

Praise for *Sustainability Generation*

“The business case for sustainability has been made. Behaving in ways that enhance the earth and people is simply better business. Mark Coleman goes beyond this increasingly conventional wisdom, however, to argue that it is also the basis for greater happiness, and the best route to find yourself. This is exciting stuff.”

—L. Hunter Lovins

*President & Founder, Natural Capitalism Solutions,
www.natcapsolutions.org*

“Mark Coleman says we are all part of the *Sustainability Generation*. Indeed we are, regardless of age. He lays out a compelling story for how you can make a difference. Humanity needs to transform our ‘container ship brimming full of stuff,’ much of it toxic and dangerous, into a new model of living, connection, and consumption. Mark writes with passion, humor, and solid substantiation; you will be energized to reassess your life and come away with renewed vigor, tools, and hope for our planet.”

—Marilyn Tam

author of Living the Life of Your Dreams and How to Use What You’ve Got to Get What You Want, co-founder of the Us Foundation, and former CEO Aveda Corp., President Reebok Apparel & Retail Group

“Mark Coleman’s book can be considered a major milestone towards directing sustainable development to a new dimension that exceeds the typical business context that we were used to. He sets the right perspective, which can’t be other than the personal one. It takes a change of mindset rather than a mere change of business strategy. It is a challenge of character and ethics that undoubtedly will shape and carve the generations to come.

“Sustainability is a battle that we mainly have to win within ourselves.

“A much more demanding task, a much more rewarding win . . .”

—Stelios Voyiatzis

CEO Enolia Ventus SA

“If we’re going to move our world toward sustainability in all its many forms, we’ll also have to move ourselves, our families, our communities, and our institutions. Mark Coleman describes how a new generation, born of the notion that ‘more’ is not always better, is rethinking what it means to ‘have it all.’ He provides guidance and hope for an increasingly fragile world that seems to be spinning ever faster.”

—Joel Makower

*Executive Editor GreenBiz.com
Author of Strategies for the Green Economy*

“How many new century authors can write intelligently about entitlement, indulgence, and taking personal action in the same book? Mark Coleman has done this with grace, force, and insight for executives, consumers, and social leaders alike. This is a book for the now generation in a new way. Use this book often.”

—**Bruce Piasecki**

*Founder & President, www.ahcgroup.com
Author of *Doing More with Less: A New Way to Wealth**

“Sustainability is often put forward as the responsibility of governments, companies, and activists. Mark Coleman brings this complex field to a personal level: how can each of us bring our values and our dreams to the decisions we make every day? Just as Mark’s life felt transformed as he gazed at his newborn child, each of us is challenged to open our eyes to the interconnected web that binds us to the generations before and after our brief lives.”

—**Barton Alexander**

*Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer
Molson Coors Brewing Company*

“The maturation of the concepts surrounding sustainability has been like watching the growth of the Internet . . . only faster. The most fascinating aspect of this transformation has been that business has led the charge. Business is adopting concepts and principles faster than individuals and pushing the boundaries in all directions at once. Mark Coleman not only consolidates and categorizes these learnings, but captures the soul of sustainability—finding personal responsibility in a global context. He contributes a HUGE needed piece of the puzzle that ties the concepts together to suggest that a ‘never satisfied’ humankind and sustainability can happily coexist.”

—**Richard Walker**

*Program Leader—High Performance Buildings,
Trane Commercial Services Global Services and Contracting*

“In a time when so many are describing lofty thoughts and very green what-ifs, Mark Coleman has produced an informative tool with depth and supporting backup, that could benefit anyone who is really serious about making a difference.”

—**Bob Bechtold**

Founder and President, Harbec, Inc.

“I have an old friend that tells me he doesn’t mind change as long as it doesn’t happen to him. He would hate Mark Coleman. Not only does *The Sustainability Generation* accurately depict the underpinnings of the global tsunami which is sustainability, the book challenges to reader to grab a surf board and ride the wave—another thing that would terrify my friend.”

—**Derrick Mains**

Recycling, software, and sustainability entrepreneur

“Mark Coleman has a unique way of explaining and showing us that we must accept personal responsibility for creating the sustainable future we all desire. It does not need authoritative top-down government or corporate leadership. It is organic and very personal—starting with little actions taken by millions of people and beginning with each of us accepting our part. Mark’s work is clear, concise, and irrefutable. The responsibility rests with us. Mark’s passion, wit, and charm show through in his work and make the argument even more compelling. Generations to come will look upon Mark’s work as provocative and liberating, showing us the way.”

—**Paul A. DeCotis**

*Vice President of Power Markets
Long Island Power Authority*

“Coleman’s book underscores the truth that we can’t mandate, regulate, and legislate our way to a sustainable world. He eloquently describes the moral imperative that we must nourish multigenerational solidarity around preserving the precious natural resources that make up the finite foundation of humankind’s ability to thrive. Through an enthralling series of personal revelations and case studies, Coleman leads us to the understanding that environmental protection isn’t simply something we do . . . it’s who we are, and each individual must decide if they are the kind of person who wastes or replenishes, even when no one is looking. No doubt, Coleman’s children will one day thank him for writing this book, as will the children of all parents who read it and put it into practice.”

—**Jill Buck**

*Founder and CEO, Go Green Initiative
www.GoGreenInitiative.org*

“A transformational read for those concerned about the fate of this and future generations. Mark Coleman provides a unique perspective on the trade-offs this generation has to wrestle with if we are to balance the needs and opportunities in our economy, environment, and energy futures. The time is now for ‘clean’ energy and this book is a primer to understanding the issues we face with dwindling natural resources and how this issue of personal responsibility will shape the future of clean energy development.”

—**Dr. Carole Inge**

*President and Chief Executive Officer
National Institute for the Commercialization of Clean Energy*

“After reading this book, Mark Coleman will have you motivated to change some habits and look at life on this planet from a very different perspective.”

—**Robert Franzblau**

Master Scheduler, Supply Logistics, Roche Molecular Systems

“Ultimately, sustainability is about balance and the interconnections of our actions. Mark Coleman’s book provides the framework for an inside-out, bottom-up approach to creating positive change. Starting from the assumption that we are all designers of our future, this book provides the roadmap to a journey that starts within. Get ready for the ride of your life!”

—**Chandler Van Voorhis**

Managing Partner of C2I, LLC

Managing Partner of GreenTrees

2002 Recipient of the ChevronTexaco Conservation Award

The Sustainability Generation

*The Politics of Change &
Why Personal Accountability
Is Essential NOW!*

Mark C. Coleman

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*Dedicated to my loving family:
My wife Aileen McNabb-Coleman and two sons,
Owen Patrick and Neal Garrett
You are my inspiration, joy, and love!*

Introduction

“People do not change when we tell them they should; they change when their context tells them they must.”¹²

—Thomas Friedman



“I can’t understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I’m frightened of the old ones.”¹³

—John Cage, U.S. Composer
(1912–1992)



“To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.”¹⁴

—Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of United States
(1858–1919)

The quotes above portray the human emotion associated with fear of change. It is surprising that we have such a hang-up about change. The world is in a constant state of flux, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. The natural environment, human built environment, political systems, economic models, and religious sects are essentially ever-changing. People inherently don’t want to be told what to do. Thus the human aversion to change stems in part from unwillingness to change exclusively at the hand of others. People like to reach their own conclusions about the right time, place, and impetus for change. Because the decision for change can be personal, often it comes later than desired with impacts and externalities that

could have been avoided. This book is a reflection on a significant change happening throughout the world today—and a call to try to accelerate individuals to decide to make this change in their own lives. The context of how humans work, live, play, pray, and love is changing throughout the world. An ethic of personal accountability toward a more sustainable way of life now and for the future is a change happening in our society today and is both inspiring and challenging. For those who have accepted this change, a more balanced, fulfilled life has begun. For those who continue to push this change away, continued fear and uncertainty persists.

When I began writing this book, I wanted to focus the content and message of greater accountability and personal responsibility exclusively for the Baby Boomer generation. As a Generation Xer I have felt a sense of pent-up anxiety about the future and a disdain for the condition of the world that Boomers are handing down to their children and grandchildren. I have been guided by many advisors to focus the message of this book on the Millennial Generation, those that will next inherit the earth and the human built environment from the Boomers and Generation Xers. A leading social-change agent put it to me this way:

“The Boomers are the generation that built and set-sail an enormous ocean liner filled with oils, chemicals, toxins, management and consumer behaviors and other stuff. But the ocean liner was not designed to hold all of this stuff, and what’s worse is that the ship is now off-course and set to hit an iceberg. It will be the Millennial Generation that grabs the wheel of the ocean liner, steers away from the iceberg, while simultaneously cleaning up what’s left on the boat.”

