community behaviour, operations, and performance (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, xi). Citizens are demanding more knowledge of and influence within community actions. This means organizations and governments now have to justify their actions and the motivation behind those actions for it is only when people understand all aspects of the process and why to do everything, that they can begin to optimize the process (Zuboff 1989, 289).

Today, within organizational processes, to be transparent is to grant access of information to the stakeholders of institutions, regarding matters that affect their interests (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, 22). The opposite of secrecy, transparency works to eliminate corruption, hold officials and corporations accountable for their actions as well as inspire deeper member involvement. Transparency can be viewed as either a threat of vulnerability, or a way to better serve shareholders by openly aligning a business with the interests of its stakeholders (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, 3). Through increasing transparency, organizations freely subject themselves to scrutiny. Dependent upon the organization and their activities, this spotlight can be either cold and unforgiving or warm and inviting. If an organization or community is engaging in activities that do harm, those activities will be revealed and that behaviour eliminated through public outcry. If, however, an organization or community is operating in such a way that they do no harm (or perhaps some good) those actions will be rewarded through public recognition.

**Benefits of Transparency.** Transparency is believed to improve the market’s efficiency, to enhance both corporate governance and to ensure moralization of business life (Bessire 2005, 424). A benefit of transparent goals and actions in an organization is to drive collaboration between employees directly, and not exclusively through direct managers. It also has the ability to reduce redundant activities that might not otherwise be known (Berggren and Bernshteyn 2007, 416). The enhanced public expectation of transparency has legitimized shareholders’ demand for more information; a means to acquire more power (Bessire 2005, 429). Through sharing access to information, the distinctions between managers and the managed are blurred. Transparency leads to the development of an environment where
new skills and knowledge can develop and spread freely. This environment can negate the need for strict managerial authority, making hierarchy and techniques of control superfluous (Zuboff 1989, 238, 391). By removing oppressive hierarchies, transparency assists communities and organizations to make the most of the collective intelligence of its members providing an outlet for creativity and generating innovative solutions to problems that arise.

Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes. Through the sharing of and access to information, individuals have the ability to actualize multiple human needs, the most obvious of which is understanding. The disclosure of details about the systems in which a community member or employee operates paints a more complete picture and enables the deep comprehension of the entire situation. This understanding helps people to use their skills and knowledge to contribute in a meaningful way.

5.3.3 Inclusiveness

“A narrow vision is divisive, a broad vision expansive. But a divine vision is all-inclusive.”- H. H. Swami Tejomayananda

Definitions of Inclusiveness. Inclusiveness means working towards ensuring that processes acknowledge and respect the needs of all stakeholders even if they do not actively contribute to the process. An organization has an obligation to minimize or pay for “externalities,” negative impacts on people or the environment that result from its activities. It also has an obligation to treat stakeholders with reciprocity and accountability, seeking their input on how they expect their interests to be taken into account and then meeting its commitments. In all these respects, the firm must identify and work with its legitimate stakeholders- the people and organizations who affect or are affected by the activities of the firm (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, 10).

Characteristics of inclusive organizations include the following (Pease 2005):

- Inclusive organizations are aware of different cultural nuances, and they use that awareness to plan and implement programs.
• Inclusive organizations understand that all people do not respond in the same way to messages, and they recognize that it is important to communicate in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways.

• Inclusive organizations develop internal systems to help bridge cultural gaps between people from different backgrounds, and they try to ensure that all voices are listened to and that all backgrounds are respected.

• Inclusive organizations are self-aware. This means that they intentionally solicit and listen to feedback about themselves. They realize that there are no simple answers to the challenges of living in a diverse world, but that our diverse communities provide opportunities at many levels. They understand that conflict is natural and do their best to effectively anticipate, manage, and resolve conflict.

• Inclusive organizations are most successfully built by organizational leaders who are open to change, willing to look inward, and willing to bring key stakeholders together for an open, honest dialogue. This type of dialogue begins the process of creating an inclusive organization.

Benefits of Inclusiveness. To further explore the concept, social inclusiveness is often contrasted with the concept of exclusion. The act of socially excluding others occurs when an organization or community denies access to services, resources and opportunities to an individual or group. This exclusion can be based on race, sex, religion, physical ability or merely to preserve a concentration of power, all of which represent structural barriers. Exclusion is frequently more subtle and unintentional, for example when disabled people are excluded from services, markets and political participation through a societal lack of awareness of their needs or by social attitudes, or when minority groups are excluded by language barriers (Department of International Development 2005).

Actions taken towards being inclusive are meant to fighting this exclusion, thereby preventing adverse social consequences. These consequences can be in the form of behaviours such as racism, sexism and increased crime. It has been observed that young people who feel alienated from society and excluded from job opportunities and decision–making may turn to violence
and crime as a way of feeling more powerful (Department of International Development 2005). Therefore, social inclusiveness provides multiple benefits, including economic development, public cost savings and reduced crime (Litman 2006).

Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes. Inclusiveness in a community or society as a whole, where individuals and groups can access a range of available opportunities, services and resources and contribute to planning and decision making (Nelson n.d.) has a twofold outcome for its members. Primarily, for those directly involved in a process, this means knowing that the ‘door is always open’ and their input and suggestions will be openly received and valued. For those not directly involved in processes, greater inclusiveness ensures that their needs will be taken into account and preserved in the undertaking of any action. Processes or programs designed to fully integrate individuals into an organization in a positive way help the individuals to feel that they are part of a team (Employee Involvement 2005). A sense of team spirit coupled with the knowledge that their needs will be acknowledged and respected gives greater confidence for the process to both those directly and indirectly involved.

5.3.4 Involvement

“Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.” - Chinese Proverb

Definitions of Involvement. Involvement, the second facet of participation, ensures that once people know the door is open through inclusive measures, there is an active effort to reach through that door and pull people into the process. Involvement is taking part in a process out of interest and motivation. It is driven by the current external context and internal variables such as interest, values, and beliefs (Rothschild 1984, 216). Taking part in a process gives individuals a greater personal investment in the outcome because they have brought their unique ideas, talents and energy to a project.

Benefits of Involvement. The process of effectively involving individuals also means that, when ideas are contributed, they are honestly evaluated and integrated. This use and direct application of individual talents and contributions is what ties them to a process and ensures their continual
Community involvement can help overcome feelings of low self-esteem, isolation, powerlessness, fear, and anger. The process of connecting with others, confronting and overcoming real-life challenges, and giving back to the community can provide many positive benefits (Victim Services 1998). For example, when parents become involved in their children’s education, the students exhibit more positive attitudes and motivation towards school which is reflected in their academic performance. They also develop a more positive self-perception. The parents themselves experience higher self-esteem and gain confidence in their decision-making skills. Consistent parent involvement improves communication and relations among parents, teachers, and administrators (Washington State PTA 2004).

The same type of benefits can also be seen when organizations work towards greater involvement of their employees. Seeking input from employees works to encourage the understanding of how the business works and the problems it faces. Information and consultation also provides employers with a means of tapping into employee knowledge and potential for innovation for the benefit of the organization. It demonstrates that their views are taken seriously, which boosts commitment and engagement (Coupar 2007).

Though primarily a way of actualizing the need for participation, involvement has the potential to synergistically actualize multiple needs. Through active involvement, the needs for identity, creation, freedom, understanding, and even affection can be actualized. By providing the platform for individuals to be involved in an action, an organization assists the individual to be creative and gives them the room and freedom to experiment and test new ideas. Individual understanding of the structure and function of organizational processes also deepened through a more intimate working knowledge of those processes. It is from the relationships and bonds forged through interacting and engaging with their fellow citizens and co-workers that affection can grow through mutual understanding and appreciation.

5.3.5 Openness

‘It’s amazing what ordinary people can do if they set out without preconceived notions.’ - Charles F. Kettering
Definitions of Openness. Within a process, openness means that a community or organization is willing to rethink and review its own values and methods of behaviour. In the context of social sustainability, this means that they are open to changes within their processes in order to better meet the needs of members and remove barriers that make it difficult for others to meet their needs. Openness also represents the door to genuine understanding of others.

The openness to the changes that are required for the shift to sustainable development has three main aspects. The first, refers to the ability to see patterns of organizations (mental models, values, beliefs), especially one’s own. The ability is related to the capacity of suspending (Senge et al. 2005, 30) which is the awareness of mental models and assumptions. This openness is the capacity to bring those patterns of organization to light and observe them (Senge 2006, 226-227). The importance of openness of mind comes from the understanding that thoughts and assumptions can determine the way different individuals perceive reality. In order to promote sustainability in the processes of social development, one needs to be aware of one’s own assumptions, beliefs, and practices.

The second aspect of openness is related to understanding one’s connections to and interdependence with others and the situations in which they operate (Senge 2006, 372). To fully understand something, one needs to experience it from within the context, as opposed to observing it externally (Senge et al. 2005, 54); this relates to the required transformation in our mental model from knowledge to understanding (Max-Neef n.d.). This transformation means that, to really understand something, we need to experience it; this is much deeper than to simply ‘know’ about something. For example, one can know everything about love in regards to its physical and psychological implications; however, one will only understand love by experiencing it. The same works for a culture within a community or an organization (Max Neef n.d., 6).

The third aspect is related to letting go of old patterns or behaviors and being present for what is required from the context that involve us (Senge et al. 2005, 96-97; Senge 2006, 372).

Benefits of Openness. In social development, the role of openness is twofold. Firstly, it is for people and organizations to be receptive and prepared for change. It also involves being more understanding with others.
by accepting and working with their unique strengths and limitations. This first aspect relates to what was mentioned in section 3.2.3 that, in order for one to keep pace with the social dynamic one needs to be open to change. This requirement comes when it is understood that patterns of organization or structures can have limitations which result in their becoming insufficient, inadequate or obsolete. Being open prevents one from becoming stuck in reiterative social dynamics and promotes adaptability to changing situations through awareness of the limitations of structures and patterns of organization.

