

This paper has been prepared by Judith Morrison, a PhD Candidate and Honorary Research Associate, Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Murdoch University. It is in part a response to comments by Dr. Thomas Brinsmead with respect to "the value of supporting educational initiatives to promote a scientifically literate and critical general public." (Brinsmead 2005: 175)

Many of the contributions to this forum confirm that the term 'integration' is widely used within and beyond the scientific community, often to imply a need for unity, coherence and cohesion in our endeavours to sustain the world's inter-relating social and environmental systems. This paper will begin by sketching some applications of the term 'integration' in different bodies of scientific knowledge in order to suggest how this influences and alters its meaning. The next section will suggest that, to constructively address institutional and other barriers to integrated sustainability assessment practice, it is worth asking why there is so little interest in contemporary peace and conflict studies in Australian teaching and learning institutions. Reasons are put forward as to why this field of research is virtually untapped in scientific discourse relating to the assessment of social and environmental conflicts in an Australian context. It goes on to suggest that a greater interest in this field could increase capacity to scope and frame ideas about sustainability, particularly when discourse about 'integration' has to be appreciated in relation to its antithesis, 'disintegration'.

It is posed that there are many instances where it can be both realistic and productive to theoretically define sustainability in terms of intractable conflict. In this way we can more constructively confront the idea that sustainability involves competing and contradictory interpretations of how we are to meet social environmental needs both in the present and the future. Two reasons are put forward as to why we should look to developments in contemporary peace and conflict studies. The first is that scholars in this field have been required to develop innovative theoretical frameworks to do with problem-identification. Secondly, we can appreciate from contemporary applied research about peace and conflict, an area of study somewhat distinguishable from peace philosophies, how to theoretically describe and evaluate strategies through which diverse groups attempt to collaborate and hopefully come up with integrated, sustainable solutions to problems that some perceive to be virtually unresolvable.

This preliminary discussion establishes the basis for introducing the main theme. As indicated it is in part a response to the following comments by Dr. Thomas Brinsmead when revisiting the Blueprint prepared by Dr. Graeme Pearman and others:

"The blueprint also recommends the value of supporting educational initiatives to promote a scientifically literate and critical general public. This report shows it may also be profitable to promote a values literate and communication literate scientific community. For the conduct of science in general, but integrated sustainability assessment in particular, it may be useful to support educational initiatives to promote skills among scientists to identify the values guiding their choices in the conduct of the design of an integrated assessment, and an ability to make appropriate trade-offs. Furthermore given the relevance of stakeholder involvement in context management, the multidisciplinary nature of integrated assessment, and the relatively informal processes where much of the relevant integration takes place, communication skills are clearly required, even as a necessary foundation to implement some of the many participatory methods in integrated assessment that are available and being developed." (Brinsmead 2005: 175)

I will discuss, as a case study, my own innovative and unique application of peace and conflict studies. Discussion will trace theoretical and practical considerations that are relevant to the development of a course I have had nationally accredited through the vocational and educational training sector. The course is entitled *Certificate IV in Preparing for Negotiation: Devising Sustainable Processes to Promote Sustainable Outcomes*. It has been developed to assist parties prepare to voluntarily participate in innovative decision-making processes. Theoretical developments in conflict transformation are identified in relation to other areas of conflict management research and explanation is offered as to why these ideas underpin the espoused purpose of this particular kind of education. The goal of the course is to provide prospective participants in negotiation with an informed basis for constructively reviewing their

understanding of what sustainability means from their own particular perspective, and how this is likely to influence their strategic thinking about optional processes of decision-making or problem-solving as the means through which to bring about the most durable and sustainable outcomes.

The paper concludes by suggesting that in its own right this type of education serves a useful educative role. As an adult education program it promotes and disseminates ideas about the general concept of sustainability as well as the challenges associated with how, as individuals, we might play a role in forging 'sustainable decision-making processes' and 'sustainable relationships'. However, I put forward that this type of education can serve an equally useful purpose if, through a scholar-practitioner nexus, an action research methodology runs alongside course delivery. I suggest that such an approach could make a valid contribution to our capacity to make sustainability assessments. It would allow for a fruitful integration of ideas about sustainability generated through the adult learning sector and ideas generated through higher level academic research.

Knowledge Bases Where the Term 'Integration' has Significance

Expressions of concern as to whether we are forging a sustainable future often come from scholars who develop their expertise through knowledge derived and legitimated within the natural sciences. Their authoritative contributions are vital to help us identify and interpret specific substantive problems. The term 'integration' applied in the natural sciences often represents the way scientific data is brought together to provide a coherent understanding of a specific problem so there is an informed basis for considering potential solutions. There is not necessarily a presumption that scientists with this expertise have simultaneously also acquired knowledge to speak authoritatively about the appropriateness of decision-making processes which ultimately will have to factor into deliberations both scientific and non-scientific ideas and information in relation to one another.

Expressions of concern about environmental integrity and social justice often come from social scientists whose expertise relates to social processes, including decision-making processes. When the emphasis is on our formal legal and legislative processes based on precedent, our knowledge is usually derived through schools of law and social policy. The term 'integration' in this context generally relates to our appreciation of the coherence of actual processes themselves, and their capacity to take account of and deal with a range of relevant values, interests, needs and positions. Inevitably, the way we understand the usage of our formal determinative decision-making processes is continually influenced by events and ideas studied through a diversity of schools within the social sciences. These contributions suggest another use of the term 'integration', the need to understand our formal decision-making processes in context, given that they are continually influenced by our ongoing processes of social interaction. Thus many schools within the social sciences contribute to the body of knowledge about the relationship between formal and less formal interactions and processes of decision-making that are integral to normal social living.