This analogy is interesting because within it are several metaphors and subtleties: first, the ocean liner is going in the wrong direction; second, the boat is filled with “stuff,” including obsolete business models, policies, and behaviors that need to be curtailed, and cleaned-up; and third, an iceberg will cut it down the middle if some directional and operational changes are not made soon. The size, scale, and impact of the proverbial iceberg are the big unknown factors. The iceberg envelops climate change and ecosystem and natural resource damages, including the future ability of ecosystems to give us the life-essential services of providing clean water, delivery of food, and sustaining the embodiment of diverse life. In a sense, the BP Gulf of Mexico disaster is only a tip of an iceberg that runs deep, long, and wide.

The author of the quotation, David Gershon, is the author of *Social Change 2.0: A Blueprint for Reinventing our World*, and founder and CEO of the Empowerment Institute.¹⁵ David himself is a self-effacing Boomer who himself admitted that his and prior genera-

tions have played a significant role in the current state of the environment and the issues of energy security and natural resources. But as he rightly points out, it is his generation that has been also diligently launching life rafts from the ocean liner for years as the Boomer Generation has tried to decrease the size of the ocean liner. As the ocean liner grows more encumbered, so too does the probability of hitting the iceberg because making mid-course corrections for the direction of the ocean liner is more challenging. Thus, it is his belief that the ocean liner needs to trim down, find new direction, and set new sails toward a more sustainable future. And he is of the belief that Millennials, with the help of Boomers and others, will be the essential part of this necessary change.

Like no other time in history, there is a coalescing of social and environmental challenges that pose risk and detriment to the ongoing sustainment of human and ecologic life on Earth. While there are many social, economic, and environmental challenges for the existing generation, there are an equal number of opportunities for us to take action individually to effect positive behavioral change.

Individual and generational entitlement has led to *erroneous indulgence* of our natural resources, particularly in industrialized countries. In addition, our thirst for the here and now has led to the detriment of future generations' ability to meet their own needs. We need to bring to light a different perspective on the philosophic, individual, and societal notions of sustainability and how we as both individuals and generations can make positive changes during our lifetime. Themes of individual constraint, personal responsibility, increased critical thinking, and leadership are addressed in the book.

At a time of so much concern about our social and environmental challenges and needs, including climate change, water and air pollution, consumerism, and increased incidences of natural and human disasters, this timely book should enable readers to think in a new way about their behavior and how they those actions impact the state of human health and environment, for both today and tomorrow.

Unrestrained individual and generational entitlement is in many ways the root cause of our current social and environmental challenges. However, there is hope. By gaining a greater awareness of our daily behaviors, and by a reexamination of both individual and generational responsibility toward protection, conservation, and enhancement of our natural resources, we can engage with those older and younger than us to create solutions.

A new **“Sustainability Generation”** is evolving throughout all facets of society and throughout the world. The empowerment and

enlightenment of this generation can change the course of ecologic damage and social ills that now hinder the ability of the existing generation and future generations to meet their needs and to sustain a civilized quality of life.

In my research about social change through interviews with industrial, government, and academic leaders, I realized from the wisdom of those older and younger than I am that every new generation has a certain amount of apathy for the preceding generation. And older generations will always have a bit of fear and doubt about the promise they see in younger generations. This book is not written to chastise Boomers or put the burden of making the world a better place exclusively on the Millennial Generation. Instead, my intention is to highlight that the current generation—all of the people alive today and throughout the world, Boomers, Xers, and Millennials alike, are the Sustainability Generation. But I do believe that the younger Millennial Generation will be the first generation to truly “own” sustainability as a concept and endeavor and bring it to life as a daily practice, and not just a theological pursuit. Generation Y will have more impact on global society and economy than the industrial revolution of the 20th Century. Thus I do hope and intend that the core messages of this book will reside first and foremost with the Millennial Generation. Much the way it takes a village to raise a family, it will take a collaborative global approach to achieve sustainability. Buy-in and collaboration across all age, sex, ethnicity, creed, and socio-economic groups are necessary for sustainability to move into its next phase of enlightenment and action to create a better world.

Taking action on sustainability will require an “all hands on deck” approach to personal accountability, which is then magnified to generational accountability if we are to change the course of the ocean liner from its current trajectory to hit the proverbial iceberg. However, getting “all hands” to want to come on board, and to acknowledge necessity for change and acceptance of personal accountability, remains a challenge.

My intent is to help people to visualize how a “Sustainability Generation” of all age groups is emerging throughout the world. I want to encourage more open and honest conversation among all generations of people who are alive here and now about our needs and aspirations. This includes a desire for greater balance in our lifestyles, our government and politics, and in our industry and economy.

Catastrophic events of the past few years have caused a great deal of uncertainty in the lives of Americans and many throughout the world. The convergence of significant economic, social, political, and

environmental issues brings complex global challenges to the present generation that can no longer be dismissed as another person's, another country's, or another generation's problem. Extreme anxiety about the future contributed to the feelings of loss and despair with the people who lived in the Lower Ninth Ward and throughout New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and added to the overwhelming feelings of helplessness after the disastrous earthquake in Haiti and the tsunamis in Asia and nuclear plant disaster in Japan. Anxiety about our economic future fueled the fury and disgust over the financial markets' collapse in 2008 and the fear and chaos at the time of the London riots of 2011. As a result of the financial crisis and a myriad of other geopolitical, environmental, social, and energy issues, society has become more impatient, and less forgiving of, large institutions and organizations that have struggled in recent years to meet the evolving needs of their customers.

The convoluted protests on Wall Street and in other large U.S. cities in 2011 expressed the fears and anxieties of the current generation, as well as a demand for attention and a call to action. On the 23rd day of "Occupy Wall Street" a CNN article,¹⁶ "As 'Occupy' protests spread, some politicians rebuke" began to unveil the real and raw motivation behind the protests. The article noted:

The remarks [from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg] drew criticism from Tyler Combelic, a spokesman for Occupy Wall Street, who claimed Bloomberg "hasn't really represented all of New Yorkers. The fact is there are thousands and thousands of us out on the streets, and he's not really recognizing that we're a movement," Combelic said Saturday. "We should be heard by New York politicians."

Lately, the movement has been spurred by support from unions and other groups.

"Social and economic inequalities are the tipping point, and people are hungry for getting involved and trying to do something to change it," Jim Nichols, who has been involved in Occupy Atlanta protests, said Saturday. "It's almost like, 'I want the American dream back.'"

President Barack Obama acknowledged that protesters "are giving voice to a more broad-based frustration about how our financial system works," even as he defended the need for a vibrant financial sector.

The No. 2 Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives, Eric Cantor, slammed what he called the "growing mobs" who he claimed were "pitting . . . Americans against Americans."

Combelic, the New York spokesman, said the movement chiefly is trying to showcase “active democracy and (show that) everyone has a voice in government.” He said the protests—which have been associated with progressive causes—are “a rebuke of government, that includes the left and the right.”

On Saturday, U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel backed the demonstrators—whom he has been visiting regularly over the past three weeks—for venting their frustrations and exercising their constitutional rights.

“Their dreams are being shattered,” Rangel, D–New York, told CNN’s Don Lemon. “They may be an inconvenience to a whole lot of people in that area, but people are going to sleep at night with an economic nightmare.”

He also dismissed criticism that the demonstrators don’t have a coherent purpose, saying despite their varied issues and lack of organization, their sentiments are raw and real.

Hero Vincent, one of several unofficial spokesmen for Occupy Wall Street, acknowledged last week that “we’re here for different reasons.”

“But at the end of the day, it all boils down to one thing,” he said, “and that’s accountability.”

The imperative for the current generation is to find a common voice and leadership amid the turmoil of continued social and geopolitical unrest. This generation wants the economic war games and partisan politics of today to end. The current generation has had enough of short-term politics that negatively impact long-term outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

The Sustainability Generation is rising in the wake of huge man-made environmental disasters, such as the 2010 BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, and is growing quickly in scale as it evolves in our global “flat world” coined by Thomas Friedman to describe the connectivity the Internet has brought the world. As it grows in the face of unsustainable production and consumption behaviors, including the uncontrolled greed that led to financial, energy, and market volatility throughout the past two decades, individuals are now asking more from governments, industry, and their peers. The “more” that the Sustainability Generation seeks is not based on individual entitlements or social programs, but “more” by way of accountability, responsibility, and greater transparency in government and industry.

This generation wants more critical thinking (better use of data, information, and personal and professional judgment), and greater

consciousness about the world. While sustainability is often valued and viewed as a “green” or environmental initiative, it is much more than that one dimension. The advent of a “Sustainability Generation” is about finding greater balance to empower people to be good critical thinkers and tinkerers capable of building a new economy. This cannot be accomplished through petty political positioning, but instead requires grounded, innovative, and pragmatic approaches to meet the needs of the present by defining and pursuing common priorities and goals. This means short-term action and long-term thinking from all facets of society—young and old, Republican and Democrat, rich and poor.