The negative consequences of not being open to change in the long term have been well documented, societies collapse through lack of flexibility, and flexibility is lost through not practicing it (Tainter 1988, 56). Being open allows the dynamics of reinforcement and change to take their natural course without encountering resistance. In doing so, one works with the new circumstances that are presented and the social dynamics to refine and develop themselves and their processes rather than stubbornly sticking to ‘business as usual’. In this sense, Allan Kaplan asserts that the process of development to become complete requires the organization (or individual) to keep itself open and permeable (Kaplan 2005, 121).

The second aspect of openness relates to the understanding and acceptance of others as they are. It is about becoming aware of assumptions, understanding connections, and realizing the possible need for adaptation depending on the context. In this sense, openness is the major requirement for an effective dialogue (Senge 2006, 227-228), where people can exchange their points of view, communicate needs, as well begin to understand the other as they are. It also enables the ability to work with others to support cooperative processes which facilitate inclusiveness and involvement.

Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes. Through being open to new ideas and change, the organization or community exposes itself to all the creative abilities and ingenuity of its members once old assumptions and entrenched behaviors give space to a new way of acting and understanding the world (Senge et al. 2005, 101). Tapping into this wealth of creativity, an organization or community is able to hear and integrate ideas from many points of view rather than relying upon a select few to determine possible paths of action. Using the old adage of ‘two heads are better than one’, this multi-faceted outlook assists the
organization or community in increasing its adaptability to adverse conditions.

Openness also promotes diversity and cooperation within an organization, because, when multiple perspectives are welcomed and acknowledged, a wider array of perspectives are attracted and may become involved in the organization. This coming together of perspectives can be a stumbling block, however, if each member is open to the ideas and perspectives of the others, any tensions are quickly eased and comprehensive solutions to conflicts can be generated.

Organizations and communities that integrate openness within their processes work to create the space for the actualization of the needs for creation, understanding, participation, freedom, and identity. Because an open organization or community is receptive to the creative, innovative, and uninhibited flow of ideas of its members, this inspires even more members to become involved in the processes. And, as individuals open themselves up to hear and understand the ideas of others their understanding is deepened; through this sharing, individual identity and merits are heard, acknowledged and respected.

5.4 Proposed Supportive Process Traits

The aforementioned main process characteristics are meant to form a set of easily understandable and distinctive traits that organizations can aim to nurture and promote. These five characteristics constitute an intermediate goal which serves to align processes within the constraints of sustainability and create the space for the actualization of human needs. The use of these characteristics is supported by and generates a series of so-called ‘supportive’ or ‘emergent’ traits. These traits: commitment, empowerment, dialogue, honesty, trust, and goodwill, both facilitate and emerge from the use of the main characteristics. They were viewed as secondary, not because they are necessarily of lesser importance, but rather because they are not aims in themselves, but manifest from working towards the main characteristics and help to further promote them.
These supportive characteristics were included to acknowledge their importance in socially sustainable development while at the same time demonstrating their role in relation to the main characteristics. Furthermore, they serve to provide a fuller understanding of how the interactions between involvement, cooperation, inclusiveness, transparency, and openness may develop and play out within a process.

5.4.1 Commitment

Definitions of Commitment. Having a sense of commitment to an organization, be it as employee of an company, a citizen of a community, or otherwise, is one of the characteristics we consider to be ‘supportive,’ so called because it less of a starting point and more of a result which then has positive feedback.

Organizational commitment is a central theme in occupational psychology and human resources management as it has a major impact on behaviour. The main model used to conceptualize organizational commitment (Allen & Mayer 1991, 64-67), views it as the net result of three components. Affective commitment reflects the positive association the individual has with the organization, in terms of emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in some aspect of the organization. Continuance commitment is more associated with the necessity of the association, such as the cost to leave or a lack of alternatives. Finally, normative commitment is an expression of felt obligations to remain with the organization, for reasons such as social norms or moral duties. These three components can be presented simultaneously, and to varying proportions/degrees, and result in a certain level of organizational commitment, an attitude that has the organization as its object (Roe, Solinger & van Olffen 2008, 71).

These three categories are also presented as the reasons people stay with an organization: because they want to, because they need to, or because they feel they ought to (Allen and Meyer 1990, 3). From this, we can understand that organizational commitment is not necessarily a positive thing per se, since it can be a result of a lack of options, or a sense of obligation, some of which could easily be considered barriers to the actualization of human needs. To be more specific, what is desirable in an organization is a high
level of affective commitment, where people remain and get involved because they want to.

**Benefits of Commitment.** Having strong affective commitment among members is a highly desirable characteristic, as it has many substantial behavioural benefits. It is a main indicator of work motivation, which correlates strongly with behaviour such as improved attendance, reduced turnover, and a willingness to put in extra effort to help the organization (Kuvaas 2006, 368; Boezeman and Ellemers 2007, 161). Regardless of other motivations for work performance, commitment leads to an increased desire to work constructively and do what is needed to see the organization prosper.

**Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes.** Affective commitment is believed to emerge from positive experiences associated with the organization, though there is no single generalizable model for exactly what factors influence this (Brown 1996, 231). There are numerous theories surrounding things like the organization’s promotion of self-esteem, intrinsic work motivation, respect, and fulfillment of socio-emotional needs among others (See, for example: Lee & Pecci 2007, 663-4; Boezeman & Ellemers 2007, 160; Kuvaas 2006, 369). Using human needs terminology, most of these theories center on relationships that promote the actualization of human needs. It is for these reasons that (affective) commitment is viewed as a positive but secondary characteristic that will emerge from positive relationships within an organization and will reinforce main process characteristics such as cooperation and involvement.

### 5.4.2 Dialogue

**Definitions of Dialogue.** Dialogue is the flow of meaning between entities which allows all parties to go beyond their own understanding by viewing their assumptions and the limitation of their own thoughts (Senge 2006, 223-225). At the same time, a common meaning or a new and more encompassing view of the situation can be discovered (Senge 2006, 230; Stacey 2007, 91).
Dialogue is one type of conversation which is further illustrated when contrasted with discussion. While the latter may help to shed light on the subject in question, usually both participants stick to their points of view, and the idea is that the side with the stronger arguments prevails (Senge 2006, 223). In a best case scenario, a discussion will bring people to an agreement. In a worst case scenario, the issue will run up against fundamental non-negotiable beliefs, and can degenerate into a confrontation with no solution except polite avoidance or conflict (Bohm and Peat 1987, 82-83), both of which are undesirable outcomes. Dialogue, however, is more of a way to see perspectives through sharing meaning and searching for a common way of dealing with the limitations of the number of perspectives being considered. In this sense, different perspectives challenge one another only to create a pool of common meaning and collaboratively develop new ways of describing and perceiving the situation (Senge 2006, 223-226). This new perception creates space for the development of new solutions, overcoming the old way of seeing (Brown 2005, 37-38).

**Benefits of Dialogue.** In the conclusion of his book “solving tough problems” Adam Kahane affirms that the solution to hard situations is to promote a generative dialogue. This is because dialogue has the property of discovering new patterns and solutions while taking everyone’s assumptions and perspectives into account. It is then possible to bring together the people that are co-creating the current reality and support them to co-create a new reality (Kahane 2004, 129). Dialogue allows for new forms of relations between people which are the underlying process that creates the properties of the whole as discussed in section 3.2.1.

**Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes.** Dialogue is closely connected to openness; the capacity to listen to the other and suspend one’s own assumptions is crucial for establishing dialogue (Kahane 2004, 130; Senge 2006, 226). As one of the paths to finding new solutions and perspectives between parties, dialogue can have an important contribution in allowing cooperation within a process. Cooperation, when combined with the understanding of the other, creates the space for the actualization of needs such as creativity and participation through the emergence of new views, perspectives and solutions.

In practicing dialogue, affection can be actualized as observed by Senge: “as dialogue develops, team members will find this feeling of friendship
developing even towards others with whom they do not have much in common” (Senge 2006, 228).

Dialogue is just people talking, sharing assumptions and meaning through which new perspectives and possibilities will arise. In a dialogue there is no pressure to have an outcome or destination. In this sense, freedom can be nurtured because people are able to find and realize the outcomes themselves.

5.4.3 Empowerment

*Definitions of Empowerment.* Empowerment is the creation of conditions or platforms where people can build their own development processes and work to enhance their abilities or circumstances in order to actualize their own needs without having a pre-determined course of action imposed upon them. Empowerment could be identified as giving power to someone; however, as defined by Neil Thompson, empowerment is better understood as actions that help people to get greater control over their lives and circumstances (Thompson 2007, 21).

When referring to communities, it is possible to provide a similar and more specific definition of empowerment: “A group-based, participatory developmental process through which marginalized or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization” (Maton 2008, 5).