This paper is primarily concerned with the emergent body of knowledge about relatively informal participatory processes of decision-making and problem-solving that often serve to complement our formal systems of governance. The particular focus is on processes of cross-sectoral and cross-cultural consultation and negotiation which have to be tailored to suit very specific sets of circumstances to deal with sustainability issues in an innovative way. This knowledge base can be most clearly identified with respect to decision-making in the emergent field of deliberative democracy, while with respect to problem-solving processes there is often recourse to ideas generated primarily through ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution), even though ADR represents only one aspect of the broader field of peace and conflict studies. Two other significant areas are conflict resolution or conflict transformation. The following section suggests that even though studies in the broad field of peace and conflict research have to take account of a wide range of scenarios where conflicts prevail, ADR is the preferred aspect of this field which is applied in an Australian context.

The Relatively Limited Application of Contemporary Peace and Conflict Studies in Australia

Given the relative cohesiveness of our nation-state, social scientists who study political and social realities particular to the Australian context are less inclined to make contrasts so that 'social integration' is correlated with its antithesis, a state of affairs where there is actual, or at least the potential for, serious 'social disintegration'. We are, however, more obliged to think along these lines when discussing the sustainability of our global social and environmental systems. It is at this broader level where we are confronted with more discomfiting, negative social trends that suggest the world community is not moving toward a sustainable future. Millions of people are directly or indirectly affected by ongoing all-out warfare, while in many circumstances hostile conflict simmers but does not necessarily lead to total social disintegration. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports that in 2003 there were 19 major armed conflicts in 18 locations. In the 14-year post-cold war period, there have been 59 different major armed conflicts in 48 different locations (SIPRI Yearbook 2004: 6; see also Marshall & Gurr's report: *Peace and Conflict 2003*).

As globalisation and looming sustainability problems increasingly require us to think globally and act locally, our strategic assessment methodologies will have to take account of the prospect that unabated conflicts can and often do become unmanageable (UNDP: 1998). This suggests it is in the interests of even well-regulated countries to study the potentially different ways that societies can deal with conflict. Yet contemporary peace and conflict studies are offered in a relatively limited way at all levels in educational curricula in Australia, and in many other developed nation-states.

I suggest that one explanation as to why our teaching and learning institutions do not tend toward a more global perspective when considering the phenomenon of social and environmental conflict, and how we might deal with it, can be traced to ideas put forward by both Dovers and Booth in papers in this forum. Both draw attention to a distinction between what Funtowicz and Ravetz (1991) describe as 'normal science' and 'post-normal science' and suggest that we need both types if we are to constructively address issues of uncertainty, risk and change. Dovers, in his paper *Policy Assessment for Sustainability: Institutional Issues and Options*, raises the question as to whether we can predict the impact of current and proposed policy directions with sufficient clarity to make a difference, or whether we can only be wise with hindsight. He indicates we must look to the role of different knowledge systems, scientific disciplines, modes of inquiry and burdens of proof. With respect to the problem of predictability, he goes on to say:

Discussions of risk, the precautionary principle and decision making in the face of uncertainty suggest we cannot rely solely on the resolving power of reductionist, quantitative science. This issue is even more important for assessment of broad policy approaches. The most detailed policy assessment will produce uncertain findings. The nature of the questions asked will require a range of inputs into the assessment; these include natural science, social science, community opinion, and traditional knowledge. It will be necessary to apply what Funtowicz and Ravetz (1991) refer to as 'post-normal science', to be utilised under conditions of high uncertainty but potentially significant impacts, requiring engagement of 'extended peer communities' to frame questions and interpret the significance of the findings. Moreover, values and political judgment will always play a major role in final decisions, along with scientific assessments. (Dovers: p. 7)

A great deal of social science research in Australia is understandably inclined toward normative or functionalist approaches. There is a tendency for this to be the case with respect to the topic of community engagement in participatory processes of decision-making and problem-solving to ensure an ongoing healthy and harmonious functioning of society (Dietz, Webler and Renn: 1995, Pruitt: 1993; Carpenter: 1988; Bingham: 1996). The emphasis is understandable, given that a primary role of our teaching and learning institutions is to develop students' knowledge and skills so that they will be recognised as having attained particular expertise that can immediately be put to good use. However, a recurring theme with respect to my topic, that of innovative processes of decision-making or problem-solving, is to pose the question: what qualifications and work experience establish who is appropriately informed and competent to organise, facilitate or mediate them?

This forum has been established as a project to encourage academic discourse which generates and disseminates ideas and knowledge aimed at improving our capacity to make assessments about sustainability. All offerings are expected to relate to the prescribed purpose of examining "Australian attempts to develop methodologies for sustainable development that simultaneously reflect environmental, economic, social, and inter-generational outcomes, to identify commonalities, and to recommend "best practice" as a guide for further research and application work" (Brinsmead, 2005: 10). Therefore in part its purpose has to do with developing appropriate expertise so that our systems of governance are better equipped to use the power endowed to them to better 'manage' through policy the contradictions and conflicts posed by sustainability issues. For example, the website of the Office of Sustainability within the SA Government's Department for Environment and Heritage, describes sustainability assessment in the following terms:

"Sustainability assessment is a process to enable policy makers to integrate their decision making on projects, plans, policies and programs so that they are consistent with sustainability principles" (Office of Sustainability Website).