Personal, generational and societal accountability is essential as the ideas of the Sustainability Generation become established in our local communities, governments, and economy. There are four dimensions where concepts of sustainability are forming in the “here and now” that will influence future generations:

- Work
- Family
- Spirituality
- Entertainment & Living

Within these “sustainability dimensions” there is a set of questions that will help to clarify how we are accountable to a more sustainable future personally as individuals and as entire generations and an entire society. At the heart of a more sustainable future is a consciousness about ourselves and the world around us at any given moment. Being present is essential to understanding one’s own self-ish needs and the needs of others.

The key is in asking the right questions and pushing for the most balanced decisions—because not all decisions are going to appeal to everyone or work for all of our needs. Think about minerals extraction and the chase for more “green” technology. This approach is one-dimensional. By this I mean that we are simply trying to patch up a wound by stitching it, while a new wound is being cut. While some minerals offer great efficiency and promise (lithium for batteries to enable lower emission “cleaner” transport), when they are in a system-wide global supply chain they will bring with them huge sustainability issues (economic security, waste, and materials handling). So while we solve some issues, such as mobile emissions, others are created, such as hazardous waste and environmental liabilities at mining sites. A question we need to ask as we pursue cleaner technologies is,

“Are we playing a zero sums game of using innovation and technology to buy time?”

Thus, this generation “here and now” needs to address underlying issues of consumption and reasonableness about our choices and decisions. This takes strong leadership and tact, as well as an ability to be self-aware and conscious of our decisions and their impact on the world. Think about the powerful impact of President Kennedy’s statement “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” and how it remains the ultimate call to personal action and accountability in context of an engaged citizenry. During the past ten years Americans seem to ask continually less about what they can do toward the common good of all and increasingly more about “What can you do for me?” Unfortunately, this kind of narrow self-centered thinking is not going to get our generation anywhere except more in debt, less secure and more vulnerable on a global stage. This flawed thinking will not allow this or future generations to advance in science, explore deep oceans or deep space, or reach our fullest potential as a society.

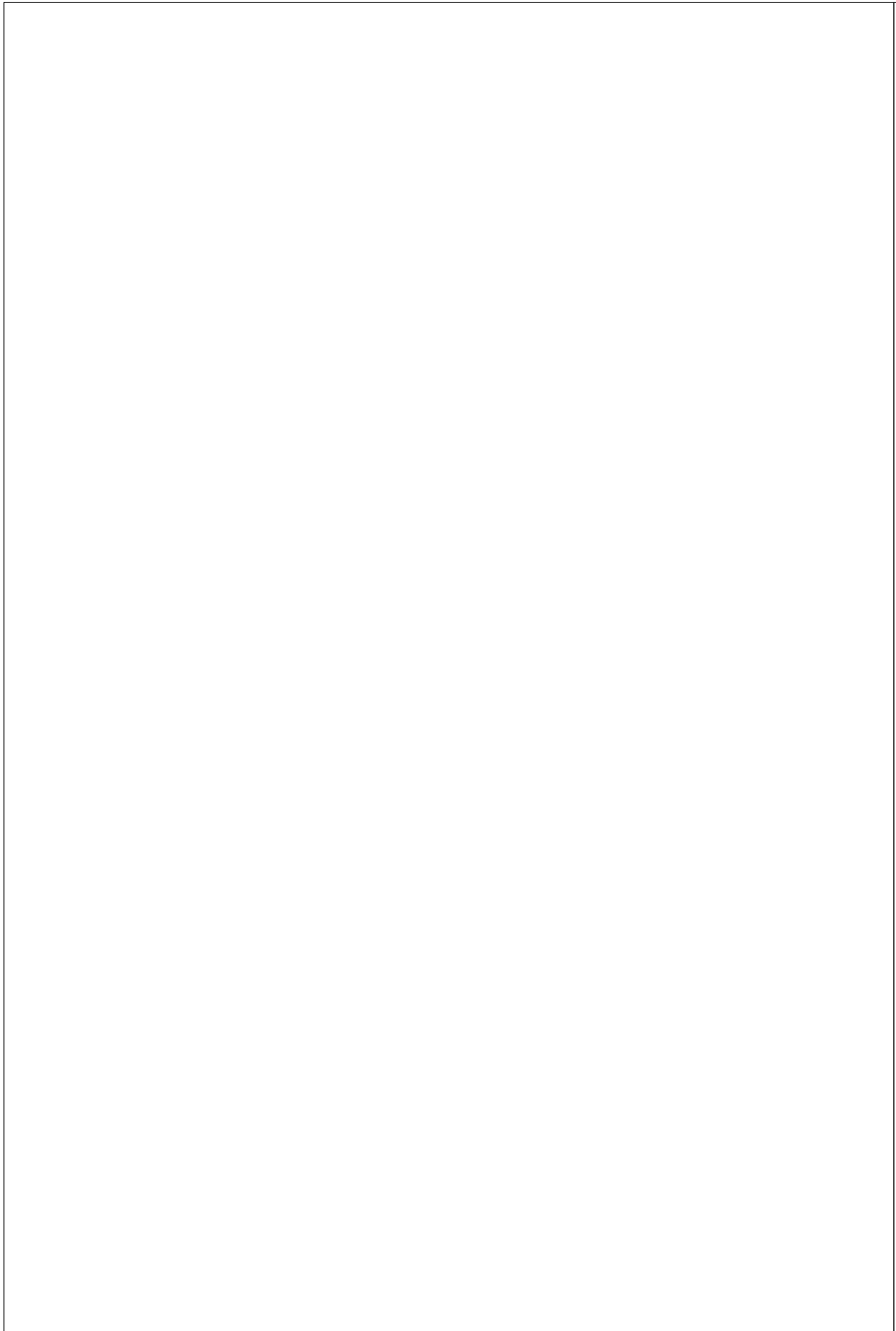
To have a sense of clarity about the four sustainability dimensions as you go on your journey to have personal accountability in your life and take action for a more sustainable future, I hope you will ask these questions:

- **Work** Does your work provide a value to the economy, the community, and the environment? Are you passionate about what you do? Does your work have meaning to you, or are you simply collecting a paycheck? What values, capabilities, and strengths do you bring to your work?
- **Family** Do you have enough “family time” in your life? Is your family “engaged” and “active”? Does your family live with purpose and meaning?
- **Spirituality** Do you feel “spiritually engaged”? Do you allow spirituality to be a part of your life to influence your thinking and behavior? Do you dedicate enough time to spirituality?
- **Entertainment and Living** In what ways do you spend your spare time? Are sources of entertainment intensive? Is your form of entertainment relaxing or a “crutch” for your lifestyle? Where and how do you live? Are your home, belongings, and behaviors at home built on consumptive behaviors and patterns? How can your living environment be improved to bring a better standard of living?

All stakeholders who want sustainability need a push-and-pull to make changes. At the heart of this are our behaviors and perceptions about consumption and our stubbornness toward making change. And we need to break free from conventional thinking about the past and how it affects the future. If we run out of natural resources, if the country is less secure, if we owe too much money to China, there will be no one to bail us out. As a global society, there are big issues before us. To remain economically innovative, competitive, and conscious and active about sustainability, we need to reinvigorate an ethic to have personal accountability and a desire to “get it done” in our work, family, spiritual life, choices of entertainment, and everyday living. Thanks for being a part of the Sustainability Generation! I look forward to sharing the discovery, excitement and hard work, in the pursuit of sustainable living with you.

Summary

- Global changes that affect our life and the life of our children are happening now! We need to respect and embrace that fact.
- Through individual decisions and behaviors you have control over your life and can influence the life of others and the world around you. By choosing to take action on individual accountability, you choose to engage in a life of purpose and consequence for today and the future.
- Deferring decisions to take action can increase probabilities for negative consequences in our future.
- Living a lifestyle just to keep the status quo negates the possibility of sustainability. To work for sustainability means continually looking at your life and asking “What can I do to improve this condition? And the condition of those around me?”



The Societal Shifts before Our Eyes

A societal enlightenment for a new generation focused on sustainability has been underway for forty years. However, only in the past few years, while we were in the middle of a self-induced economic recession brought on in part by our self-indulgence, have dramatic shifts occurred in our industry, governments, and colleges and universities. This new enlightenment has launched the “Sustainability Generation.” This generation will be measured not on its ability to wage and win a war, land on the moon, or be a global economic powerhouse. It will need to become empowered and enlightened to work to solve pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges of this and future generations. It will need to solve the dilemma of how we can live in harmony on a planet of fixed assets, yet limitless potential. The magic, art, and science of humanity give us an understanding that we have everything we need—yet we have also an internal desire to struggle to get more. A renewal of our thinking and behaviors about the balancing of our desires with what we truly need is now more crucial than ever.