From the above definition, it can be derived that a disempowered person is someone without control over the choices within or direction of their own life because they are subjected to constraints and forces beyond their control. This does not mean, however, that disempowered individuals can not be happy with the conditions that life presents them. If these conditions are oppressive or undermining though, the individuals will lack the capacity to change them and, like it or not, will remain subjected to them and their outcomes. In this sense, it can be said that a disempowered person is subjected to conditions that undermine their capacity to meet their own needs. Therefore, disempowerment can be seen as a barrier that sustainable processes can work to remove through empowerment.
**Benefits of Empowerment.** Empowerment is related to the removal of barriers to allow for the actualization of needs. According to Neil Thompson, the empowerment process is comprised of the following qualities, among others (Thompson 2007, 65):

- Means of achieving structural changes
- Personal growth and development
- Transformation within social groups
- Gaining greater control over life choices
- Gaining a presence within political system from which one has been excluded

These achievements can be derived from the process of empowerment at the individual, cultural and structural levels (Thompson 2007, 21). At the individual level, empowerment is related to developing confidence, boosting self-esteem and enhancing skills to better actualize one’s needs; at a cultural level, it is related to the removal of mental models or values that can be exclusive or undermining (Thompson 2007, 21; 8-9). While at the structural level empowerment is related to concrete structures or the distribution of opportunities. A structure that results in empowerment provides meaningful opportunities for participation, learning, and development for a range of individuals who vary in background, interests, and skills (Maton 2008, 11).

If these levels are compared with the systems terminology used, it is possible to say that empowerment works by intervening in both patterns of organization and structures while promoting conditions that do not undermine peoples’ capacity to actualize their needs. As Maton well synthesizes, “Various empowerment outcomes can be encompassed, including political, economic, and psychological empowerment (i.e. enhanced control, influence, and capacity in one or more of these domains). Also, various levels of empowerment can be encompassed, both individual and collective” (Maton 2008, 5).

To empower is not about doing something to or for someone; people cannot be empowered by others. Rather, they can be enabled to empower themselves (Thompson 2007, 22). In this sense to empower is maximizing potential so people can have the power to create the circumstances to actualize their own needs (Thompson 2007, 63).
Relation to Human Needs and Organizational Processes. As working together is the fundamental basis for empowerment practice (Thompson 2007, 63), empowerment is closely related to cooperation. These concepts were also linked by Robert Adams in saying that the ideal of an empowering practice is one in which each part is empowered (2003, 24). Empowerment can be achieved when the set of relations established between the parts has removed barriers and enhanced conditions and choices in order to better actualize needs.

In the same direction Maton asserts that empowering settings “encourage members to look beyond themselves, incorporating a shared vision and larger purpose shared by members of the setting” (Maton 2008, 8). In this sense empowerment works with cooperation towards the mutual actualization of the needs for both parts as synergistically as possible.

Through the characteristics of cooperation, inclusiveness and involvement, empowerment practices are comprised of engaging activities which are “meaningful to the members in terms of their personal goals and congruent with their cultural and personal background” (Maton 2008, 10). These practices help to actualize needs such as identity and participation. Empowerment consists of practices that are reflective, raise awareness, and increase consciousness of one’s situation. Because of that, the need of understanding can be actualized through empowerment practices (Adams 2003, 10).

5.4.4 Qualities of Relationships

When talking about processes in human systems it is, of course, impossible to omit a discussion of the nature of the relationships between the people who constitute these processes. Whereas the main characteristics of cooperation, involvement, inclusiveness, openness, and transparency are meant to describe the processes, it was felt necessary to describe some characteristics present in the relationships themselves. These were identified as trust, honesty, and goodwill. These are considered supportive characteristics not because they are of lesser significance, but rather due to causal reasons.

The social benefits of these relationship qualities are self-evident to a large degree; they are essentially ‘good’ by definition, which is part of why it
was not seen to be particularly meaningful to advocate them as a strategy for change. They certainly have a main role to play in relationships that address human needs, and anything that undermines them is detrimental; however, what is important to know in regards to organizational processes is how they are promoted.

This being said, the importance of trust, honesty, and goodwill cannot be understated, and there are certainly situations that suffer from a deficiency of all three. These are qualities that are necessary for people to work together effectively and have fulfilling relationships.

*Trust* has been identified as fundamental to any well-functioning organization, a ‘central spine’ around which all other outcomes of a relationship emerge (Burchell and Cook 2008, 43), and as a key antecedent of willingness to voluntarily cooperate fully (Egley, Henkin, and Moye 2005, 259). Very few relationships are based on what is known with complete certainty about another person, and very few relationships would endure without a high degree of trust (Simmel 1979, 179). Having higher levels of trust can also be seen as something that brings direct and tangible benefits to an organization. Employees in open and trusted firms are more motivated and contribute more creatively (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, 103). Most people respond in kind to the underlying intentions of others and will hence behave more fairly in relationships based on trust, as opposed to antagonistic relationships (Bowles et al. 2005, 21).

*Honesty* is a quality which is intricately connected to trust. Trust has its limits as trustworthiness has its limits (Egley, Henkin and Moye 2005, 261). Honesty is the main contributor to trusting supportive relationships, and a prerequisite to an open and transparent organization, as the intent of transparency is to publicly demonstrate honesty, among other things (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003, 102).

*Goodwill* results from viewing a relationship in an optimistic light, and hence behaving in a constructive manner. It reflects an intention to ‘do good’, and is in essence, positive by definition. This of course, has many benefits for an organization, as when people view a certain relationship as positive, they are highly likely to behave in the same way in other relationships, and spread goodwill throughout the organization. This occurs because when people experience affective reactions, it often causes them to focus on the positive aspects of the job to cognitively justify these emotions (Brief and George 1992, 317).
5.5 Examples of Process Characteristics within Organizations

The following examples were included in order to provide a brief illustration of how different organizations and communities have embodied the proposed process characteristics. These case studies, which range from governmental programs to NGOs to businesses, are explored in further detail in appendices B through E. They serve to highlight the connections and interplay between the proposed characteristics and the benefits that result from their implementation. These organizations have established processes that embody our characteristics which has helped them to overcome barriers to the actualization of human needs.

5.5.1 Grace Living Center

The Grace Living Center provides an interesting example of how processes can be reorganized, in this case combining two processes, to better address human needs of those involved. The resulting processes came to demonstrate a high level of cooperation, involvement, inclusiveness, transparency, and openness. The consequence of this change has been an undeniable positive influence in regards to human needs, removing many of the barriers that had previously existed.

The Grace Living Center in Jenks, Oklahoma is a nursing home for the elderly and disabled that is home to a unique partnership. A two-room school for preschool and kindergarten was constructed in the lobby of the facility, allowing for regular interaction between residents and children. There are a variety of structured and unstructured activities to facilitate these interactions, such as a reading programme where students and the residents read together, one-on-one. This level of personal attention has helped students to excel in reading comprehension (Robinson 2007, 20) and the exposure to elderly people has led to an increased acceptance and compassion for people with disabilities and difference in general (Galley 2002, 32).

There have been numerous benefits for the centre’s residents as well. The regular interactions with the students helps to address the so-called ‘three
plagues’ of nursing homes of loneliness, boredom, and helplessness through companionship, spontaneity, and having someone to care for, respectively (Galley 2002, 30). Seventy per cent of residents interact regularly with the students, indicating that the majority find it very worthwhile. Residents that were formerly sullen and reserved have opened up and talked to children when approached by them (Galley 2002, 32). Their spirits have been lifted, and they are literally living longer, and taking less anti-depressant medication (Robinson 2007, 20).

The mutual benefits of this partnership have made it highly successful, and a great example of an initiative that works to address many human needs at once. The programme involves cooperation between the school and the nursing home, as well as between the students and residents. The process is open, and has a variety of unstructured interaction, so to a large degree, it is determined by everyone involved, as they see fit. There is a significant emphasis on inclusiveness, and students go around and visit residents who are physically unable to come visit them in the classrooms. There is a very transparent environment; being a kindergarten, there are no hidden agendas or power relations, everyone can easily see what is going on. Finally, a central tenant of the programme is to encourage the involvement of the residents in processes that shape how their facility operates. There is no requirement to participate, and residents can get involved to varying degrees, but the door is open so that they can have a large influence on the processes that influence their lives.

5.5.2 Instituto Elos, the School of Warriors Without Weapons

The following case study is a living example of our process characteristics in practice. Through a systems perspective and the understanding that by changing the qualities of relations on an individual level the properties of the whole are also changed, Elos’ programme demonstrates that, with small targeted interventions, it is possible to create a significant impact on the whole community. Instituto Elos’ projects address situations with endemic barriers to the actualization of needs and seek to overcome them through cooperation and empowerment. They achieve this, as explained below, through an open, transparent, and dialogical process that includes and involves community members as well as participants of the program.
The Instituto Elos is a not-for-profit NGO established in 2000. They aim to develop a new generation of social entrepreneurs that can respond more effectively to social issues. In achieving this goal, the organization has a very clear mission which states: “Instituto Elos cultivates a sense of cooperation and citizenship among social entrepreneurs so that they can more effectively utilize the human, material, economic, and institutional resources already available in their communities” (Elos Business Plan).

Both the Instituto Elos and this research, look at social processes. For Elos, the majority of their activities are focused on creating processes within communities that lead towards social change, enhancing quality of life and, as they say, build a better world. In this research, we have focused on process characteristics that can lead towards social change by removing barriers and therefore create the conditions where people can develop their capacity to actualize their needs. Elos’ 30 day School of Warriors Without Weapons programme is as an efficient and effective way of removing barriers that undermine human capacity to meet their needs and at the same time helping to actualize those needs.

The efficiency and success of this initiative can be seen in their results and partnerships with local communities as well as by the great number of invitations that they receive from different communities to run their programs (Instituto Elos, 2007).

In their mission, the value of cooperation is emphasized as a key aspect to building a shared future. It is only by joining forces to remove barriers that our needs can be actualized. As explained by Edgard Gouveia, Elos’ founder, it is this gathering of forces of these small parts that will contribute to create a physical manifestation of a project that benefits everyone.

This process of cooperation is initiated by the invitation of people to dream and share their needs and desires; ensuring that people’s needs are taken into account. In doing so, they work to include all community members regardless of whether they come to the activity or not. This is an important step in order for people to feel heard and part of the outcome.