It is worth considering how the purpose of developing methodologies for sustainable development ties in with the way applied conflict studies are offered in Australian teaching and learning institutions, and the extent to which there is a tendency to emphasise the functionalist aspect of conflict research. University programs are generally geared toward providing training in ADR (see Acland: 1990; Brown & Marriott: 1993; Charlton & Dewdney: 1995). The purpose of education is to ensure that mediators attain appropriate expertise in order that they can assist protagonists deal constructively with issues in dispute. That these educational programs are geared toward maintaining the functionality of processes of 'management' is evidenced by the degree to which research programs are actively supported by the legal profession and the judiciary itself through institutions such as the National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council based in the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department (NADRAC: 2003). 'Alternative' in the context of ADR implies that its processes involve a neutral third party mediating between parties who have to deal with some degree of dysfunctionality or contradiction. They undertake ADR rather than them pursuing their claims through formal court processes where the third party fulfils a judicial role. One reason ADR is so well supported and promoted is that it maintains a focus on constructively shaping or re-shaping present relationships and future possibilities, whereas traditional legal processes are primarily concerned with determining past facts, and determining what is right and wrong according to laws governed by established precedent.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that to 'manage' our complex social and environmental systems we will often have to resort to consensual 'resolutionary' processes of decision-making and problem-solving. They represent the alternative to competitive or adversarial win-lose processes as a means to address community and broader public problems, many of which can be defined as sustainability issues. With the current pace and extent of change, we are increasingly forced to accept that formal legal determinations or political decisions on their own may not necessarily translate into fair, efficient and sustainable outcomes in practice, or be sufficient to bring about sustainable social change. The workability of outcomes often depends as much on capacity to first identify and integrate the diverse aspects of complex problems as it is on collaborating for the purpose of actually addressing them (see Bingham: 1997).

An idea which is integral to my topic is that when parties engage directly and voluntarily with each other rather than indirectly through lawyers or advocates, as is more usual in mandatory processes, the onus will be on participants themselves to establish or at least accept the ground rules and procedural guidelines as suitable for their circumstances, so they can factor into the process scope for innovation and new possibilities. Theoretically, through power-sharing in a deliberative process the parties can all concertedly contribute to formulating the final decisions as an alternative to having them determined and imposed by a third party. This suggests that alongside the requirement to understand the substantive facts underlying sustainability problems, there is equally a requirement to develop theory and practice to attribute meaning to the complementarity between our formal systems of governance and

innovative processes through which diverse parties identify and deal collaboratively with sustainability as a common concern.

The Case Study

My post-graduate research, which included my participation in and reporting on an extensive statewide consultative process with native title claimant groups throughout South Australia in 2000 (Morrison 2001), has sought to integrate ideas derived through peace and conflict studies with sustainability research. An outcome of this research is the development of the capacity-building course *Certificate IV in Preparing for Negotiation: Devising Sustainable Processes to Promote Sustainable Outcomes*. Prior discussion has highlighted some key differences between the characteristics of formal and informal processes for addressing contradiction and conflict so as to establish that the primary focus is on the latter type of process. As a case study, some underpinning theoretical and practical considerations to do with the development of my course are discussed to demonstrate how they are relevant to the way practical outcomes of peace and conflict studies can make a significant contribution to sustainability assessments.

Theoretical Ideas Underpinning Course Development

One way of establishing this relevance requires us to turn again to the prescribed purpose of this forum, the generation and dissemination of ideas and knowledge to improve capacity to make assessments about sustainability. The quotation cited above from the SA Government's website suggests that "best practice" is mostly to do with the way sustainability assessments are developed by policy makers.

However, as a guide for further research, I pose that peace and conflict studies can offer useful theoretical frameworks through which to critically and constructively reflect on the matter of who we assume should be deciding and administering "best practice", and whose expertise we look to, when circumstances indicate that communities are confronted with serious risk, uncertainty and change. Contemporary conflict studies suggest it is neither esoteric or trivial to review understandings as to who is qualified to decide on "best practice" when there is a need to assess the workability and legitimacy of innovative, unprecedented problem-solving processes that are entered into by diverse parties.

In well-regulated societies the differences between formal and informal processes can seem far less critical, given that both can be employed in a relatively seamless and complementary way. It is more often when the stakes of an unresolved social or environmental conflict escalate that different parties' interests and positions create a polarisation between formal and informal strategies for dealing with risk and uncertainty and they become more divergent in relation to one another (see Curle: 1986). However, for the purposes of the present discussion, the primary focus is on the usefulness of 'resolutionary' processes in an Australian context as a means for proactively resolving conflicts before they begin to significantly escalate. In this case, the use of 'resolutionary' processes is indicative of the extent to which parties are able to voluntarily commit to sharing power for the purpose of working concertedly through their differences and arriving at a mutually satisfactory, sustainable solution.

With respect to the issue of sustainability assessments in this context, I pose the question: what type of education endows people with particular expertise to participate in, and make informed assessments about, innovative processes of problem-solving, and their outcomes?

I pose this question to suggest we must critically review the issue of appropriate expertise. As the phenomenon of sustainability comes more to be seen as our common problem, we will increasingly need to be able to discern whether the expertise required to make assessments about the sustainable functioning of our present systems of governance, and established means through which problems are dealt with, is actually the same as the expertise required to make assessments about innovative and unprecedented processes of problem-solving? If such processes actually represent a voluntary sharing of power for the purpose of arriving at a mutually-agreeable sustainable outcome, then a diversity of parties may need access to

some form of education which builds their capacity to actually make an informed assessment of the way such processes are put into practice (Lederach: 1994a, 1994b).