We need to advance discussion about the “social side” of sustainability—namely the people, faces, emotion, and intellect behind change. Too often, an attempt to define sustainability is anchored in technologies, processes, policies, and financial terms. Those are all essential elements of enabling sustainability practices and ensuring checks and balances and return-on-investment. But for sustainability to be fully immersed in society *people* need to find value and meaning in their decisions and actions. Many in society at-large, whether confused and disgruntled youth in London, or thousands of protesters ranging in age and ethnicity who are “Occupying” cities in

2 *The Sustainability Generation*

the United States, are standing up and proclaiming to Wall Street and Main Street that they have had enough of greed, corruption, partisan politics, inattention to social and environmental challenges, and the perceived lack of concern over their future.

On October 1, 2011, more than 700 protesters were arrested in New York for occupying and blocking the Brooklyn Bridge. Articles in mainstream news networks like CNN¹⁷ noted that the mass protesters appear to “have a lack of a coherent message.” However they were being effective in uniting masses of people to come out in droves in other cities across the United States. The tag-line, “Occupy Wall Street” inspired “Occupy Chicago,” “Occupy Boston,” and “Occupy Los Angeles” and “Occupy Oakland” and “Occupy D.C.” campaigns and similar protests in other U.S. cities and towns. The protesters in New York centered their demonstration on Wall Street and did so for many weeks. Messages from the protesters touched on corporate greed, high gas prices, insufficient health insurance, foreclosure prevention, climate change, and social justice-related issues. In essence, the raw emotion of the protesters came down to issues related to generational entitlement, accountability, sustainability, and social equity. An October 3, 2011 CNN article¹⁸ noted:

... The motto atop a website for “Occupy Los Angeles,” which kicked off Saturday with a march from Pershing Square to City Hall, reads: “The revolution is happening ... It’s just not in the news.”

There are 34 organizations—from unions to ethnic organizations to activist groups focused on everything from foreclosure prevention to climate change to justice-related issues—listed as being involved in a like-minded activist coalition in Boston. This group, which held a festival and march Friday and Saturday and has explicitly targeted Bank of America in recent weeks, states on its website that its aim is to “stop their greed,” “fight for an economy that works for all of us” and “build cities that are democratic, just and sustainable.”

The website of Seattle demonstrators describes the nationwide effort as “a leaderless resistance movement with people of many colors, genders and political persuasions.”

The one thing we all have in common is that We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%,” the statement continues, referring to what it sees as a sharp divide between the wealthiest Americans and the rest of society.

And other news organizations captured some of the personal perspectives and intentions of the protesters:

“Our beautiful system of American checks and balances has been thoroughly trashed by the influence of banks and big finance that have made it impossible for the people to speak,” said protester Marisa Engerstrom of Somerville, Mass., a Harvard doctoral student.¹⁹

The Boston demonstrators decorated their tents with hand-written signs reading, “Fight the rich, not their wars” and “Human need, not corporate greed.”

Patrick Putnam, 27, a chef from Framingham, said he’s standing up for the 99 percent of Americans who have no voice in government.

“We don’t have voices, we don’t have lobbyists, so we’ve been pretty much neglected by Washington, D.C.,” said Putnam, wearing a red bandanna across his face. The bandanna isn’t just to hide his face from the multiple surveillance cameras on the Federal Reserve building, he said, but to show solidarity with several other demonstrators wearing similar masks. Putnam slept in a sleeping bag on a tarp in the open air Sunday night and said he plans to keep coming back as long as his work schedule allows it . . . “People are finally coming together in this country,” he said.

Given the actions and diversity of messages from protesters on Wall Street and outside Bank of America in Bean Town, the “Sustainability Generation” has taken root and wants its voice to be heard. There is gaining momentum toward a universal call for greater accountability in the very foundations that have created independence, individuality, and freedom in the United States for the past two and a quarter centuries, namely government, capitalism, and an engaged citizenry. An October 5, 2011, blog post “Think Occupy Wall St. is a phase? You don’t get it”²⁰ written by Douglas Rushkoff, a media theorist and the author of *Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age* and *Life Inc: How Corporatism Conquered the World and How We Can Take it Back*, summarizes how the tactics of current generation differentiate from other movements in the past:

. . . To be fair, the reason why some mainstream news journalists and many of the audiences they serve see the Occupy Wall Street protests as incoherent is because the press and the public are themselves. It is difficult to comprehend a 21st century movement from the perspective of the 20th century politics, media, and economics in which we are still steeped.

In fact, we are witnessing America’s first true Internet-era movement, which—unlike civil rights protests, labor marches, or even

the Obama campaign—does not take its cue from a charismatic leader, express itself in bumper-sticker-length goals and understand itself as having a particular endpoint.

Yes, there are a wide array of complaints, demands, and goals from the Wall Street protesters: the collapsing environment, labor standards, housing policy, government corruption, World Bank lending practices, unemployment, increasing wealth disparity and so on. Different people have been affected by different aspects of the same system—and they believe they are symptoms of the same core problem.

Are they ready to articulate exactly what that problem is and how to address it? No, not yet. But neither are Congress or the president who, in thrall to corporate America and Wall Street, respectively, have consistently failed to engage in anything resembling a conversation as cogent as the many I witnessed as I strolled by Occupy Wall Street's many teach-ins this morning. There were young people teaching one another about, among other things, how the economy works, about the disconnection of investment banking from the economy of goods and services, the history of centralized interest-bearing currency, the creation and growth of the derivatives industry, and about the Obama administration deciding to settle with, rather than investigate and prosecute the investment banking industry for housing fraud.

Anyone who says he has no idea what these folks are protesting is not being truthful. Whether we agree with them or not, we all know what they are upset about, and we all know that there are investment bankers working on Wall Street getting richer while things for most of the rest of us are getting tougher. What upsets banking's defenders and politicians alike is the refusal of this movement to state its terms or set its goals in the traditional language of campaigns.

That's because, unlike a political campaign designed to get some person in office and then close up shop (as in the election of Obama), this is not a movement with a traditional narrative arc. As the product of the decentralized networked-era culture, it is less about victory than sustainability. It is not about one-pointedness, but inclusion and groping toward consensus. It is not like a book; it is like the Internet . . .

. . . The members of Occupy Wall Street may be as unwieldy, paradoxical, and inconsistent as those of us living in the real world. But that is precisely why their new approach to protest is more applicable, sustainable and actionable than what passes for politics today. They are suggesting that the fiscal operating system on which we are attempting to run our economy is no longer appro-

appropriate to the task. They mean to show that there is an inappropriate and correctable disconnect between the abundance America produces and the scarcity its markets manufacture.

Given the greed, corruption, and sense of entitlement exhibited from politicians, captains of capitalism, and some of the protestors themselves in late 2011, it seems that U.S. society has become imbalanced, and the citizenry of the current generation is not taking responsibility to bring a sense of balance back to this great country. The protestors on Wall Street initiated a new generation of activism and leadership that will look, feel, and behave much differently than our traditional notion of “here are our demands, or else!” Even activism in the past had a sense of entitlement about how it was carried out. The current generation is looking for much more from its government and industry than corrective actions and “meeting their perceived demands.” The Sustainability Generation is looking for fundamental change in how society currently functions, and wants a focus on greater balance. This generation is seeking to change the politics of change to be less entitled and more accountable. Only time will tell if, and how much, this societal shift will impact our future. But, it is a shift that has forty years of momentum behind it.

A Societal Shift—40 Years in the Making

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s there has been a fundamental transformational shift among U.S. consumers. While the oil crisis of the 1970s spurred some early energy and fuel conservation efforts as well as fuel efficient vehicles introduced by Toyota and Honda, it’s really been the past five-to-ten years where we have witnessed a coalescing of business performance with consumer preferences and values.

Today’s American consumers are different from the past. As Patricia Aburdene, best-selling author of *Megatrends 2010: The Rise of Conscious Capitalism* notes: “. . . there is a rise in the conscious consumer and conscious capitalism.” Consumers are now purchasing products that align with their values, often very individual and complex, that include elements of spirituality, environmental responsibility, and ethical conduct.²⁰

The modern day state of “environmentalism” in business has undergone three transformations and is on the cusp of a fourth transformation, marked by the emergence of the Sustainability Generation:

- ***Transformation 1 (late 1960s to late 1970s)*** This era was marked by social transformation and the emergence of environmental law. The first Earth Day was held in 1970. The 1970s witnessed a surge in environmental legislation and regulation focusing on protecting human health and the environment. The national environmental policy act (NEPA) of 1969, the Clean Air Act (1970), Environmental Pesticide Control Act (1972), Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), and Toxic Substances Control Act (1976) are some notable examples of the era (NRDC: Environmental Law).
- ***Transformation 2 (late 1970s to early 1990s)*** This era was marked by a decade of hazardous waste response and clean-up. In the late 1970s and in 1980 public awareness of hazardous waste impacts on humans became a national issue when Love Canal emerged from a local homeowner association issue to a classified national disaster (EPA and Love Canal). The 1984 industrial accident and disaster at Bhopal triggered societal concern on the safety of industrial facilities. There are many great resources covering this social history of the environmental movement.
- ***Transformation 3 (early 1990s to today)*** This era was marked by more market-based mechanisms to improve the operations of corporations. Corporations increased the roles and responsibilities of environmental managers from compliance activities to operational excellence and efficiency experts. Corporations learned that they could not only reduce compliance costs by being environmentally responsible—they could also reduce operating costs and improve their margins. This era brought rise to ISO 14001 environmental management systems, certification and auditing of environmental programs, and a focus on a slew of metrics that measured energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, hazardous waste handling and reduction, recycling, and air emission reductions for most major firms. The era sprouted the modern day focus on corporate social responsibility, product stewardship, pollution prevention and corporate environmental strategy.

