
Editorial

Delyse Springett

Centre for Business and Sustainable Development,
Massey University,
PO Box 11-222, Palmerston North, New Zealand
Fax: +64-63-50-5651
E-mail: D.V.Springett@massey.ac.nz

Biographical notes: Dr. Delyse Springett is the Director of the Centre for Business and Sustainable Development at Massey University, New Zealand. She has an interest in applying concepts from critical theory and Foucauldian theory to the business discourse of sustainable development; and in exploring issues of progressive agency with actors working within the business context as a means of opening up an emancipatory discourse of sustainable development.

The invitation from Inderscience to become the Editor of the new *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development* presented a number of challenges. Not the least of these was that of developing a new journal that would fill a gap in the existing canon, taking account of the proliferation in recent years of journals focusing on environment and sustainable development. A specific focus for the journal was therefore sought. This arose, in part, from the problematic nature of the concept of sustainable development itself, and the belief that the contestation that surrounds it drives a valuable discursive approach to a complex and political concept. It meant that 'innovation' should also be regarded as representing, not only technological answers to practical problems, but new ways of thinking about the complex and contested issues of sustainable development. It would help to introduce innovative discourses, thinking and practices in areas of economic paradigms, policy-making, legislation, health, education and the institutional and structural barriers to sustainable development. The main objective of the journal, then, was to establish a discourse of innovation and sustainable development that would engage a broad band of writers and researchers from different disciplines who perhaps did not frequently occupy the same written space: policy-makers, government agencies and those who work with them, academic and research institutions, and all who have an interest in the changes that will foster the transition to sustainable development.

The approach called for the support of an international editorial board that could bring wide-ranging expertise and knowledge to the journal, and this has been achieved. Our thanks go to the members of the editorial board for their support. The intention is that, as the journal continues to evolve, the board will play an active role in decisions about its future direction.

Papers for the inaugural issue have been selected with care, and rigorously peer reviewed by referees of international standing. This first issue meets a number of the overall objectives of the journal. Papers represent the discursive struggle that characterises sustainable development and address innovative discourses and solutions that emerge from this struggle. Issues addressed include innovation in the field of

ecosystem service markets; strengths and limitations of an innovative statutory framework for waste management; sustainability efforts of local governments; the radical systems innovation required for economies to ‘leapfrog’ to more sustainable systems; criteria and indicators for a sustainable knowledge society; environmental innovation as a means to competitive advantage and environmental improvement in the public transport sector; radical versus institutionalised discourses of sustainable development; the need to extend the research discourse on corporate sustainability and a reminder that innovation is not only about technologies or regulatory regimes, but about discourses and how we conceptualise the shift to sustainability. The papers reflect the international perspectives that we aspire to in the journal, with contributions from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Sweden; and, in keeping with the policy of encouraging young researchers, we have papers from recognised authorities in their field published alongside robust contributions from newly emerging researchers.

Salzman begins by reminding us that underlying all human endeavours are planetary geophysical cycles, which we absolutely depend upon for our continued survival: sustainability at its most basic. Yet ecosystem services are rarely prized by markets or protected by the law. Recent initiatives that have sought to create markets for services, whether dependent on government intervention or private ventures, have demonstrated that, while markets for ecosystem services hold great potential, they also create challenges, including moral hazards, rent-seeking, free riders and perverse incentives.

Weaver focuses on innovation in municipal solid waste management policy and practice, identifying influences on the design of the innovative statutory framework driving change in waste management practice in England. The framework includes the first economy-wide permit trading scheme and mandatory recycling targets. Weaver examines concerns over its design; explores the possible implications for sustainability of waste management practice and suggests possible policy modifications. The paper outlines the practical difficulties of policy-led sustainability innovation in the complex context of multi-level governance structures and processes.

Wild River discusses the sustainability efforts of local governments in Australia, drawing upon empirical work using grounded theory and action research methods employed over four action research cycles. The identification of local-state antinomy and the conflict between inside and outside perspectives was followed by case studies to deliver sustainability outcomes. The subsequent targeting of local governments facing multiple sustainability challenges produced reports designed to optimise external validity and local specificity while allowing for mass production. The final action research cycle comprised the delivery of this outside information to local governments and found strong support for the prototype of tailored outside information described in the paper.

Tukker points out that radical or system innovation is called for if a real transition to the meeting of needs is to be made in a sustainable manner. Whether we examine ‘consumer’ economies, ‘emerging’ or ‘bottom of the pyramid’ economies, there are significant obstacles and a need for innovative solutions. While the situation calls for technological ‘leap-frogging’, this may be easier said than done. Key for all of these economies are functions that include visioning, indicative planning, foresight and reflexive governance that ensure that foreign and national investments are used to create sustainable systems.

Spangenberg outlines the reasons why the information society will not lead to sustainability; and the conditions under which the knowledge society might be more sustainable. A vision of sustainability built upon active citizenship requires criteria and indicators for a sustainable knowledge society, but also calls for a variety of changes in society, from the acceptance of different sources of knowledge to choosing a broader base of actors for decision-making.

Lam et al. focus on the role of environmental innovation in the context of the development of ecological modernisation theory and as a driver for firms to gain competitive advantage in the market. They address the limited attention given to issues of technological innovation and their implications for company competitiveness. Their case study of the public transport sector of Hong Kong explores ways in which transport operators have deployed environmental innovation to enhance their competitive positions in the market while helping address significant local environmental concerns.

Springett takes account of the struggle between ‘the business case’ for sustainable development, wherein the concept becomes normalised to fit the limitations of eco-efficiency, and the competing radical discourse that constructs sustainable development as potentially having emancipatory power to challenge the dominant model of economic rationality. This contested discourse frames a research investigation undertaken in New Zealand where corporate managers generally conceived ‘the business case’ as their chief means of exercising agency and to negotiate the meaning of sustainable development; but where the research discourse itself opened up the conceptual space for counter-hegemonic positions to emerge.

Sandström discusses the ways in which the discourse of corporate sustainability has become institutionalised, even when authors claim to be extending the discourse. He provides a case study of one tool widely used for developing corporate sustainability, which is seen to draw largely upon the dominant normative discourse of business-as-usual, further institutionalising the discourse. Three areas for future research are outlined as possible contributions to a broader discourse of corporate sustainability.

Bristow and Wells examine the way in which the concept of eco-industrialisation has assumed prominence as a means to achieving sustainable local development. They point out that the discourse has become dominated by place promotion and a determinist interpretation of the ecology metaphor that has meant that eco-industrialisation has been difficult to distinguish from other forms of place promotion. They call for innovative discourses for sustainable local development that reach beyond the constraints of contemporary economic rationality to lay the foundations for a radically redefined concept of local development.

Both ‘innovation’ and ‘sustainable development’ can become taken-for-granted concepts unless fresh discourses keep their principles alive and challenge any ‘normalisation’. These inaugural papers provide a thought-provoking issue and also open up other areas of discourse for future papers. They provide a rich dialogue about wide-ranging issues of innovation and sustainable development and characterise the complexity that the journal seeks to address. We thank the authors who contributed their papers and the reviewers who gave generously of their time to provide critical and constructive comments. All chief authors and the Editor are prepared to receive readers’ comments on the papers and the journal.

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