One of the purposes of my course is to generate and disseminate knowledge through our adult education system which has the potential to increase the capacity of people from different walks of life to play a role in concertedly 'managing' the contradictions and conflicts that will increasingly be posed by sustainability issues, including capacity to make assessments about processes of engagement. The rationale behind its development is that increasingly we should be deriving our ideas about strategies to deal with significant conflict from theoretical developments that come from further afield, situations where degrees of instability or dysfunctionality suggest a requirement for 'post-normal science' (see Mason: 2003; Ury 1999). To assess the capacity of our decision-making and problem-solving processes to address and resolve sustainability issues, it is unlikely we can place sole reliance on knowledge generated through 'normal science' that tends to emphasise functionality. Even though a well-functioning society is what we aspire to maintain, it is evident when we take a global view that some sustainability issues will increasingly require us to step outside of conventional discourse and assess in the most constructive way what we understand is actually posing the most significant threats to stability.

Previously I have suggested that the primary application of peace and conflict research in Australia is the advancement of ADR. Its theoretical frameworks are often sufficient to educate and develop the expertise of third parties who can assist protagonists resolve social and environmental problems through a mediating role. However, that it is inclined to reflect only 'normal science' can be gauged by the extent to which this field of education is supported by the status quo. ADR can often be perceived as a useful alternative, or adjunct, to other more formal processes of decision-making and problem-solving (see Harrington, 1982 for an historical analysis of applications of ADR in the US to deal with community justice issues). Even though mediators can step in and help protagonists work through their contentious issues collaboratively in an attempt to find sustainable solutions, it is often the case that this only happens if, firstly, some person or institutional body actually decides that an informal participatory process is preferable to a mandatory process and, secondly, they have sufficient power to authorise and fund it. It is this issue which has led me to ask: when this type of assistance is not forthcoming, where does this leave those who have to engage in consultations or negotiations dealing with highly contentious issues? Where can they acquire knowledge and skills which might help them participate constructively and make assessments as to the appropriateness and fairness of the process even when there is no mediator who can provide this kind of assistance?

ADR represents only one field within the broader body of knowledge comprising applied peace and conflict studies. It is when we look at the emergent fields of contemporary conflict resolution (see Burton: 1990,1996, Deutsch: 2000, Rothman: 1997, Schellenberg: 1996) and conflict transformation (see Miall: 2003, Lederach: 1995, Reimann: 2000, International Alert 1995), that we can identify approaches that are more akin to 'post-normal science'. Scholars in this field have had to develop innovative theoretical frameworks for scoping and framing what some perceive to be intractable social and environmental conflicts, the component of theory relating most particularly to problem-identification. Here the term 'integration' is more concerned with theoretical capacity to deal with the issue of bias so that simultaneously competing interpretations of reality can be represented, including realities people want and aspire to replicate in future, as well as those they wish to avoid. Their contributions to social science theory are more radical because they often work in circumstances where serious 'cultures of non-cooperation' prevail. The circumstances in which theoretical understandings about problems are generated often challenge more taken-for-granted parameters, such as national boundaries, social norms or cultural affiliations. When scholars work as practitioners to assist people deal with conflict in circumstances that are chaotic and profoundly dysfunctional they are also dealing with the component of theory relating to problem-solving. In either case, a factor which makes their scholarship more akin to 'post-normal science' is that it emerges through a scholar-practitioner nexus (see Kelman: 1992; Reimann: 2000). When scholars practice as mediators and advisers in zones where there is intense acrimony and violence, they are required to continually review and critique their own, and protagonists', ideas about functionality and dysfunctionality, given that both elements can be perceived as

being either the cause of or the outcome of unabated social and environmental conflict (see Woodhouse: 1991).

There is a complementarity between the body of knowledge through which mediators develop their expertise and abilities and that required to offer the type of education provided through my course. There are parallels, in the first place, about the need for commitment to abide by certain consistent underlying principles, particularly that of neutrality, when assisting protagonists involved in conflict. A mediator's role is to help the parties identify impediments to agreement and incrementally move through a process of re-framing their ideas so they can consider possible settlements and solutions they could live with. The facilitation and training role to deliver my course can only be accorded legitimacy if practitioners demonstrate they also abide by certain principles, such as commitment to neutrality. Their role is to offer assistance through facilitation and training in a non-partisan way, geared toward empowering clients to be better prepared to directly participate in negotiation, rather than being absolutely reliant on third parties to represent their interests or speak on their behalf. However, there is a second parallel. A basis for people to take these respective roles to be legitimate, and distinguishable from other assisting roles, is recognition that the practitioner has, besides commitment to certain principles, knowledge based on an understanding of relevant theory about 'resolutionary' processes.

It is in the realm of theory where the knowledge and skills required to deliver my course can most clearly be seen to differ from those of an ADR mediator. To illustrate this point, below I set out my interpretation of certain significant theoretical distinctions between three different 'resolutionary' processes:

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) :

- ADR processes tend to be applied as a means to bring about the resolution of disputes which disrupt social cohesion and social norms within a society.
- The processes are often promoted as either an adjunct to or as an alternative to formal judicial procedures of a court or similar institution which would bring about a determinative settlement of the issues in conflict.
- The processes are mostly undertaken in an attempt to reach a compromise or settlement before resorting to having contentious issues adjudicated by a third party or determined according to prescribed rules.
- There is an underlying assumption that outcomes should be capable of being ratified or legitimated in accordance with rules governing the more formal institutions of the society.
- A further underlying assumption is that if a mutually agreeable outcome is not reached by those directly involved, the parties would recognise the knowledge and authority of more formal institutions, and their legitimacy to be the final arbiter.