The world is on the verge of a new economy driven by a more socially and environmentally aware generation of global citizens. We can call it Transformation 4 of the modern environmental movement focused on the evolution of the Sustainability Generation. It is one that is being shaped by a myriad of past mistakes, promise for the future, and real-time transaction. This is occurring at a furious rate

of speed. And businesses have taken on a new role in transforming this new economy by advancing “socially responsive” innovation to provide value not only directly to customer demand, but to all stakeholders. Consider some of the following trends:

- **Social Investing** In 2010, and in the United States alone, greater than \$3 trillion of the investment dollars under professional management are invested in socially responsible companies that have been screened for their governance, environmental, social and corporate responsibilities efforts globally. The \$3 trillion under management in the U.S. represents a 380% increase in socially responsible investments (SRI) since 1995. According to the Social Investment Forum Foundation, SRI assets in the U.S. experienced “healthy growth” during the most recent financial crisis (2007–2010) while the balance of professionally managed assets remained relatively flat.²¹
- **Eco-Innovation** Making better products: products that have social, environmental, and sustainability virtues and values embedded in them is the current state of the competitive business world. Look at companies like Toyota, Boeing, Sun Microsystems, HP, GE, Green Mountain Coffee, Suncor Energy, Interface and Siemens. What you see is a strategic choice to offer products that compete not only on price and quality, but also on a new dimension of product value: social response. Toyota’s hybrid vehicles, Boeing’s fuel efficient 787 Dreamliner, Sun’s UltraSPARC T1 eco-responsible microprocessors, and Suncor’s commitments to integrating renewable energy technologies into their portfolio are all examples of this strategy unfolding in the marketplace. This is not a “green” trend; it is a strategic decision to differentiate better products for a better world on behalf of these corporate giants.
- **Growth in Renewable Energy** The renewable energy market is exploding with force and fascination for the near future. Global wind and solar markets reached \$11.8 billion and \$11.2 billion in 2005—up 47% and 55% respectively from the previous year. The market for biofuels exploded to \$15.7 billion globally in 2005 up more than 15% from the previous year. Multinationals like Archer Daniels Midland, BP, GE, Sharp and Toyota are all partly responsible for this strong growth in the renewable energy sector. These companies are stoking these technologies’ aggressive growth, leading the way with billion dollar divisions

dedicated to solar, wind power, ethanol, and hybrid electric vehicles, among other technologies,” According to Clean Edge, growth in renewable energy and clean technologies is anticipated to continue through 2015.²²

- **Responsible Lending** More than forty-five banks and financial institutions representing more than \$4 trillion in assets under management have subscribed to the Equator Principles,²³ a set of voluntary guidelines for environmental and social investment for international project finance. Financial institutions including Citigroup, HSBC, Bank of America, ING, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Wachovia, and Royal Bank of Scotland are just a sample of the global finance leaders that have adopted the principles into their lending practices for project finance. Large financial institutions have acted on concerns over climate change to improve procedures of hazardous waste handling. Brownfield redevelopment will incorporate social responsibility into their lending practices with institutions and corporations. This change is driving a transformation in capital markets as they are more cognizant of the risk of financial investments in new development and the need to maximize capital return by minimizing environmental and governance related risks. Banks are essentially requiring that businesses have a sound governance, energy, environmental, and social responsibility policy and program to implement before they move forward on large scale global development initiatives.
- **The Power of Philanthropy** The year 2006 was an incredible year for billionaires. Not only did they have a successful year of returns, they also returned billions to society. In June 2006 Warren Buffet announced that he would give away 85% of his fortune he built in Berkshire Hathaway, and the largest share, some \$30 billion, would go to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.²⁴ The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have committed billions of dollars toward fighting disease globally as well as reducing poverty and hunger.²⁵ And with a focus on energy and climate change, global health, poverty alleviation, and mitigating religious and ethnic conflict, the Clinton Global Initiative emerged in 2006 with a \$7.3 billion pledge from 215 sponsors to continue these efforts globally.²⁶
- **Fundamental Shifts in the Philosophy of Environmental Protection** The environmental movement in the United States and in other developed nations was born in part out of a

need to curtail the creation of hazardous wastes and minimize human and environmental exposures to such risks. The risk-based approach toward environmental protection has undoubtedly protected human health and the environment for the past forty years. There has been an advancement of a “sustainability ethic and philosophy,” particularly since 2000, as a voluntary and strategic opportunity for business and as a new philosophical paradigm for government. It is notable (see text box on *Key Players Question EPA’s Ability to Lead New Sustainability Approach*) that in 2011 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson introduced a “new approach” required for government and industry leaders to collaborate and address contemporary environmental issues using a holistic sustainability approach. USEPA Administrator Lisa Jackson’s vision for a “new approach” is the kind of leadership, forward thinking, and innovation that will be required for the Sustainability Generation to balance economic and environmental goals into the 21st Century. The science, policies, and politics that set the environmental movement in motion forty years ago are not the same requirements, necessarily, that address the complexity of sustainability related issues today. The current generation now needs to revisit, redefine, and reframe its policies, politics, and practices so that there is greater balance and equity between government, industry, and the needs of greater society.

Key Players Question EPA’s Ability to Lead New Sustainability Approach

Source: Inside EPA, 1/6/2011, by Bridget DiCosmo

As EPA takes steps toward building an operational framework for incorporating sustainability measures across the agency, a landmark effort that Administrator Lisa Jackson calls **the “new approach” to environmental issues**, key former agency officials and other observers are questioning the agency’s ability to lead sustainability efforts.

While Jackson recently announced the creation of a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel to advise the agency on **how it can replace its current risk-based approach with a more holistic sustainability approach**, some former EPA officials and current state officials say that EPA as a regulatory agency is not the right orchestrator for the responsibility.

Ann Klee, a former EPA general counsel during the Bush administration now serving as lead lawyer for the General Electric Company, suggested at a Dec. 14 meeting of the NAS panel that for EPA to adopt a truly sustainable approach across the agency, it must be willing to consider a move beyond a “binary compliance-noncompliance” regulatory framework, which Klee argued will serve to stifle current sustainability activities industry is doing on its own, to a more flexible paradigm.

Klee argued that innovations in sustainability are “driven from the bottom up, not in response to a regulatory mandate, but letting all the creative, smart thinking bubble up. It’s clear that success depends on more than the traditional environmental crowd.”

EPA research chief Paul Anastas announced last September the move to re-structure the agency’s Office of Research & Development (ORD) to ramp its sustainability focus and more “closely align” its research with Jackson’s priorities, plans that included consolidating the agency’s dozen research programs into four larger programs.

The four proposed consolidated programs are safer products for a sustainable world (SPSW); air, climate and energy; sustainable water resources; and safe and healthy communities. They are aimed at replacing fragmented research with integrated transdisciplinary methods to work toward developing more sustainable, “system-based” solutions approaches to environmental issues, rather than the agency’s current risk-based approach.

Anastas has described the push toward sustainability as a “seismic shift” in how the agency views challenges, with the goals being to move away from “chemical-by-chemical” risk assessment approaches in favor of systemic solutions that avoid the trap of addressing one environmental problem to have another crop up in its place.

And last month, Jackson announced EPA’s plans to ask the NAS to craft novel “Green Book” recommendations advising the agency on how to integrate ORD’s existing sustainability efforts into all EPA decision-making, and move the current risk assessment and risk management paradigm into a more holistic, sustainable framework. Jackson touted the drive for sustainability as “not an initiative, not a program,” but a “new approach” to environmental protection.

The NAS panel faced with the task of drafting the Green Book recommendations must determine the parameters of EPA’s role in advancing sustainable solutions, but many former officials and others say EPA is not the right orchestrator for the responsibility.

At the Dec. 14 meeting, Klee also urged EPA to provide more flexibility for state and local governments, saying that “states are great incubators for sustainability. We ought to let them incubate freely.” Klee suggested the “blue sky proposal” of creating a new interagency team to address sustainability, saying that EPA should have a more limited role, with involvement from the Department of Energy, Department of Education and Interior

Department. This new team, which Klee said should be housed within the White House Council on Environmental Quality, should serve as a "clearinghouse for evaluating best practices."