In the beginning phase of the program, where participants go into the community for the first time and research the community’s dreams and challenges, the program embodies the proposed characteristics. In this step, people are encouraged to be open, which mean to actively listen to one another and understand their original needs, instead of coming with
prescriptions. This openness allows for an appreciation of the individuality of the specific context, and the diversity that exists within it to gain a better understanding of the relevant human needs.

Once the community’s dreams are put together in a concrete plan, they are invited to build. At this point, there is a further manifestation of involvement. People can feel that they are a part of building something that enhances the quality of life in their community. Having a concrete outcome is important for many reasons. It is by seeing the concrete outcome of the previous effort and by using it for inspiration that people can be empowered. This demonstrates to both participants and people from the community that people are capable of overcoming and removing their own barriers.

At the end there is always space for celebration. This is also an important step. It recognizes the effort that has been put into the project and celebrates the power of community to realize their own needs.

5.5.3   **Bessa’s Cabeleireiro**

The following case study shows how a business can succeed by using whole systems thinking. Bessa’s philosophies and actions are based on the belief that the quality of relationships to create a “healthy” whole. It demonstrates how barriers can be removed by being cooperative, open, and using dialogue among its members to create conditions where people can exercise their capacity to actualize their needs.

Bessa’s Cabeleireiro opened in 1992, and has been operating for the 16 years in the capital city of São Paulo, Brazil. The shop offers a variety of services and has as a staff of 58 members. Among these are hair stylists, manicurists, hair and manicure assistants, receptionists, car drivers, car washers, and cleaning staff.

9   A Cabeleireiro is a combination of a barbershop and a salon. In addition, Bessa’s offers a car washing service for clients.
The work in the shop is guided by some basic principles focused on the quality of relationships between staff members, and with other stakeholders such as clients and suppliers. The fundamental idea is that having good quality relationships within the business helps to create a common whole that works well together in order to provide good service.

To maintain good relations among the staff, meetings are held on a weekly basis and people are encouraged to be open and engage in dialogue to help create new dynamics for conflict resolution. The effectiveness of this process is only possible because of the principles of respect and understanding that are fostered in the shop.

Another aspect of Bessa’s that helps them work towards a better whole is the spirit of cooperation that underlies the organization. People are encouraged to give their best to and receive as much from the shop as they can. The employees are stimulated to learn and earn money while the shop continually improves its reputation and keep its business up.

Involvement is an important aspect of the shop, exemplified by common activities and weekly meetings. Not only are employees included and involved during the weekly meetings, but also in the three big parties that happen every year. Additionally, there are minor events directed to the clients that break up the work routine and enhance participation and the creativity of the staff while building a good rapport with clients by showing them special attention and affection.

All of this helps to create a sense of belonging in a nurturing environment where people work to understand and support each other, instead of competing. The ‘concrete’ aspect of wellbeing (subsistence) is guaranteed by employment while development, both personally and professionally, is encouraged to address subjective wellbeing. Through its actions and policies, Bessa’s is well on its way to social sustainability in regards to its employees.

5.5.4 **Ontario Student Nutrition Program**

The Ontario Student Nutrition Program works towards socially sustainable development through performing the everyday process of feeding school children in an innovative way. This reorganization of processes
demonstrates how a program can create community-wide cooperation by organizing itself in a way that encourages innovation and is adaptable to a community’s unique circumstances. This exemplifies how a community need can be satisfied from within through processes that work to actualize multiple needs.

After seeing the success of meal programs initiated by individual schools, the Province of Ontario, Canada, took notice. In 2000, the Student Nutrition Program (SNP) was implemented provincially. The SNP is an optional program which allots partial funding for schools to provide students with either breakfast, lunch or a snack. In order for schools to receive funds, the government does not have many mandates, primarily it is the ability to raise or provide the remainder of support for the program.

Other mandates include set requirements for the nutritional values of the food as well as the stipulation that, if a program initiated, it is available to all students. This inclusiveness was implemented with the intent that, regardless of whether or not parents have the ability to provide a meal at home, the students have the ability to get one at school. By including all students, the program eliminates any potential stigma attached to being a program recipient and ensures that those who truly need it do not feel ostracized for using the program.

As the government only provides a portion of the operating costs, it is then up to the school board and community to cover the rest. By maintaining ownership of the program, the community is able to come together to generate its own creative and unique method for running it. The government’s hands-off approach allows the school to be open to new ideas and changes within the community as there is less bureaucracy to go through in order to make alterations. By being community-organized, the SNP is a transparent activity. It is made clear where supplies come from, and as it is partly government funding the expenses are meticulously documented.

Supplying meals for large groups of students on a daily basis is a large task. Because of this, the programs that are the strongest are the ones that involve and include the most people in their operation. By bringing these diverse groups together and involving them in a worthwhile project, community bonds are forged and strengthened. The school’s openness to new ideas encourages involvement as well because, as channels for input are open and transparent, individuals can easily know how best to contribute.
There are many variations in SNP administration, in some areas the local school board is the main partner, whereas in others, it is a local restaurant, church or community organization. While some schools use their cafeteria staff to prepare and serve the food, others involve parents or community volunteers. This community self-organization serves to empower community members as well as promote cooperation between school administration, local groups, restaurants, parents, and local farmers who all come together around the common cause of ensuring that the students in their area do not go to school hungry.
6 Conclusion

The aims of this research were to directly inform the FSSD, sustainability practitioners, organizations or communities that are in need of more direction when looking at social sustainability, and to assist in the identification of contributions to barriers to people’s capacity to actualize their needs.

In reaching this end, five main process characteristics: cooperation, inclusiveness, involvement, openness and transparency and six supportive traits: empowerment, commitment, dialogue, trust, honesty, and goodwill which are meant to address structural barriers were proposed. These characteristics were intended to be a set of criteria that ensures sustainable development by aligning the ideologies, mental models, values, and physical manifestations (the policies and power structures) of a process within the constraints of sustainability.

To facilitate the implementation of these characteristics, a guidebook incorporating a set of guiding questions was developed. This guidebook has the dual intentions of facilitating sustainability practitioners in the diagnosis of processes that can create or contribute to structural barriers in addition to promoting an organization or community’s examination of their processes in regards to the proposed characteristics and human needs. Through this, both become aware of the ‘current reality’ in regards to social sustainability. In raising this awareness, the guidebook also serves as a tool to identify the processes in which these characteristics are missing and recommend their more complete integration. It can be used both to instigate deep institutional change as well as to raise general awareness of concepts of social sustainability. In either application, it facilitates reflection and a questioning of structures and ideologies.

6.1 Recommendations

6.1.1 Practical Application

The guidebook has yet to be applied to an organization or community to test its strengths and weaknesses. This practical application would be a
great opportunity to further develop it. Through application, a more precise method of evaluation tailored to the organization could be developed and resources identified that can assist in its implementation.

In addition, as the authors believe that these characteristics are a step in the right direction, and socially sustainable processes will be more accessible and tangible through the use of this guidance and guidebook, we suggest that they be tested and considered for further integration with the FSSD at the Strategic Guidelines level.

6.1.2 Further Research

Although the authors feel this thesis is a good stepping stone, further research is still required in order to fully assess the proposed characteristics and their impacts within different types of processes. This will work to refine them and their methods for application. In conducting this research, one aspect for consideration is the effect of the absence of these characteristics within processes. To this end, research into additional case studies of communities or organizations that exemplify these process characteristics would be of great support to the proposed theory.
References


Appendix A: Guidebook

So, you want to be
Socially Sustainable...

Exploring the Social Dimension of Sustainable Development

2008
Author’s Note:

Congratulations on taking this important step! Whether you’ve taken a full dive into sustainability or are merely curious as to what social sustainability is all about, this document will serve as a guide through social processes and how you can get started.

This guidebook was inspired through work on a collaborative thesis examining the nature of social sustainability. It is the intention of this guidebook to further detail the concept of social sustainability and characteristics of processes that work towards it. The aim is to guide a reflective exploration of the way your organization or community functions. By taking a closer look at how processes within a community or organization are structured and knowing key elements of sustainable processes, practitioners will be able to effectively shape their organizations towards socially sustainable development.

Our sincere thanks go out to all those who have encouraged and provided their insights during the development of this guidebook.
Getting Started: Where am I?

In your journey towards social sustainability, it is important to know where you start. No matter what level you operate on; small business, multi-national, non-profit or government; it is a social system with similar characteristics. In our globalized world, a social system is, in other words, a network of stakeholders. Given this, it is important to remember that every organization is a social system unto itself which functions within multiple other social systems and ever-widening networks of stakeholders. It is in this commonality that we can begin to work towards social sustainability together.

Due to the nature of human interactions, the exact boundaries of each particular social system are blurred and will vary from one system to another. By defining them too narrowly or broadly, one runs the risk of omitting some stakeholders, either through exclusion or because resources have been over-stretched. In order to strike this balance, and encompass the majority of stakeholders without casting the net too widely, social system boundaries can be seen as an organization or community’s sphere of influence. This model centers on the organization or community and imagines its actions as having effects that radiate outward. The boundaries of any particular ‘sphere’ are set by the extent that tangible effects can be seen as occurring either directly or indirectly as a result of actions, decisions, or policies.

How does this guidebook apply to me?

As every business, community, or NGO is its own social system, this guidebook focuses on those systems and how they can be shaped towards greater social sustainability. It works to demonstrate the nature of processes within a sustainable society and outline how individuals, organizations, and the communities in which they operate can act in order to make systematic progress towards sustainability.
What is Sustainability?

The work towards sustainability is often referred to as ‘sustainable development,’ but what does that mean? The most widely accepted definition was put forth by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, who defined sustainable development as development which:

“meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.¹

This means that, when undertaking any action, its impacts on future generations need to be considered.