Conflict Resolution :

- Conflict Resolution processes are often applied as a means to bring about the resolution of apparently incompatible issues which not only disrupt social cohesion but give rise to uncertainty which calls into question the legitimacy and capacity of taken-for-granted formal institutions to address the issues appropriately, and thus it prompts a review of accepted social norms and behaviour patterns as the basis for settlements.
- There is conflict relating to specific substantive issues, but there is also conflict relating to the capacity, appropriateness and legitimacy of the conservative prescriptive processes of the status quo.
- There is intransigence because established conservative institutions assert the right to force or impose a settlement according to past precedents and pre-existing social norms.
- An intermediary intervenes to assist the parties voluntarily undertake concerted analysis of the issues at stake and consider optional means for addressing them and therefore optional directions of change.
- There is a tendency for the involved groups to each have a relatively explicit understanding of their interests and goals that accord with their own perspective of the apparently incompatible issues. Thus the intermediary must attempt to develop through re-framing a more integrated description of the issues at stake, which would be the basis for attempting to resolve them.
- There is a tendency for the involved groups to each have a relatively definitive vision of what they hope to achieve, and the intermediary's role is to encourage the parties to

determine in what way their goals are incompatible with those of other groups, and to work toward problem-solving on the basis of interests that they may have in common, and a direction of change which they could commonly envision and live with.

Conflict Transformation :

- Conflict Transformation processes are most often applied in circumstances where the causes of conflicts are deep-seated, complex and difficult to articulate.
- The conflicts usually relate to protracted ideological differences which affect personal and group identity and stereotypical images dominate groups' perceptions of each other.
- The characteristics of the conflict inhibit groups from understanding each other's interests and values and thus why they have different goals, and this indicates that the conflict cannot necessarily be wholly articulated and understood.
- There is a tendency for its protracted and complex characteristics to inhibit the groups involved from developing clear visions of relatively realisable goals.
- A 'resolutionary' process on its own would be unlikely to resolve the issues at stake. The conflict is so deep-seated it could actually require a transformation of social norms that maintain competitive or adversarial behaviour patterns through which the involved groups express their values and their interests to one another and about one another.
- A 'resolutionary' process would need to be preceded by intervention in the form of social support to articulate the social change being sought, on the understanding that this may possibly only be realised incrementally in stages. The purpose of support would be to encourage review of present relationships and exploration of ways to institute new patterns of interactive behaviour.
- 'Resolutionary' process could follow on from preceding stages, which would include:
 - *education* applied in its broadest conceptual sense, the development of a more conscious awareness and capacity to reflect on the prospect of social change at personal and social levels
 - an *advocacy* role to assist groups heighten their own explicit awareness of the conflict and strategies through which it could be addressed, and ultimately
 - 'resolutionary' processes of mediation or negotiation.

An appreciation of the differences in these approaches in relation to one another is likely to foster greater theoretical discernment when assessing what is likely to be the most appropriate 'resolutionary' process to apply in a given set of circumstances. Comparison enhances theoretical capacity to take account of the scale and the characteristics of particular problems and the scale at which it is possible to seek resolutions. Capacity to discern the specific characteristics of different problem-solving processes can usefully highlight that a mediated or unmediated negotiation process that is appropriate for one set of circumstances may not necessarily be appropriate for another without the development of some pre-engagement capacity-building to participate (See Curle, 1990, Fisher: 1989, Saunders:1985). However, as well as the need to make comparisons, such as the above, between different 'resolutionary' processes, all ultimately have to be appreciated in terms of their potential for complementarity with more formal processes. These comparisons are highlighted in my course, in part to prompt people to reflect on and make informed decisions as to why a consensual collaborative process may be preferable to recourse to a process that enforces a settlement through legislative or legal determinations. The comparisons can also encourage people to reflect on whether recourse to enforcement might carry the risk of challenges or resistance to an imposed settlement by parties dissatisfied with the way decisions were reached, and in doing so sideline interest away from the core issue of whether outcomes will be sustainable. (see Axelrod: 1990).

My course, based on the theoretical principles of conflict transformation, is best offered to parties when they have the most need, that is, prior to them engaging directly with one another. This is particularly crucial when there is a sense that they are dealing with a sustainability issue which bears the hallmarks of intractable conflict (Azar: 1991; Kriesberg, 1989, International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict, University of Colorado 1998) and that, without a concerted effort to alleviate it, the stakes will inevitably get higher. It is at this point where people can most constructively confront the prospect of whether they can work collaboratively to find solutions.

There are two key ideas that I have taken into consideration when thinking about how, as a scholar concerned with sustainability in an Australian context, I could draw from and apply this body of scientific knowledge in an innovative and relatively unique way. In the first place, the significance of the concept of peace in an Australian context may be construed by many to be somewhat extrinsic. Yet if the concept of peace implies a state of affairs where people's actual realisations are increasingly being brought closer to their potential realisations in ways that are not unduly influenced by excessive force or violence, it is a concept which has relevance for every society. Many Australians may not immediately see that this way of applying 'post-normal science' derived through conflict transformation theory is immediately relevant to their own circumstances. However, the point of this article is to suggest that even though the theoretical ideas themselves, which underpin my course, get scant recognition within our teaching and learning institutions, they have immediate relevance to research relating to sustainability. They are particularly useful for framing and promoting peace as intrinsic in the concept of sustainability, and for framing its antithesis, physical or structural violence, as likely to lead to situations that are more unsustainable. Tapping into these studies can foster us to think globally and act locally when we are discussing 'sustainable decision-making processes' and 'sustainable relationships'. Sustainability, like peace, in part implies the ideal of meeting fundamental needs so that people, and other entities in our ecosystem, can actualise their potential realisations both in the present and in the future.