One state official appeared to agree that EPA may not be able to provide the kinds of flexibilities needed to advance sustainable approaches to managing of water resources. Ellen Gilinsky, of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, said at the Dec. 14 meeting that EPA should accept and help to promote some of the department's "creative solutions" to developing more sustainability-minded water programs, such as watershed-based permitting and water quality trading. "We need to think outside the box . . .," Gilinsky said, highlighting a need for a "more flexible regulatory framework" that could offer permit incentives for water reuse and reclamation activities.

Linda Fisher, a former EPA deputy administrator during the Bush administration now serving as DuPont's vice president for sustainability, largely agreed with Klee that sustainability is a concept better driven by entrepreneurial catalysts than regulatory ones, but said **that the question "is bigger than just 'what is EPA's role?' It's 'what is government's role?' It's 'how do you define problem-solving tools to address bigger problems than are mandated in statutes?'"**

Fisher pointed to EPA's voluntary Design for the Environment and Energy Star programs, saying that non-regulatory programs tend to be more successful in encouraging innovation. And Fisher and Klee both agreed that there are opportunities for EPA to offer some consistency across the various sustainability initiatives—such as developing consistent life-cycle analysis guidelines and establishing other metrics for better characterizing sustainability.

Klee cautioned that development of such metrics could easily become a "new set of stovepipes" that would further hamper innovation. "If we tell EPA to consider what approaches drive water use down the most, that's going to have unintended consequences."

Paul Gilman, a former EPA research chief in the Bush administration now serving with Covanta Energy Corporation, asked whether the possibility of EPA developing standards within a sustainability framework that took into account a wide variety of long-term consequences, not just human and environmental health effects but water use, economic performance, and environmental justice issues—"a mishmash of sustainability issues"—make innovation easier or harder for industry.

Fisher responded that the scenario Gilman described would stifle innovation and make sustainable solutions "way harder" to implement by adding to existing regulatory burdens and making the approval process more costly and unwieldy. "It's not something you want government to have to sign off on."—Bridget DiCosmo

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Lessons in Leadership: Working toward a Better Future Requires Patience and Humility

I once heard a senior executive at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) tell an audience of college students in upstate New York that when he got into the energy business in the early 1970s he was full of optimism and focus. His intent, he said, was to dedicate a career in transforming how industry, businesses, government, and consumers perceive and use energy in the United States. Thirty years later, with a tone of regret and humbled defeat, this senior leader issued a word of caution to his audience, “don’t listen to conventional wisdom . . . seek out answers to the complex energy and environmental challenges of the day . . . and find ways to work together.”

The NYSERDA leader noted that his career began with a desire to develop new energy technologies, reduce energy demand, promote energy efficiency, and deploy renewable energy technologies on a broad scale. Reflecting that the amount of renewable generation in the United States continues to be marginal, that the fuel economy of vehicles has stayed roughly the same along with increases in energy demand and prices, the senior leader admitted that he wished his career had created more of an impact.

The story about this energy industry leader is a case study of the past thirty years. I hear similar sentiments from senior managers at large electric utilities and at big chemical, oil, and automotive companies. Their reflections of the past are rich with reasons why not more change has occurred. But one hears from them a new urgency to want to make good on the last few years of their professional careers and often their desire to launch new careers in “retirement” to take advantage of the new opportunities for advancing alternative and renewable energy.

Across the globe the race has started. Instead of one whose outcome will be judged by who lands on the moon or proliferates nuclear weaponry first, this race is more peaceful. But it is just as significant as our past technological missions. With a burgeoning population of seven billion people and a growing global economy, the demand for energy, material, and natural resources are at an all-time high. We are now seeing price signals in the marketplace that tell us that constraints to our growth include the availability, reliability, and dependability of energy and natural resources like water. In 2007 the price per barrel of oil exceeded \$100 for the first time in history. Reports of global energy demand brought on by growth in China and Asia

Pacific indicated energy demand was higher than supply. In addition the political environment of 2001–2010 marked a shift in debate about global climate change and how humans should think about their carbon footprint.

Globally and regionally new economies are also being formed and reshaped by corporations designing better products influenced by a new era of philanthropists and by a transformational shift in how we think about, invest, spend, use, and make, our money. These evolving trends on money and markets are built in part on the shoulders “of Business Past.” Social response to capitalism is being shaped by all of these forces and shows no signs of receding.

While no particular tipping point can be referenced, a fundamental shift of government, industry, non-government organizations (NGOs), trade associations, intergovernmental coalitions, and consumers is underway. This shift spans multiple generations and is the spawn of the Sustainability Generation.

Rebalancing Your Future

Several times a year I receive alerts from my financial investment brokerage reminding me to make the effort to annually rebalance my retirement portfolio. As the theory goes, rebalancing the initial allocations of one’s retirement portfolio helps to maintain the right percentage of dollars in investment (i.e., stocks, bonds, international, and so on) that fit your stage of investing, stage of life, and future financial goals. This makes sense to me as a basic investment strategy. Hopefully it pays to rebalance and realign your portfolio so that your allocation of dollars meets your ideal positioning for growth, stability, or sustainment over the long-term. I like the alerts I receive from my brokerage.

Many of us spend time, energy, and focus on rebalancing our financial portfolios. This is a necessary and obvious need to keep our financial futures on track with our goals, expectations, and hopefully in alignment with market forces. What is interesting is that we do not necessarily spend the same time, energy, and focus on rebalancing our lifestyles in the context of societal, individual, or generational goals and aspirations, or as a reflection of signals from natural or spiritual forces. When we do make the decision to focus on this or respond to these signals, it is often reactionary, like the clean-up of the BP oil spill in the Gulf. With our rebalancing and reallocation of our retirement accounts, we are as strategic,

thoughtful, guided, deliberate and anticipatory as we can be with information at hand. Yet when it comes to things that enrich, nourish, and sustain life, we do not exercise the same care and commitment to protect our future.

Rebalancing for our future, in the context of sustainability, is much like the maintenance of a retirement portfolio. This requires a deliberate and consistent assessment of the health, vitality, and abundance of the earth's natural resources in the context of sustaining human life, but also maintaining a balanced ecosystem. Humans are impacting the earth's ecology, atmosphere, water, natural resources, and energy systems in many ways. The earth's ledgers are recording human-induced positive and negative impacts. What we do not necessarily know, however, is just how much rebalancing is needed to keep the existing and future generations on track for ecologic security.

Financial security, I would argue, is directly tied to ecologic security. The conservation, protection, and enhancement of the earth's natural resources and ecologic services for providing clean water, clean air, and abundant food sources, is not just in our long-term best interest for survival; it is also our long-term best interest for financial growth and security.

To rebalance for our future we need to begin to ask the right questions, as individuals, citizens, and as generations, to keep our ecologic portfolio in check with our goals for growth, spirituality, and stewardship of our collective home, planet Earth. As you go about your daily life, consider these questions:

- Are you a “successfully” engaged citizen? What does that mean to be a “successfully engaged citizen”?
- What belongs to you as an individual? What do you own? What are your rights, privileges, responsibilities? Do you exhibit “entitlement” for goods, services, and resources?
- What belongs to “us” as society? What do “we” own? And, what are our collective rights, privileges and responsibilities? Does society exhibit “entitlement” over Earth's natural resources?
- What belongs to your “generation”? What impacts on the positive and negative side of the ecologic ledger has your generation made?
- Does “conformance” in society, either individual or generational, lead to an unbalanced ecologic (or economic) portfolio?

- How can modern innovations, technologies, institutions, and networks be deployed to help individuals and generations rebalance the ecologic portfolio for long-term sustainment?

As you can tell, there are no simple answers to these questions. In each one there are moral, ethical, and perhaps legal justifications and perceptions that can shape perspective. And in many ways, this is the point. Sustainability is not an end-state to be achieved. Sustainability is not just reacting to what has been right or wrong in our past. Rather, sustainability is a process of rebalancing the portfolio to meet the needs of the short- and long-term investors, the generation here and now, and the future generation.

The origins of a cultural shift is happening right now, in real-time throughout society. This shift is being led by individuals in a variety of demographic, geographic, and socio-economic standings. Leaders in the world's largest corporations, smallest family owned businesses, and throughout government, academia, not-for-profit organizations, and inner-city business incubators and suburban strip malls have begun to take action toward a sustainable future. The diversity and breadth of knowledge of individuals concerned about their economic, environmental, and social futures are creating a "culture of sustainability" within their organizations, networks, and generation. These leaders are challenging the assumptions of how society operates and are innovating solutions that attempt to balance and economic, environmental, and social needs. The question now becomes how these early influencers can further advocate, align, and empower a higher order of individual and generational intelligence that can support sustainability in this, and in future, generations.

Generational Accountability

The earth is a natural, dynamic, and living system. The landscape of the earth has never been static; it has changed over the millennia through the forces of nature, geology, and humans. Each of these forces have eroded and built new landscapes. Each of these forces has positive and negative impacts on the earth. While humans cannot directly influence natural and geologic earth systems, we can be accountable to our own behaviors and influences upon the earth.