Sustainability is often pictured as the intersection of three spheres: environment, economy and society. This means that the best choices are those that meet the needs of society and are environmentally and economically viable. In recent progress towards sustainability, despite Brundtland’s emphasis on human needs, great attention has been paid to the environmental and economic spheres while the social sphere has been viewed as separate. Why is this?

What is Social Sustainability?

There are many reasons overall social sustainability has not been addressed by many organizations. The first is that the social dimension seems overwhelming. Unlike the environmental and economic systems where flows and cycles are easily observable, the dynamics within the social system are highly intangible and not easily modeled.

In the four consensus-derived sustainability principles¹° which outline the minimum requirements for a sustainable society, the social sphere is addressed through the assertion that:

“In a sustainable society, people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.”
This definition, much like that of Brundtland Commission, is based on the concept of fundamental human needs and describes a sustainable society in terms of encouraging processes and relationships which do not create barriers for others. From this, sustainable social development can be defined as the change, growth, or evolution of a social system which progresses towards an enhanced quality of life for all of its members without undermining the capacity of others to do the same.

**Why Social Sustainability?**

You may be thinking, what does it matter if my organization contributes to barriers or not? We’re just one out of millions! Though one organization or community does not always have the ability to influence issues at a global scale, you can enact meaningful change within your sphere of influence.

Every organization or community that makes a change towards sustainable development makes a contribution to social progress. In a complex system like society, no one actor will be able to claim responsibility for the entirety of the solution. It is the incremental measures taken by individual organizations that will help reach the ‘tipping point’ and finally turn the tide of development towards a world where everyone has the capacity to meet their needs.

Not only is addressing social concerns an important thing for the whole of society, it also has positive impacts on the organization or community that takes the initiative. By implementing changes within your sphere of influence, you begin to strengthen the relationships that connect you and your stakeholders. These connections and relationships define how complex systems work; an organization is its relationships, not its flow chart. Ensuring good relations within your organization or community can be beneficial in good times and in bad. A reputation for respecting and listening to others projects the image of a great place to work, raise a family, or develop as an individual.
How do we get there?

On this one planet, there are: 6912 living languages, 1500 different culture-groups and thousands of types of religions that exist in every region from the poles to the Equator, existing in such extremities as the desert and the rainforest. This immense diversity and individuality makes it difficult to precisely measure or predict the impacts of our actions. Because of this variation and unpredictability - there is, of course, no single prescription or scenario for being a sustainable society.

While the exact details of what a sustainable society looks like may not be known, progress can still be made towards sustainability if the principles outlining the minimum requirements to preserve society and the environment are followed. By aligning organizational processes to be within these constraints (i.e. not creating conditions that undermine others’ capacity to meet their needs) the outcome will be a shift towards a sustainable society.

So what are the minimum requirements for creating a sustainable society? In answering this, one step is to become aware of the overarching characteristics of living systems. Through this, one can begin to see how systems react and begin to define their organization or community’s sphere of influence. It is also important to explore the dynamics of human societies to understand fundamental human needs and process characteristics that will help to align society within the constraints of sustainability.

Social System Characteristics

The study of living systems teaches us that, from bee hives to businesses, systems at all levels share the same traits of being self-organizing, interdependent and diverse. These characteristics, derived from the work of physicists such as Fritjof Capra, have been observed in living systems at all levels which impart a level of natural resilience.

To be self-organizing means having the ability to choose actions and adapt to different situations and contexts rather than acting only in a pre-
established way. Social systems have differing levels of interdependence among themselves, their members and with their environment which come about through dynamic relationships. The diversity of a society, its differing skills, perspectives, abilities, and weaknesses, contributes to the overall fitness and resilience of a system, which allows societies to develop and adapt.

**Human Needs and Social Systems**

If all living systems share these traits, what traits are specific to human societies? What accounts for the subjective elements of well-being? Human societies were not established with the sole purpose of being self-organizing, interdependent, and diverse. What then, was their purpose and how does one account for why humans have self-organized as they have?

A social species by nature, humans originally began developing their societies with the purpose of fostering well-being and meeting some level of human needs for its members. What then, are human needs? The economist Manfred Max-Neef has identified nine fundamental human needs which do not vary between or within cultures (see Fig. 1). This concept of human needs is similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs in that both put forth that humans share the same fundamental needs cross-culturally. The very nature of a hierarchy however, places some needs as more important than others. In contrast, Max-Neef’s conception of needs asserts that while all needs carry equal weight, some take longer to erode well-being than others. Though these needs are universal, the ways in which they are satisfied varies between societies, individuals, and cultures.

**Human development: actualizing needs through processes**

While human needs themselves are universal, the action taken to satisfy them is a continual process. Therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of needs as being realized or actualized as opposed to being met. This is a slight difference in language, but an important one.
This means that needs are actualized by more than just having something, it is about being in a process (being, doing, and interacting) that enables the actualization of needs to emerge. The ‘deprivation’ of a need is not simply the absence of an object: it is a lack of the capacity to fulfil it. For instance, a paintbrush does not work to realize the need of creativity; rather, it is the act of painting, using the paintbrush, which can. By creating the conditions that allow for the act of painting, the actualization of the need of creativity can happen over time. Since needs require a process in order to begin to be realized, an unsatisfied need is a source of potential for creative and meaningful action. Organizations and communities can

**Figure 1: Nine Fundamental Human Needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subsistence</strong></td>
<td>The perpetuation of physical health through such means as shelter, safe drinking water, food and ability to clothe oneself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protection</strong></td>
<td>Care for the individual in the form of physical protection from harm, access to preventative medical care and the like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affection</strong></td>
<td>Having sufficient levels of self-esteem, love, and healthy and respectful relationships with family and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Being critically conscious, rational and satisfying curiosity through literature, mentors, media, investigation, study and experimentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>An association with others to share in the decisions, processes, and outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leisure</strong></td>
<td>Time off from the demands of work or duty, to have free time to reflect, relax, or play games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creation</strong></td>
<td>The releasing of ingenuity, passion and imagination through working, inventing, building, designing, composing or interpreting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>A sense of self image defined in relation to others; awareness of oneself raised by self-reflection and self-development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom</strong></td>
<td>Autonomy, self-determination, assertiveness, open-mindedness through the ability to choose, dissent, be different, run risks and develop oneself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
capitalize on this potential by shaping their processes to result in the creation of conditions where needs can be realized.

By identifying both the processes that inhibit (or ‘create barriers’ to) the actualization of needs as well as those that allow for the actualization of needs to occur, it is possible to determine the characteristics that must be encouraged in order to progress towards sustainability.

So, what are the characteristics of processes that facilitate actualizing human needs and work to build a sustainable society?

**Processes Characteristics**

As sustainable social development describes the processes of change and growth, it is through removing barriers and applying key aspects of sustainable social processes within your community or organization that one can take steps towards becoming socially sustainable. Through our research, five main traits of processes that promote/actualize needs were identified. The characteristics of *cooperation, involvement, inclusiveness, transparency* and *openness* work both individually and collectively to actualize needs. By intentionally shaping processes so that they do not create or contribute to barriers, organizations and communities can begin fulfil the minimum requirements of social sustainability.

**Cooperation** is one of the possible ways interdependent parts can relate to each other. To cooperate within a process is to have each party contribute what they can in order to best serve their needs in a mutually beneficial way. Through actively cooperating, individuals can further actualize their: understanding of a situation, identity of self as defined by the relationship, creativity by applying it to an issue, and participation in a project through positive reinforcement.

**Involvement** is the taking or being part of some action or attempt; a sharing, of tangible or intangible things, as in benefits and profits or as in culture and values. Individuals are involved actively in the form of bringing their unique ideas, talents and energy to a project. By involving
all parties in an action, individuals have a greater personal investment in the outcome. Involvement can serve to actualize multiple other needs at once, such as participation and identity.

**Inclusiveness** is ensuring the needs of stakeholders are acknowledged and respected even if they do not actively contribute to the process. This acknowledgement helps the organization/community to shape its processes in such a way that they are not creating barriers to the needs, even for those not directly connected to it.

**Openness** means that a community or organization has the willingness to rethink and review its own values and processes. In the social sustainability context, this means that they are open to change in their processes in order to better meet the needs of members and remove barriers that make it difficult for others to meet their needs. Through being open to change, organizational and community adaptability, diversity, and cooperation are promoted, helping to actualize needs of creation, understanding, and participation.

**Transparency** refers to an ideal of communication and accountability in organizations and communities where motivations, driving factors, and impacts of all decisions and actions are made publicly available. This is meant to lead to more member involvement, hold officials accountable, and eliminate corruption. Within organizational processes, transparency can serve to remove barriers to individuals’ understanding of the processes that affect them. It can also ease and promote participation within processes as well as build trust and goodwill.

It is important to realize that, since they are interrelated and mutually reinforcing concepts, they are not completely separate. Though they all share the same basis of individual relations, the characteristics do play different (yet complimentary) roles within processes as shown in Figure 2.

Involvement and inclusiveness, for example, are both related to the concept of participation. However, as participation is such a vast concept as well as a human need, it was felt that it contained traits distinct enough to warrant separation. By separating its two aspects, the full spectrum of
participation is able to be encompassed. It is in this type of interplay between characteristics that they serve to cover most facets of organizational and community processes.