A second idea follows on. If we are to generate knowledge which helps us to assess whether our decision-making processes and our ongoing social relationships are sustainable or unsustainable, we must consider how this can be advanced at *all* levels within our education systems. I have cited my course as a case study, representing it as one way through which to generate and disseminate knowledge which can help us move beyond complacency or cynicism and constructively assess what is likely to be the more appropriate decision-making or problem-solving process for particular scenarios. People's capacity to assess the workability of processes they can voluntarily enter into can only evolve if opportunities are made available through adult learning programs, offered when people are most in need. This means that the theoretical ideas can have immediate practical relevance and usefulness among the network of people representing or working for government, those who represent business interests or local community interests who increasingly will be required to engage in discourse about sustainability.

Practical Aspects of Course Development

In Australia, the concept of sustainability is becoming increasingly relevant to strategic planning and assessments, irrespective of whether projects relate to the management of natural resources, the management of built environments or the provision of services to communities. There is a growing expectation of 'triple-bottom-line accountability so that the economic, social and environmental dimensions of projects are dealt with in an integrated way.

We are increasingly coming to realise that we may not be able to rely solely on our formal mandatory processes to achieve durable and sustainable solutions to complex social and environmental problems. More often people from different walks of life have to come together and voluntarily enter into participatory processes and collectively make decisions or resolve problems. Alongside a growing appreciation of the way innovative unprecedented processes are complementing our more formal systems of governance, we are growing increasingly more conscious of the risk that flawed processes lead to flawed agreements. Many attempts to reach consensus between planners working in the government sector, the business sector and the community founder and collapse because participants are unable to sustain the dialogue required to work through their differences. Groups who cannot work through issues because of personal animosities and poor communications often find themselves at an impasse, which paralyses capacity to work constructively through contentious issues (Susskind: 1987).

I sought to have my course endorsed and accredited through the vocational and educational training (VET) sector for four key reasons. Firstly, accreditation in the VET sector means that the course can be delivered anywhere in Australia with certification awarded through a

registered training organisation. Secondly, accreditation increases the likelihood that training costs can be supported through federal or state government funding or grants through other sources. Thus it opens the potential for a wider range of people to have access to training. Thirdly, there is an implication that the training has a practical 'on the job' purpose. In this case, the purpose is to prepare people to participate in innovative consultations, negotiations, or other processes promoting constructive rather than adversarial approaches to problem-solving. Fourthly, a qualification can be attained which provides formal recognition that recipients have sought to extend their own social knowledge. It is a way of recognising they have acquired specific knowledge, skills and capacities in order that they can make more informed decisions as to what might be required to voluntarily and constructively participate in less formal decision-making or problem-solving processes, and whether they can commit to taking collaborative consensual approach in the process.

The course is founded on the idea that willingness to commit to collaborative dialogue usually requires a lot more than good will between parties. In fact, when contention threatens to further erode goodwill between parties, it becomes even more vital that people have access to educational training that develops their awareness of the challenges associated with committing to collaborative consensual decision-making. Training in the pre-engagement stage is useful because any process that seeks to be innovative will actually require participating parties themselves to assume certain direct responsibilities and assert certain rights. They will have to decide who should participate, the kind of information that needs to be brought forward, and what procedures might best ensure that the process is fair, equitable and productive and hopefully averts the risk of poor communications and misunderstandings escalating into personal feuds or conflicts (Adler & Birkhoff: 2002)

My course highlights that negotiators dealing with complex planning and decision-making need more than natural, intuitive ability. They need specialised training and skills to anticipate and hopefully avoid, some of the communication traps that can undermine collaborative decision-making or problem-solving. Training can build participants' capacity to assess whether innovative participatory decision-making processes are working effectively and, if not, how they might get back on track.

The accredited training offered through my course allows people to attain a qualification verifying that, as prospective negotiators, they:

- have acquired a sound general understanding of the emergent principles and ethos of sustainability.
- appreciate sustainability actually implies contradiction, and that it involves people holding profoundly competing ideas about the way we are to satisfactorily meet social and environmental needs both now and in the future.
- are equipped with a good understanding of optional strategic means through which people might settle or resolve problems and conflicts. They are equipped to appreciate the complementarity between mandatory legal or legislative processes based on precedent and innovative participatory processes of consultation and negotiation tailored to involve a range of parties to deal with issues in one particular set of circumstances.
- they are better equipped to predict the personal stresses associated with multi-party decision-making, and can make informed suggestions as to how people might cope with them.
- have gained insights that help them to anticipate how they could engage most constructively, and how they could respond if and when problems surface once consultations or negotiations get under way.

Certification highlights that:

- a great deal of knowledge and understanding to cope constructively with uncertainty and change cannot necessarily be anticipated or learnt or in advance. Nevertheless, people who have to participate in consultations and negotiations who take this course acquire useful knowledge when it is most critically needed, that is, when they are actually considering and dealing with real-life situations of contention or transition.
- cross-sectoral and cross-cultural consultations and negotiations require knowledge and skills beyond those required for day-to-day engagement within one particular sector or within one particular cultural context.

- clients have committed time and effort to extend their knowledge and prepare, both practically and psychologically, for decision-making where people's cultural and lifestyle differences suggest there will be competing values, interests, objectives, hopes and fears to take into account and people will be approaching the substantive issues from profoundly different perspectives.
- clients are likely to be better negotiators because they are better placed to predict many of the barriers to taking a collaborative approach, and appreciate what can be required to develop and maintain a fair and equitable process and an atmosphere of trust and conciliation.