Much as the way greater governance and accountability have infiltrated financial markets, the current generation needs to have

greater accountability toward the sustainment of our natural resources. From a consumption point of view, humans began their relationship with the earth by taking only what they needed to survive. The arduous tasks and human systems built around hunting and gathering, and then small scale agriculture communities, was constructed to achieve survival needs of food, clothing, shelter, and procreation.

However, somehow in human existence, and particularly in the past century of our evolution, we have shifted our notion of survival to an extreme. We now burn a proverbial candle at both ends of the stick. On one end, developed countries represent highly consumptive behaviors. On another end, growing populations, particularly in the poorest regions of the world, suffer from a lack of sufficient food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention. Since humans have invented tools and gadgets, anything that allows us to shape the earth more quickly, easily and effectively—we do.

A high rate of consumption of goods and services coupled with unfettered population growth is placing incredible and damaging demands on the earth's natural resources and the ability for ecosystems to provide the services that historically enabled humans to simply survive (clean water, abundant food reserves, abundant fuel sources, and so forth). In short, humans have evolved from a relationship of "small payments from the bank" to "drawing huge loans that are now defunct." We are not paying our interest on our loans from the earth, let alone addressing the principle that we use annually by way of natural resources and the impacts associated with a consumption society.

Like no other time in history, humans face "survival" challenges. A burgeoning global population places greater demand on natural resources, and also heightens the potential catastrophic impacts that can cascade from disease, hunger, or collapse of ecosystems. The current generation has a variety of tools and solutions to adapt and manage the imminent change that will occur in our lifetime and that of our children. We already have the tools to make the world a better place in our common intellect, humanity, and sense of humility. In my personal view, a social enlightenment about individual and generational restraint along with intelligent innovation is necessary if we are to continue living in any harmony on the earth.

We are now improving, in general, the culture of behaviors that have created excess, waste, and many of the inefficient systems in

finance, industry, and government. I recently heard at a regional “Green Jobs Summit” a “business generalist” say the past decade has been like a slap in the face or a splash of cold water in the face of business. The generalist represented a small architect and engineering company in Rochester, New York—not a big three-auto or nation-state. The point here is that the “small guys” have caught on, and it is from there where I feel innovation will be born, momentum gained, and a quickening of social transformation begun.

But the small business transformation will take time, and it will take us only so far. I do believe a necessary correction in the form of individual and generation behaviors remains. That is, more foundational and philosophical questions need to be asked of consumers, industry, government, and society at large: What is too much? Who decides what is too much? And where are we collectively going? As the world gets smaller—do we become more ambitious as a society and risky and daring? The BP spill would have one believe so, as we search greater depths of our oceans for oil, or consider the search for water on Mars. Or do we cap our human ego of conquering our natural world and relearn what it means to be a care-taker of this fine planet, much like the way we began? These are questions that we should be discussing daily—not putting this off for technology to decide.

The existing mix of generations (young, middle-aged, and old) can work toward a more sustainable existence with the earth. The solution is simple, yet difficult to implement. Society needs innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. This will provide us with the products and services that reduce demand for natural resources or help us clean-up past environmental damages. Society also needs proper governance, policies, and controls to help us protect ecosystems, financial markets, and people. And, society needs to reestablish its role as a steward of the earth, not just a taker. The Sustainability Generation shares a common humanity. We have the ability to unlock the ways in which we can work as individuals and as generations to sustain a focused and shared effort to adapt to environmental change, and to adopt new consumptive behaviors to seed the development of innovation and technology that can enable us to meet our needs, not just for today, but also for tomorrow.

Going Beyond Generational “He Said, She Said”

Generation X and Y (those typically in mid 20s to early 40s) have an enormous weight on their shoulders. As a Gen Xer I will try not to sound too whiny here, but being born after the Baby Boom generation is no picnic. No, Gen X and Yers not have not had World Wars, a Great Depression, or a major pandemic flu epidemic to completely change or define our generation. But what we do have is a lot of asymmetrical and distributed “issues” and lot of baggage from the past.

While the threat and acts of terrorism, health epidemics, environmental pollution, and economic woes are not new with our generation, these issues are becoming more prevalent and cascading. With more than seven billion people now on the planet there is much greater potential for economic and environmental chaos that can directly affect us as humans. We don't have just one or two major issues to address as a society. We have hundreds of small issues that if not monitored, analyzed, remediated, or acted upon can become big issues very quickly. For example, since 1970 the following significant events impacting human health, our natural environment, and global economy have happened:

- Love Canal disaster, August 7, 1978
- Bhopal disaster, December 2, 1984
- Chernobyl disaster, April 26, 1986
- Exxon Valdez oil spill, March 24, 1989
- Gulf War
- World Trade Center Bombing, February 26, 1993
- Oklahoma City Bombing, April 19, 1995
- Terrorist Attack on World Trade Center, September 11, 2001
- War in Iraq
- War in Afghanistan
- Decade of Greed (2000–2010)—Enron, Worldcom, Tyco, Bernie Maddoff and other financial debacles
- Hurricane Katrina, 2005
- Global Financial Meltdown, 2007–2010
- BP Gulf of Mexico Oil Catastrophe, May 2010
- 9.0 magnitude earthquake triggering the devastating tsunami off the Pacific coast of Thoku, Japan, March 2011

Figure 1.1 further illustrates how environmental sustainability has been evolving over the past thirty years. The ability to monitor, adapt to, and effect change is the heart of sustainability. The post-Baby Boom generations that will comprise the beating heart and new age vision of the “Sustainability Generation,” are the generations that accept the changes before us and works together to move society past one of entitlement toward empowerment and enlightenment.

Figure 1.1

Ongoing Evolution of Environmental Sustainability

Created by Mark C. Coleman

1950s–1970s

Era of Disdain & Discovery

Illustrative Events:

- Silent Spring by Rachel Carson is published (1962)
- Clean Air Act (1963)
- National Environmental Policy Act (1969)
- Clean Water Act (1972)
- Small Is Beautiful by E. F. Schumacher is published (1973)
- RCRA (1976)
- Love Canal (1978)
- The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense and Natural Resources Defense Council were all formed.

1980s–1990s

Era of Awareness, Regulation/Enforcement & Clean-up

Illustrative Events:

- CERCLA (1980)
- Bhopal Disaster (1984)
- Chernobyl nuclear disaster (1986)
- Water Quality Act (1987)
- Brundtland Report introduces “sustainability” (1987)
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is established by UNEP and WMO (1988)
- Clean Air Act Amendments (1990)
- GEMI is formed (1990)
- ISO 14000 environmental management standards (1996)
- Kyoto Protocol is agreed upon (1997)
- Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes launch (1999)

Figure 1.1 (continued)
Ongoing Evolution of Environmental Sustainability

2000s–2010s

Era of Disclosure, Financial & Global Assessment “Stock Valuation & Taking Stock” on Impacts

Illustrative Events:

- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2001)
- EU WEEE Directive (2002)
- United States Sarbanes Oxley Act (2002)
- Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) launches (2003)
- The Equator Principles are developed (2003)
- EU RoHS (2006)
- EU REACH (2007)
- SEC Guidance on Carbon Disclosure (2010)

Beyond 2010

Era of the Sustainability Generation: Accountability & Action

Illustrative Events:

- BP Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill (2010)
- Japan’s Nuclear Crisis post 2011 Tsunami and Earthquake
- London Riots of 2011
- Continued Uncertainty on Carbon Regulations and the long term impacts of Climate Change
- Social Response Capitalism Corporations taking leadership role in social response capitalism—delivering superior products that address social needs and improve the environment. See the books “World Inc.” and “The Surprising Solution” by Bruce Piasecki
- A need to address natural resource constraints in the context of a burgeoning world population
- Access to “commons” including clean air, water, fisheries, and minerals more and more a competitive factor globally.

However, those born after the Baby Boomer generation cannot achieve this alone. The United States has an aging population. The sector of those aged 55+ will grow nearly three times faster than the U.S. population as a whole between 2000 and 2020. Thus younger generations must understand, appreciate, and tap into the intellect and knowledge that comprises what Tom Brokaw calls the “Greatest Generation.” If Generation X and Y are the beating heart of the Sustainability Generation, then Baby Boomers are its spirit and mind, offering wisdom and guidance from their experience.

The “Sustainability Generation” will require all generations to work together in concert with one another. The challenge in the next decade will find ways for those that are growing up to work with those that are grown up in ways that are constructive, collaborative and consequential. The Sustainability Generation will help to save not just the planet, but also the people that make up this vast land we call Earth.