Fig. 2: Sample Roles of Identified Characteristics as Satisfiers of Human Needs

To support and reinforce the interactions of these characteristics, there are a number of process traits, two of which are honesty, and commitment. For example, the ability to be honest with oneself and with others is engendered through and creates the space for transparency and openness while commitment to a process, decision, or action results from and perpetuates involvement. As all of these characteristics and supportive traits deal with the relations between individuals and the strengthening of interpersonal bonds, they serve the good of the entire community or organization. This is because, when individuals care for each other, they truly work together to do what is most mutually beneficial for those directly and indirectly involved.
Guiding Questions

Foreword

The ‘social sustainability’ of any organization or community is the result of how it conducts itself— from its employee relations, interactions with suppliers and other external stakeholders, to how it works with businesses and the larger community. Knowing this, in their work to eliminate contributions to barriers to people’s capacity to meet their needs, an organization or community needs to take stock of where they are today and how they relate with their entire network of stakeholders.

When going through the questions, you will notice two types. The first asks targeted questions and uses a spectrum so that you can better visually gauge where your organization/community is today and monitor progress in the long term. By assessing where you are today, it will outline the ‘gap’ between your current situation and your desired state of sustainability. The second type of question is more open-ended for you to reflect and review your processes. Through answering these, you will gain a clearer picture of the reason for your score in the first questions. It must be noted that, while some questions are more specific to one sector than another, all are key elements to consider in order to see the relationship to the greater overall system.

In performing this exercise, it is important to remember that these questions are meant to provide a lens for looking at processes in relation to human needs. As such, they were designed as a reflective exercise to focus attention on the identified characteristics and the degree to which they are reflected within current practices. By assuring these characteristics within processes, it is believed that the space will be created and maintained for people to have the opportunity to actualize their needs. The questions are not meant to be overly critical; rather the intent is for practitioners to take a deep and honest look at the nature of the organization’s internal processes. By going through this exercise, you will gain a deeper understanding both of where your organization is headed and the nature of the processes that are pushing you in that direction.
Guiding Questions

1.0 Determining your sphere of influence

Who are the people and/or organizations who are influenced by your operation in any way?

- Customers
- Employees
- Suppliers/supply chain
- Tax payers
- Government/authorities
- Society at large
- Other

2.0 Openness

A) Your organizational power structure could best be described as:

- Hierarchical, with upper management, some layers of middle management and rank and file members (Top down)
- Fairly flat, but with an imposed leadership body (directed from above, but members are free to choose their methods)
- Flat, or with leadership coming from some sort of a council chosen by all members (directions are taken by a representative body but initiated by organizational members)
- A series of semi-autonomous workgroups or task forces that meet regularly to coordinate, without direction from above. (bottom up, grassroots)

B) How does your organization/community recognize and incentivize new ideas and new forms of organization?
C) How does your organization/community provide support for the exploration of new ideas?

D) How are feedback and general ideas listened to and incorporated within your organization/community?

From last 3 the questions above, your organization could be described as:

Minimal channels for input

Very encouraging, Supporting, integrating

E) What ways can initiatives be developed without going through formal channels or procedures?

Given your reflections above, how could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure)

How can these barriers be removed?

### 3.0 Involvement and Inclusivity

A) To what extent do you think individuals feel part of the organization/community?

Not at all  

Somewhat  

Completely

B) How are the general direction and major priorities of the organization/community determined, and who was involved in determining them?

C) What percentages of members regularly participate in community/organizational governance and decision-making?

D) Does everyone feel safe to express their opinions?

None  

Some  

All

E) Within your organization/community, how is individual expression encouraged?

- Discouraged?
F) What are the formal channels for all members to discuss important decisions and add their input?

G) What percentage of members would say that they have a significant say in the major decisions of the organization?

- What has contributed to this?
- What has detracted from this?

H) What percentage of members would agree that decision-making system is successful in difficult decisions or situations?

I) Do all members feel a personal sense of responsibility for the outcomes or direction of the organization?

J) How is commitment to and ownership for decisions established among all stakeholders?

Given your reflections above, how could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure)

How can these barriers be removed?

4.0 Quality of Relationships

A) In what ways do you/your organization/community try to understand and assess the needs of others?

B) Describe how you try to understand Stakeholders’:

   i) Chosen methods to accomplish goals
   ii) Decisions of end goals or targets
   iii) Underlying assumptions and values
C) How are conflicts usually resolved...
   
i) When there is a difference of end goals
   
ii) When there is a dispute over the means to reach an agreed-upon end

D) To what extent do you use dialogue to find an agreement?
   
   Never ———— Sometimes ———— Always

E) How do relations within your organization/community promote tighter connections between people?

F) What types of spaces are available for formal and informal gatherings?

---

Given your reflections above, How could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure

How can these barriers be removed?

---

5.0 Satisfaction, Quality of Life

A) What estimate of community members/stakeholders would say they experience non-monetary fulfilment in their life?

- All, very few exceptions
- Most
- Some
- Few/none

How does your organization contribute to this fulfilment?
B) What estimate of individuals would describe their role within the community/organization as meaningful and fulfilling?

- All- very few exceptions
- Most
- Some
- Few/none

C) What amount of members would say they see a rewarding and satisfying future within your organization or community?

- None
- Some
- All

D) When applicable describe in what ways organizational/community processes work towards human needs through:

- Making work meaningful
- Encouraging people to take part of visioning processes
- Involvement in day-to-day operational processes
- Salary and payment (employees)
- Service or product to customers, consumers, or citizens
- Stimulating the creation and implementation of ideas
- Promoting a light (relaxed/open) work environment

5.1 Personal Growth/Learning

A) What percent of members of your organization/community feel that their qualities/skills/living experience has improved from involvement with your organization or community?

- 0
- 20
- 40
- 60
- 80
- 100

B) In what ways do the actions of your organization/community help stakeholders to develop themselves personally and/or professionally?

How might these opportunities be impeded?
What conditions would serve to better foster improvement?
Given your reflections above, how could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure)

How can these barriers be removed?

6.0 Cooperation

6.1 Use of all skills and knowledge

A) How does your organization/community proceed when common effort or team work is required?

B) In which ways does your community/organization acknowledge and integrate the specific skills and qualities of its members?

C) To what extent does your organization/division/community work as a whole?

- In what ways are sections integrated?
- In which ways are divisions specialized to the point of isolation of one another?
D) In what extent does your organization/community seek to participate, promote and partner with local initiatives?

E) How are your partnerships mutually supportive and beneficial?

F) In which ways are your partnerships actualizing multiple needs at the same time?

G) How do your organizational processes help to develop the organization or its members through involvement?

H) Do you view your organization as:

- A machine - each part/member working towards a specified goal by doing their own role.
- An ecosystem – consisting of many different types of interdependent and self-organizing performing a common task as a whole, while evolving.
- A brain – an interconnected, entity, constantly learning
- A culture – an evolving entity with collective values, beliefs
- A government – a complex and interconnected power structure

### 6.2 Integration of Purpose

A) In which ways does your product/service contribute to your client? How does your product have a positive impact in the overall society?

B) How does your organizational process help others to actualize their needs of subsistence and quality of life (human needs)?

C) In which ways could the organizational process be improved by enhancing the relationships that are established now within it? (employees and stakeholders)

Given your reflections above, how could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure)

How can these barriers be removed?
7.0 Transparency

A) To what extent do our communications/marketing reflect our actions?

[Scale: Not at all | Sometimes | Usually | Always]

B) To what extent are driving forces behind decisions communicated to stakeholders?

[Scale: Not at all | Somewhat | Completely]

C) In what ways are these communicated?

- General postings
- Updating emails
- Personal notifications, etc
- Other______________

D) Is information about the organization/community available for others (general public) in some form?

To what extent?

- Detailed reports are available online
- Detailed reports available upon request
- Overview of actions available online

E) How easily accessible and usable is information about decision topics for stakeholders and community members?

- Always- very few exceptions
- Sometimes
- Rarely/never

Given your reflections above, how could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure)

How can these barriers be removed?
8.0 Equity, Distribution and Living Conditions

A) In what ways does your product or service promote health and well-being?

B) To what extent are those benefits available to different levels of society?

Available to few

Available to everyone

C) In which ways is overall well-being promoted and distributed by your organizational process?
   i. Within your organization
   ii. Throughout your stakeholder chain/network

D) How does your organization contribute to the overall health of its members?

E) To what degree are people subject to unhealthy work or living environments in your organization/community?

Never

Occasionally

Sometimes

Often

How is this being addressed?

F) What are some of the health risks associated with your operation and how are they being addressed?

G) To what degree is healthcare available locally, easily accessible, and affordable?

Inaccessible

Limited Access

Good Availability

Absolute

H) Does your organization provide assistance/service for those in need?

I) Does your operation rely on processes that create economic conditions which hinder people from meeting their needs?

(Dangerous conditions, child labour, one-sided trade agreements)

K) How would your organization have to change if labour standards worldwide were increased to levels common in the west?

Given your reflections above, how could your operations be inhibiting the actualization of human needs?

(Subsistence, Protection, Identity, Creation, Participation, Understanding, Freedom, Affection, Leisure)

How can these barriers be removed?
9.0 Reflection

A) To what extent are processes and actions visited/ reflected or considered

i) while they are occurring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely/Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

ii) once they have taken place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely/Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What Next?

Now that you have gone through the questions and reflected on your organizational processes, you may have begun to detect aspects and trends that you hadn’t before. These questions were a way for you to look at your organizational processes in relation to human needs and alongside the main characteristics of processes that lead to social sustainability.

In doing so, the objective was for you to identify the extent to which these characteristics are currently embodied within your organization and begin to see how to direct organizational processes towards social sustainable development. The final question of each section was a reflection on the human needs and what barriers your organization may be creating through the nature of its processes. This was intended to encourage further examination of the specific ways your organization may be inhibiting the capacity of others to actualize their needs and encourage, through a transformation of organizational processes, the removal of those barriers.