The course equips people with knowledge and skills to address some of the following 'process' problems:

- Plan how to manage information flows so as to avoid 'overload paralysis', particularly when contentious issues involve unfamiliar concepts which might be challenging for some people to grasp.
- Fully address that sustainability issues are complex and usually involve a wide range of groups, organisations and bureaucracies who can be either directly involved in decision-making or ultimately influenced by the outcomes.
- Plan how to set agendas and establish procedural guidelines that ensure processes take account of different groups' perceptions of proposals for change or problems to be resolved.
- Scope problems so that they are represented as more than simply a matter of getting through bureaucratic red tape.
- Assess whether goals and expectations are realistic - What's 'solvable'? What isn't? - and how such assessments affect the attitudes of those involved in the process.
- Assess whether all the parties are willing and able to commit to a collaborative consensus-building approach, or whether some will still be inclined toward a more hardline competitive approach. This issue influences their approach to matters of disclosure.
- Assess what negotiators might do to smooth the path to consensus, or at least how key individuals can keep the lines of constructive dialogue open.
- Assess when and why different stakeholders may need access to certain types of advice and advocacy.
- Assess whether parties are willing to give sufficient time and attention to comprehensively identifying the problems before they begin to look for solutions, thus alleviating the problem of parties talking at cross-purposes.
- Assess the extent to which the parties place a high value on their quality of future relationships and how this is likely to influence their ongoing attitudes and commitment to support sustainable development.
- Contribute to definitively expressing the 'criteria of success' of an innovative participatory process, particularly those aspects that have to be evaluated in terms of parties' capacity to bring about consensual, durable and sustainable agreements.
- Assess whether the process will ultimately be validated as having been fair and legitimate.

Could an Academic Research Component Run Alongside Course Delivery?

I have outlined the above ideas relating to my course to demonstrate that it can serve a practical and useful purpose but that this purpose can only be perceived to be legitimate, and delivered to good effect, when it is evident that the expertise of the practitioner/trainer is based on a sound understanding of relevant theoretical principles. It is conflict transformation theory that primarily informs the way that this type of training can be offered to prospective participants in participatory processes of decision-making and problem-solving through adult education programs. I have also sought to indicate that although I have tailored the underpinning ideas primarily to suit Australian conditions, they are derived from conflict studies undertaken in circumstances that require 'post-normal science' than 'normal science'.

If it is evident that appropriate delivery of the course itself requires a meaningful scholar-practitioner nexus, it is then feasible to make a case that this kind of training could also make

a potentially useful and valid contribution to research relating to sustainability assessments through an action research methodology (see Anderson: 2003; Rothman: 1997; Schön: 1983). It is the scholar-practitioner nexus that is the key concept for suggesting that there is potential for a research component to run alongside course delivery so that assessments and evaluations can be made about the outcomes of training. This would primarily be in terms of its influence on our understanding of and capacity to make assessments about 'sustainable decision-making processes'.

An action research methodology would provide the means for making two quite distinct types of assessments and evaluations. In the first place, it could provide insights signifying the extent to which course participants themselves derive beneficial knowledge and skills relating to innovative participatory processes which they could not access in a timely way through other means. However, even though the course primarily emphasises 'process' issues, the matter of *how* to constructively participate in more informal deliberative processes, it is as likely that an action research methodology could also provide insights to indicate how people are presently gaining access to information about specific substantive issues, which is more to do with *what* matters are being decided on. With respect to both types of knowledge, researchers could make more informed assessments about present capacity, or shortfalls in capacity, to access useful information when it is most vitally needed, when parties have to deal with particular issues that could be perceived to be an aspect of an intractable sustainability issue. More informed assessments could be made as to how else, apart from this kind of course, people from different walks of life could increase their confidence and willingness to commit to collaborative rather than adversarial approaches to problem-solving. Secondly, an action research methodology could signify how practitioner/trainers might actually consolidate and improve the way they deliver the course in different sets of circumstances.

Even though I have not been able to elicit any interest to run pilots from large research institutions such as CSIRO I nevertheless continue to foster interest in the course because I am convinced that it is a groundbreaking and unique approach to sustainability education in Australia. I am upheld in this view by virtue of the very positive endorsements that I received at the time of submitting it for accreditation. Each indicated that the course fulfils a need otherwise unmet within the vocational and educational sector. I quote below from the one offered by Dr. Elizabeth Heij, Facilitator of the CSIRO Sustainability Network:

I would like to offer my strong support and endorsement for the ... course. This is the first tertiary education proposal I have seen that is clearly based on the fundamental truth that, in seeking sustainable outcomes, we are together building an unknown future, not emulating historical precedent.

As a former University Department Head myself, I have been disappointed over the last decade to see the extent to which our learning institutions are still teaching from the perspective of "yesterday" rather than "tomorrow." We are still filling heads with yesterday's knowledge rather than training people how to discover future wisdom. Yours is the first proposal I have seen that knowingly and actively makes that mental turn through 180 degrees to face the future, and looks at helping participants to build the necessary new "precedent-less" frameworks together.

Your course will help initiate the difficult but necessary transition to a new, more integrative and inclusive framework for negotiating the complex decisions ahead. I would expect those who come through the proposed course to become valuable and sought after in a whole range of public- and private-sector planning and consultation activities. I would also expect them to have a strong positive influence on inclusiveness and integration in their own workplaces.