The challenge before us has become dramatically more transparent in the past generation. As the world population has grown from an estimated one billion in 1810 to seven billion 200 years later, there has been an incredible amount of damage from human error in the earth’s ecosystem. That error is in the form of overconsumption, environmental degradation, air and water pollution, and irreversible damage to sensitive natural resources and ecosystems. Several global studies monitored by organizations have reported on our human errors in the past decade in particular. Global organizations have in many ways fallen short in their goals to set policies and practices to create swift change to impact the correction of our human error. *Why is that?*

Part of the answer is generational “**entitlement.**” Entitlement, a belief that one is “entitled” to certain privileges is the common denominator in why the current generation has more “baggage,” all of those little but highly explosive issues, than past generations. This is not stated as reason for whining about our lot in life. It is given as a matter of fact and a prelude to why and how our generation (Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and the Millennial, Gen Yers) and future generations must move beyond issues of entitlement toward empowerment and enlightenment. We see this transformation happening in society right now. Cars, homes, computers, and clothes are getting greener. Corporations have begun to transform the entire product life-cycle, from cradle-to-grave-to-cradle as new-age model of responsible product development and consumer consumption.

Small-and-large corporations, including some of the world’s best know bands like Coca-Cola, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Patagonia, Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Sharp, and Wal-Mart have instituted sustainability policies and supply chain practices. These and many in industry are accepting the drivers of change before them: changing customer preferences for more sustainable products, stricter rules governing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate change impacts, higher uncertainty in the volatility of energy and commodity prices, and investor requests for greater transparency and reportable progress on sustainability goals.

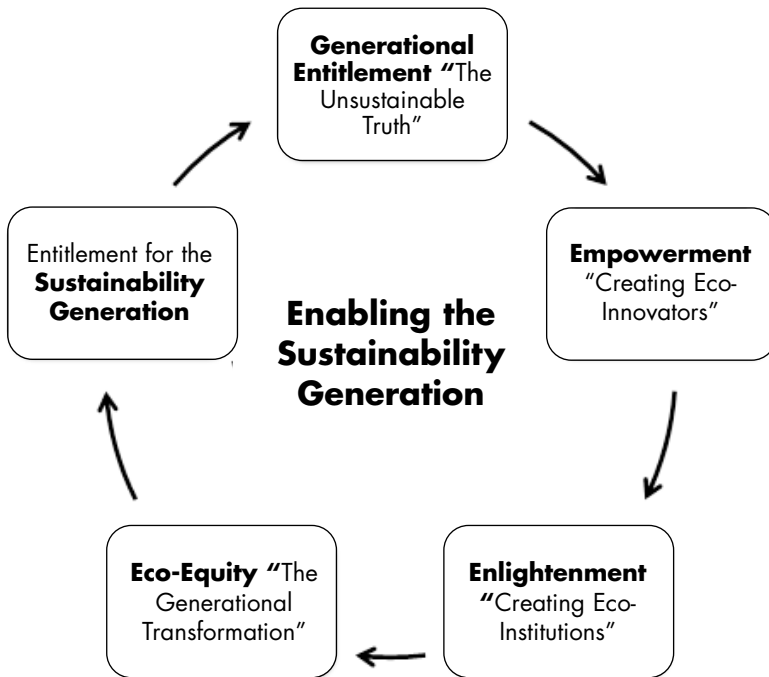
There is a fundamental shift happening in people and subsequently the systems and institutions that people have created: government, industry, capitalism, and even religion. Too often we, as a society, decouple the individual (the person) from the systems and institutions we've created. It is as if those systems and institutions have a mind of their own. It is easier to point the finger and place blame on capitalism, industry, or big government when things are not going our way. In many ways, there is legitimacy to this. However, at the heart of every institution is its decision-makers, policies, and practices—all of which are defined by its people. As people, generically, begin to shift their beliefs and values toward greater accountability and responsibility regarding sustainability, our systems and institutions will catch up. The following sums up an approach for facilitating a value-shift in people and institutions so that the Sustainability Generation not only emerges, but also thrives in managing imminent change:

- **First** The key to unlocking a change in people, and having an impact on institutional policies and practices, is first an individual and then societal recognition that living with entitlement is unsustainable. This is happening today as “eco-innovators” come to life inside college and university business and technology incubators or from within corner coffee shops or behind their corporate cubes.
- **Second** This belief has to be reinforced by empowering people to accept and act upon change. People are now influencing many new social-networks, start-ups and corporate product development efforts that pull away from “entitlement” and toward empowerment.
- **Third** Public-and-private institutions and human-built systems need to be enlightened. We see top-down shifts in government, industry, and religion. It was telling when Pope Benedict XVI made direct ties to climate change and the sustainment of religion and society. Embedded in the Pope's message is one of hope, but also caution and warning that if society cannot come to grips with our view of entitlement toward Earth's abundance (natural resources), we may fall victim to an uncertainty that cannot be predicted nor ignored.
- **Fourth** Society needs to co-exist with the earth in balance, a share eco-equity that can benefit people and planet in harmony. With a focus on equity, people, and our institutions

we can define the balance that is needed to sustain, improve, and enhance life for humans and for the Earth's ecosystems. By instilling a culture an ethic of eco-equity, we can remove entitlement from the masses and eventually shift generations away from having negative baggage to having equitable holdings.

Figure 1.2 summarizes some of the forces and influences upon how the Sustainability Generation is being shaped. While GenXers and GenYers are wrestling with entitlement from a negative sense, entitlement can be positive.

Figure 1.2
Elements Impacting the Evolution of a
Sustainability Generation
Created by Mark C. Coleman



Sustainability is a Human Endeavor

The Sustainability Generation is about embracing the intellect, passion, power, and resilience of humans. The underlying bedrock of sustainability lies in our ability to invent, innovate, maintain, what is necessary to our survival and well-being and to destroy what is harmful. Each of these actions are led by humans within the context of the perceived needs of any given generation and the natural forces of nature, the physical and chemical processes of Earth and Earth's relationship with the cosmos. Humans can currently only influence certain aspects of sustainability: our relationship as givers and takers and stewards of the earth. Conceptually and practically, sustainability of humans resides, in what we can control, within ourselves in both our individual (self) and collective (generational) relations with the world around us. At the heart of this is our ability to be accountable to ourselves in our daily life, as we age and as we nurture new generations into this world. The decisions and actions we made 100 years ago and the decisions we make and actions we take today and tomorrow about our relationship with the earth ultimately determine our sustainability. Thus we have collectively an enormous power and great responsibility as the highest form of life on Earth. As the Sustainability Generation evolves globally, we need to ask ourselves individually, and as entire generations comprising a global society, are we:

- **Informed** to have the right balance of data, information and knowledge?
- **Governed** to be representative of all nations and people on earth make responsible societal decisions in the context of a diverse value and belief system that accepting of all humans?
- **Empowered** to take action in our individual daily lives toward bettering the world. and toward the organizations, enterprises, and human-environmental-societal systems we live and work within?
- **Enlightened** to have an awareness and openness to the external world in the context of one's self, and to remain open to phenomena, events, situations, and occurrences that fall outside of our control, understanding, knowledge, and intellect?
- **Accountable** to ourselves, our families, communities, and current and future generations? Accountability is the underlying key to sustainability success.

Humans continue to assess, understand, and make sense of the world and universe around them. We do not have all the answers, but are a curious species that seeks facts and accepts shared beliefs. By being informed, empowered, and enlightened there is greater probability that we as individuals and generations will be in tune with ourselves, and the world around us. In doing so we can be more conscious of our choices and decisions related to living a more sustainable and healthy lifestyle. By having the right information, perspective, and knowledge individuals can determine their role within the Sustainability Generation.

As individuals that make up broader society, finding balance is essential to our collective and future sustainability. As a society, whether we are deep-ocean drilling for oil, mass-producing solar cells, converting vehicle fleets to run on cleaner fuels, or re-evaluating how we source and consume food, we have choices and we will make mistakes. The point of the Sustainability Generation is to not necessarily be afraid of change, and not to be afraid of trying new things. The Sustainability Generation is now operating in a very ambiguous time in history. Great uncertainty surrounds the future of natural resources, ecologic biodiversity, and ecosystem services that provide society with critical life-support “commons” such as clean air, water, and food resources. It is as important to how the Sustainability Generation deals with natural or man-made changes and disasters as it is to creating a culture that can define what sustainability means within the context of the current generation so that there are balanced approaches toward determining that future generations have the resources they need to exist. Our ability to sustain the earth’s natural resources and ensure that our needs and those of future generations are met, resides only with us—the current generation.

Chapter Summary

- Global economic, environmental, and social challenges continue to unfold with seemingly greater pace and impact, particularly in a world nearing 7 billion people.
- We live on a planet with fixed resources; thus there are limits to traditional methods of production and consumption.
- Sustainability is a human endeavor. It is about people and our interaction with one another and the natural world around us.

- There is little to be accomplished if we put ourselves at odds with one another in a “he said—she said” or “older versus younger generation” debate. The challenges and needs of society far outweigh the pettiness of politics and ego for us to delay a more collaborative spirit of innovation and change toward sustainability.
- The Sustainability Generation is forty-plus years in the making. There have been significant societal shifts and transformations that have contributed to the current state of play and affairs in sustainability. Further, a convergence of new data, information, leadership, and public participation is helping to substantiate and drive the evolution of the Sustainability Generation.