The areas of your organization in which the characteristics are least integrated, and the most barriers are being created can be thought of as your ‘areas of concern’. These are the areas in which your organization should focus on in order to proceed toward social sustainability. It is important to remember that the integration of these characteristics is about quality rather than quantity. Though some questions ask you for a value estimate, they are not merely check boxes. Rather, they are intended to
provide a momentary snapshot of where you are on your journey towards social sustainability.

By going through these questions, you have taken the first step. It is now up to your organization to decide how to best embody these new qualities and address any identified areas of concern. The incorporation of these characteristics within organizational processes is no small task. The reflections you just generated are a valuable insight, in order to build them into your organizational processes, it is necessary to have a dedicated and knowledgeable individual devoted to (overseeing) their evaluation and integration. This being said, we all have the power to make a difference. If actions are kept aligned within the constraints of sustainability and based upon the organizational processes characteristics discussed, we will realize our vision of a sustainable future.


Appendix B: Grace Living Center

About the facility

The Grace Living Center in Jenks, Oklahoma is a nursing home with a unique approach to meeting the needs of its residents and the community. The facility has incorporated a two room school which houses a kindergarten and preschool classroom into the lobby, where roughly 60 students, ages 4 and 5 attend school daily. There are a variety of structured and unstructured programmes where the roughly 110 elderly residents of the facility can get involved and interact with the children to the degree that they see fit (Galley 2002, 30).

The idea came from the owner of the facility owner, Donald Greener, who approached the public school board of Jenks County, and offered to pay for the construction of the classrooms. The school board provides the teachers, equipment, and teaching materials, and leases the rooms from the Grace Living Center (GLC) for $1 per year (Lair 2008). The idea is an extension of a concept developed by Dr. William Thomas in 1992 known as the Eden Alternative where nursing homes are made more vibrant through the introduction of animals, plants, and children (Galley 2002, 28). The idea was to combat the ‘three plagues’ of nursing homes of boredom, loneliness, and helplessness which are common threats to the mental states of people in such facilities.

The students do not just visit the facility; they attend classes there every day. The real benefits come from the interaction between residents and students. More than 70 per cent of the residents interact with the students on a regular basis, and many of them take part in the ‘Reading Buddies’ programme where they spend almost an hour one-on-one with the children, reading to them and listening to them read (Robinson 2007, 20). There are also several other programmes where the children can interact with the ‘Grandmas and Grandpas’ in both semi-structured and unstructured environments. Several times a week, many of the students go around to visit the residents who are unable to make it out to the lobby due to mobility reasons (Galley 2002, 33). The classrooms are very open, and residents can watch the children from outside, or while getting their hair done in the centre’s salon. The children share some of the halls with residents, and the playground was designed to accommodate wheelchairs as well as tricycles.
There is, of course, oversight and control of this interaction. Staff members from the nursing home meet regularly with teachers and school board officials to investigate how the relationship is and is not working, and to adjust structured activities to make the most of these interactions (Galley 2002, 31).

**Benefits**

The concept of merging a nursing home with a kindergarten and preschool has received much praise (Galley 2002, 31, Robinson 2007, 20). The partnership has been showing several significant mutual benefits. Diane Bosworth, Director of Curriculum for the school board describes the residents and students as “gifts for each other” (Galley 2002, 28).

The students have benefited greatly from the individual attention during the reading programme. The school has found that the children have been greatly surpassing students from other schools in reading due to the amount of individual attention that the residents have been able to offer (Robinson 2007, 20). Furthermore, from the constant exposure to elderly people in various states of health, the students have become much more accepting and considerate of people with disabilities and people who are different in other ways. “They know its OK to be different,” says kindergarten teacher Ellen Pongrace (Galley 2002, 32). The exposure to elderly people also gives the students a chance to hear their stories, and learn about what life was like when they were young.

The residents have also benefited greatly from this partnership. To address the ‘three plagues’ of loneliness, boredom, and helplessness, people in nursing homes need companionship, spontaneity, something to care for, respectively. All of which the children seem to be providing (Galley 2002, 30). The high degree of regular interaction by the residents indicates that the vast majority finds it very worthwhile. The residents really enjoy the interaction of the reading programme, and take it very seriously (Lair, 2008). Residents that were formerly sullen and reserved have opened up and talked to children when approached by them (Galley 2002, 32). Their spirits have been lifted, and they are literally living longer, and taking less (anti-depressant) medication (Robinson 2007, 20).
Appendix C: Instituto Elos

About the Institute:

Instituto Elos is a not-for-profit nongovernmental organization (NGO) established in 2000 by a group of architects and urban planners. They are cultivating a new generation of social entrepreneurs that can respond more effectively to social issues (Instituto Elos 2007).

Mission

The organization has a very clear mission which states: “Instituto Elos cultivates a sense of cooperation and citizenship among social entrepreneurs so that they can more effectively utilize the human, material, economic, and institutional resources already available in their communities” (Instituto Elos 2007).

Their business plan for the next three years was just launched and focuses on two main approaches to accomplish this mission. One involves training young entrepreneurs in both social and environmental entrepreneurship and the second involves finding methods and tools to empower communities.

Elos’ Approach

Elos focuses on existing and emerging social entrepreneurs, usually under age 35, which they believe to have the highest potential to quickly translate what they learn into positive social change. The program aims to provide experiences that cultivate abilities, confidence, and empower actions.

To do this, Elos works with individuals to cultivate this engaged cooperative spirit and share tools that can then be used to:

• Engage communities to draw on their cooperative strength.
• Facilitate effective communication to leverage diversity.
• Help people to recover their ability to dream of a better world.
“Effective social entrepreneurs need to be equipped with approaches and tools that help them act together with their communities rather than on their community’s behalf” (Instituto Elos 2007). It is not about advocating an ideology, but rather about creating solutions from within the community. These solutions emphasize collective rather than individual knowledge. Instead of hiring experts that have ready-made solutions, Elos works with the community’s collective wisdom and abilities to generate solutions. These are usually more effective and last longer because the whole community understands and owns them. More importantly, “a cooperative process helps to empower the entire community. To make this cooperation possible, we emphasize tools that facilitate communication so groups can work together effectively.” (Instituto Elos 2007) This works to fulfil the aims of their interventions which are to empower and cultivate the spirit of community and cooperation among community leaders.

Although Elos wants to look for a global change, its actions are local. As they clarify in their business plan, the work with local communities nourishes and allows Elos to practice what they preach. They find their primary opportunity to develop and evolve their methods in developing local activities. In this sense, the founder and president of Elos, Edgard, says that they compare their work to social acupuncture. “The intervention can be small, the reasons it works mysterious, but the resulting impact can be big. Helping to create a uniquely effective group of social entrepreneurs who then infect others can have a global impact” (Instituto Elos 2007).

Elos undertakes four main activities. One of them is the summer programme “School of Warriors Without Weapons” explained below. Another program, “Oasis” is a shorter (two day) version of the previous program. Elos’ other main activities include partnerships with local communities and facilitating workshops for organizations.

*Key Points of Elos’ Activities:*

*Joy* is one key aspect that Elos integrates in all its activities. They want to work with and build up joy because it’s easier to get ‘buy in’ when there’s beauty and joy and pleasantness. Furthermore, people don’t want to be involved in something unpleasant or overly bureaucratic.

Joy is also a main concern for Elos because the approach of urgency and complexity which are commonly used to talk about sustainability tend to be disempowering and overwhelming, resulting in less action. This point of
view is based on the general response of mammals to crisis or dangerous situations. First there is an attempt to flee the situation and not look back. If we cannot escape, the second reaction is to combat, taking on the challenge and try to fend it off. However, if the crisis is clearly unmanageable, the next reaction is paralysis; to shut down and pretend it’s not happening. Evidently we are mainly in the third stage now when it comes to environmental issues, such as climate, or social challenges, explains Edgard.

Therefore, a cornerstone of their philosophy is that, by providing a joyful environment, people will be better able to build and develop. It is by creating safe environments in which something meaningful can be created that the people of the community start to realize that they have the ability to remove barriers and work towards realizing their own needs. They can then create experiences that demonstrate how the boundless energy, joy, and genius of human play can be used to solve problems.

During Elos’ activities, participants are invited to listen to dreams, put pieces together, and create a tangible place to co-create, plan and design with the community. All of these steps are done in form of an invitation to a game, an invitation to play.

The next step is to build something tangible (library, daycare center, or something of the like) which is planned according to the community’s needs. This helps to demonstrate and provide a physical reminder of the power of community. Once the project is complete, there is a celebration, to which all members of community are invited and welcomed, that helps to share the joy of this accomplishment.

School of Warriors Without Weapons

About the Program

The School of Warriors Without Weapons is a bi-annual 30-day experiential learning program run by the Elos Institute that deepens commitment to positive social change. The goal of the program is for participants to return to their communities inspired, armed with effective techniques for working within groups, and a cooperative empowered spirit that they can use to take action in their own communities.
To awaken and cultivate this spirit, the program immerses participants in a local community, such as a favela, inner city ghetto, or traditional fishing community along São Paulo’s coast. Participants work hand-in-hand with the community to plan, design, and build something such as a daycare center or plaza.

**The Project**

Learning at the School of Warriors is based on the encounters between the participants and community members. Participants are not expected to teach or “help” the communities they work in. Instead, participants are asked to arrive with an open mind and heart, ready to face the challenges and difficulties involved in encountering, respecting, and working together with another community.

The **first step** is to sharpen each participant’s ability to use all of their senses to acquire a deeper understanding of the community’s history, dreams, challenges, skills, resources, and arts. They are encouraged to observe and explore the community and its dynamics, and to talk with community members. This helps each participant develop the ability to perceive the beauty that exists in even the most degraded environments.