Similarly I quote from the endorsement offered by Dr. Geoff Syme, Research Director, Water Security and Sustainable Communities, CSIRO as follows:

As competition for natural resources in Australia increases we are finding that as social researchers we are constantly forced to deal with the outcomes of poor process in terms of

negotiation between stakeholders and between government departments and the community at large. There is generally an insufficient understanding of the theory and practice of public involvement programs and between party negotiations. This results in unrealistic expectations in relation to conflict management and poor integration of local and professional knowledge. Problems that are reconcilable become chronic. The associated discontent then generalises to wider issues in which the parties are involved.

I find your program to be highly professionally constructed and it reflects an in-depth appreciation of the concepts and practices central to the negotiation arena. Those who participate will bring an important substantive knowledge of inter-party processes that is currently lacking. I am not aware of any comparable courses and congratulate you on your initiative.

Despite these positive endorsements for course accreditation, the advancement of the type of education I am promoting still relies almost totally on my own determination to generate interest in it and hopefully sway people to consider its potential benefits and prove its efficacy. So far I have worked extensively to tailor a course which can be appreciated more as a 'viable proposition' rather than as a well-established part of the training curriculum. Institutional encouragement to see the course put into practice has been disappointing, but somewhat understandable, given that my field of research draws on theoretical ideas that are not mainstream in Australia. The most notable exception in terms of support has come from Dr. Wally Cox, Chair of the Environmental Protection Authority within the WA Department of Environment. He has circulated a flyer to all departmental staff and I am presently planning to deliver training to those who responded.

The future development of a research component, which can run alongside course development, in part depends on the degree to which endorsement and active interest comes 'from the top'. Research and development is understandably constrained by the policy agendas of governing institutions. Those evaluating the merits of research projects tend toward established criteria for determining whether outcomes will provide quantifiable, tangible solutions to specifically identified problems. When the purpose of research relates to how we might achieve a greater degree of integration in our decision-making processes, there is a case that contemporary peace studies can offer useful bases for qualitative and quantitative assessments. Contemporary peace research has continually sought to develop wider, more inclusive frameworks in which to situate scientific knowledge that maintains the concept of peace as its source of legitimacy. Founding scholars sought to overcome the limited usefulness of studies where peace has most relevance in terms of metaphysics or religious or ideological debate. The ethos of science has been seen as the means for disengaging peace research from nonscientific discourse. One development has been a marked distinction between the concept of 'negative peace', the cessation of hostilities, and that of 'positive peace', which is more representative of conscious attempts to work constructively toward the fulfilment of individual and societal needs. Positive peace, at an individual level or at a societal level is often synonymous with a sense of wholeness - or integration.

The research topic of integrated decision-making to ensure 'triple bottom line' accountability between economic, environmental and social interests and values prompts us to consider whether our established criteria for assessing the merits of research projects are adequate for this purpose. For instance, should financial resources to support this kind of research come from allocations traditionally earmarked for projects that emphasise social, economic or environmental considerations? The question can also be posed as to what are appropriate criteria for making assessments of 'successful' integration, given that the achievement of integrated solutions are representative of a collective effort, even when certain pre-engagement initiatives have made a significant contribution. One challenge associated with assessing, and reporting on, the successful achievement of an integrated solution is that it is likely to be far less dramatic than outcomes that are unsuccessful, where attitudes and positions remain polarised and antagonistic. I suggest that one basis for qualitatively and quantitatively assessing the success or otherwise of processes and their outcomes could be an indication of the extent to which they represent 'positive peace' as a concept integral with that of sustainability.

Conclusion

I have used my course as a case study to suggest that the underpinning ideas can make a useful contribution to scientific discourse concerned with capacity to understand and constructively deal with the contradictions which impede the realisation of 'positive peace' or sustainability. I have applied this knowledge to develop an educational program which can help us to better understand the problems and conflicts in which we are embroiled and how we might increase our capacity to bring about integrated sustainable solutions, or, even when integrated solutions are not immediately realisable, discern whether our decision-making or problem-solving processes are actually improving or impairing the lines of communication between the parties involved.

The final theme of this article has been to discuss some of the challenges of integrating individual initiatives, such as my own, that are worthy of consideration, with institutionally-supported research projects. In the present case, I have envisaged that it could be both viable and useful to have an action research methodology running alongside course delivery. Thinking along these lines has inevitably raised the question of whether and to what extent, as researchers, we conceive that personal gains and benefits such as money and status are as important or more important than potential community gains and benefits that could be derived from particular sustainability initiatives. There is also the question of whether initiatives in the emergent area of sustainability should have to sustain and prove themselves to be worthy or whether they merit financial support through seed funding to ensure that sufficient time is allowed to assess their longer-term usefulness.

As the sole author of the case study course I presently hold exclusive intellectual property rights to it. If I affiliate with a university to see it advanced and developed through an academic institution I would have to relinquish those rights and I could not ensure the integrity of the course would be maintained as I envisage would be most appropriate. Nevertheless, as I believe that the common gains and benefits are more important in the long run, my vision is ultimately to see the intellectual property rights relating to the course vested in a not-for-profit organisation. If well-conceived such an arrangement could lend credibility to the idea that the course is a resource that can be made available to a wide range of individuals and groups throughout our community when they have need of it, and that they can be more assured training will be offered in a non-partisan way. Such an arrangement for administering the course would also allow a proportion of proceeds of delivery to be ploughed back into ongoing course development and associated research.

I have participated in this forum to discuss relevant theoretical and practical considerations with respect to my course, on the basis that they are likely to be equally relevant to other educational initiatives which prompt people to reflect on what sustainability means to them and what their role might be in forging a sustainable future. It is my hope that it prompts discussion, but also that it may prompt other scholars to consider the practical ramifications and benefits of the course, and perhaps take some interest to actively explore how it might be instituted in circumstances where it could serve a timely and useful purpose.

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