In the **next phase**, participants develop possible solutions in the community. From a foundation of profound respect for the community, an understanding of the available resources, and the dreams of the community firmly in mind, participants think through what can be created. Using different dialogue and planning activities, participants are encouraged to dream big and think about the necessary steps to realize the community’s dream. Proposed solutions use available resources and local knowledge, so that plans are practical and more likely to have concrete, long-lasting results.

Once designs are developed, **initial plans** are presented to the broader community and then refined. The program climaxes in a **week of action**, during which participants and community members work to mobilize available resources (whether human, material, institutional, or financial) and take action, working cooperatively to build their design together. This is followed by a celebration of the achievement.
The Results

Through this intense encounter, participants become more capable of acting responsibly and respectfully to make change in the world. The experience of genuine dialogue and exchange is essential to finding solutions that are environmentally sustainable, locally sensitive, and that enrich rather than diminish diversity.

Inspired by their experiences, many participants in the School of Warriors go on to use their new resolve, abilities, and confidence to work for positive social change. The School for Warriors is designed to have a similar impact in the local communities that they partner with. During the 30 days something is awakened in them and new community leaders emerge. These individuals begin to take leadership of projects and often start to generate new ones to improve the community’s quality of life.

The projects that are conceived and constructed during the program are an essential part of the methodology. They are an opportunity for participants and community members to work together on a tangible visible improvement. The experience of literally transforming a physical space in a very short time leaves an indelible mark on participants. For the community, these newly constructed spaces serve as a physical reminder that they have the power and ability to create a better future for themselves. One example is a housing construction cooperative that materialized in the slum tenement houses of Santos, Brazil after one of the programs. The community organized around this project and continues to work building housing and creating a real community.
Appendix D: Bessa’s Cabeleireiro

About the Cabeleireiro

‘Bessa’s’ opened in 1992, and has been operating 16 years in the capital city of São Paulo, Brazil. The shop offers a great variety of services, and because of this, has 58 members on its staff. Among these members are hair stylists, manicurists, and hair and manicure assistants, receptionists, car drivers, car washers, and cleaning staff.

History

Bessa’s mission is: “…to surpass the expectations of our clients, ensuring their total satisfaction. Our commitment is to develop Bessa’s reputation for excellence in beauty services and be an organization in which stakeholders have satisfaction and pride in being a part of”.

Bessa’s started as an informal family business operating out of the owner’s living-room, after one year they were able to move into their current location. “At the time we were 16 people already”, said Wilson Bessa, one of the owners, “we used to play guitar while having beer with the clients”. The path towards professionalism was initiated by the suggestion of one client who offered to act as their human resources consultant. This consultation aimed to transform the organization by developing a more professional ambiance and work quality.

After two years, the results were clear. The quality of interpersonal relations in the shop had clearly increased. The consultant helped the employees to become more conscious of their own emotions, difficulties, limitations, and assumptions which helped to improve the quality of the relationships in the shop. These improved relationships worked to create an organization that was appreciated by clients.

10 A Cabeleireiro is a combination of a barbershop and a salon, in addition, Bessa’s offers a car washing service for clients.

11 Bessa’s mission statement as translated by André Benaim
The process continued with another consultant, the focus this time was administration and finances. This helped the organization to dream big, but work within their own resources. It made the organization also realize the importance of the network of support that one needs in order to succeed.

**Principles**

In accomplishing its mission, Bessa’s places great emphasis on the enhancing the quality of interpersonal relationships. The work in the shop is guided by principles which focus on the quality relationships not only between staff members, but also with other stakeholders such as clients and suppliers. The fundamental idea is that having good quality relationships within the business helps to create a common whole that works well together in order to carry out good service.

These principles are:

- Openness and cooperation
- Respect and Mutual Understanding
- Care in the relation with clients
- Encouragement of people’s dreams

To achieve good quality relationships, Bessa’s encourages people to be open and learn from each other. “We suggest for people to give the best of themselves and expect the best from us”, explains the owner, Wilson Bessa.

For this reason one of Bessas’s main suggestions to new employees is that, during the trial period of one month, that their objective not be pleasing the bosses, rather they should focus on establishing good relations with the team and clients. According to Wilson Bessa, the rationale is, if the person only pretends to be cordial and careful and has no interest in getting along with others, it doesn’t take long for this disinterest to become apparent. However, if the person is truly trying, but has difficulties, the team tries to cooperate and integrate the person. Because experienced professionals generally have a pre-established way of doing things, there is a preference for hiring those without much work experience. Without knowing how others perform in the profession, they are more open to the relations-focused culture of Bessa’s.
Respect and mutual understanding are also of great importance within their objective to build quality relationships... In Wilson’s words, “one of our principles is to understand that no one is perfect and we all have limitations.”, and that the challenge, he continues, “is to create a good work environment even with some people who are not compatible”.

Caring for the client is another aspect that is taken as a principle for Bessa’s. “Everyone strongly values care, affection and understanding” when it is genuine and unforced, as a virtue of the organization. They try to keep up this care by also understanding and listening to the clients showing them attention and respect.

The shop also has as principle to provide encouragement of the dreams of its employees. People are supported in developing themselves and progressing in the organization by learning the profession and improving their interpersonal skills. While workers gain satisfaction from their personal development, they also become more motivated in their work.

**Activities**

In order to maintain the quality of its relationships, Bessa´s has modest, but very efficient forms of organization.

One of their few formal procedures is the holding of weekly meetings. Every Friday morning there is one hour staff meeting time. Every other Friday, the members of the staff meet in smaller groups sorted by their category of work, for example, a group of hair dressers, another of manicurists, and so on. This seeks to clarify and address misunderstandings and conflicts among the peers, as well search for new ways of interacting, and generate possible solutions to issues. On the subsequent Friday there is a general meeting. This is focused around a talk and general discussion about the group dynamic and development while linking back to the improvement of the quality of relationships.

The organization takes steps to ensure an enjoyable work environment by placing great importance on celebrations such as staff parties and special events for the mothers’ day and children’s day, two commonly celebrated dates in Brazil. The reason for these principles and procedures is simple, elaborates Wilson, “it is all about increasing the quality of life of our team and of our service”.

111
Appendix E: Ontario Student Nutrition Program

About the Program

The Ontario Student Nutrition Program (SNP) began organically through the initiatives of individual schools and community groups to provide breakfast, lunch, and/or a snack to school children in the province. Formally established in 2000, there are now 2,414 programs that serve over 400,000 students annually. The ultimate aim of the program is that no student in Ontario goes through a school day hungry.

The SNP evolved from the simple idea that children perform better in school when they receive proper nutrition. As shown from research, being hungry affects memory, enhances behaviour problems, and drains energy. At school age, hunger keeps children from making the most of the opportunities to learn and develop their minds; they cannot concentrate on lessons if they are hungry (World Food Programme 2006). Feeding students yields immediate benefits. In one school, the Vice-Principal had an average of 30 students sent to his office because of behavioural issues on any day. The day they implemented their snack program, two students were sent to his office. Two students has remained the average, by providing that healthy extra boost for students, the occurrence of disruption has been reduced by 93 percent. SNPs change the culture of the schools who implement them; behavioural issues are fixed and students are energetic, happier, and able to concentrate (Nikkel 2008).

Administration of the Program

The SNP is an optional program, and while not all schools participate, many do. It is more prevalent in elementary schools, however many secondary schools have adopted it as well. Though it is preferred that the program reach schools where more children are likely to be going to school hungry, the ministry does not dictate in what schools it is implemented.

For its part, the Ontario government provides 15% of the SNP operating costs. This funding is distributed directly to local programs through fifteen lead agencies located across the province (Wilson 2008). Financing is generally used to fund the school’s program coordinator; however, it also
goes towards items such as ovens, freezers, and kitchen storage items (Wilson 2008). To receive funding, the school must demonstrate the intent to have the program and the ability to cover the remaining 85% of the operating costs. Another requirement is that, if the program is available, it is available for every student. This is to eliminate any stigma that may be attached to being a program recipient. As the government only provides a portion of the program’s expenses, it is then up to the school and its community to determine how to manage the rest.

In Toronto, Ontario’s largest city, funding is generally used to pay for a program coordinator. The management of these funds is usually handled by a local group initiated by the school and made up primarily of parents. This group then selects a leader to become the program coordinator. Because most everyone can rally around the cause of feeding their children, the program brings in parents that do not generally come into the school, such as new immigrants, abused women, and those for whom English is a second language. This involvement is empowering, through working with the program, parents learn life skills, build confidence, and are better prepared to find employment (Nikkel 2008).

Different school boards run the program differently: some have a central fundraising group, others rely on a school-by-school basis, and still others rely on a ‘pay what you can’ donation from parents. (Wilson 2008) There is also variance in who is the lead agency for each school. For example, for all schools in their area, the Toronto School Board is the main partner; however, it could also be a local restaurant, community group, or church. This decentralized program model better responds to local needs and provides healthier food to more students.

Recognizing the success and numerous benefits the SNP was having within schools and for the community at large, in 2007 the Ontario government increased its annual contribution to the program from $4.5 million to $8.5 million. This near doubling of funds is intended to help the program reach even more students across the province.
## Appendix F: Experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georges Dyer</td>
<td>StratLeade, Treasurer and Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetty Einzig</td>
<td>Senior Consultant, Performance Consultants International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina Hauser</td>
<td>Executive Director, Oregon Natural Step Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannes Fruehmann</td>
<td>Researcher, Sustainable Europe Research Institute (SERI) Vienna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Manoocheheri</td>
<td>Sustainability Designer, Resource Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone Ramounoulou</td>
<td>Executive Director, WHH-TNS Brasil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>