Vision 2020: How Shifts in SE Leader Mindset Could Create Conditions for the Transition to Sustainability

by

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Abstract

With the goal of examining sustainability through a new lens this research project explores the link between inner transformation and sustainable action, with particular emphasis on how leaders of small enterprises (SE) are reconciling their role in the world today and into the future — and what it will take to realize that future. While hardly exhaustive, this report argues that the transition to sustainability depends on two rather ambitious fronts: i) To reframe the problem to include a shift in mindset toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and, ii) To reimagine the critical role of SEs in shifting business practices toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level. This research project therefore draws on in-depth interviews with eleven SE leaders of sustainability-driven models of organization to discern the difference between the inside causes for a shift in SE leader mindset - a significant finding to accelerating the transition to sustainability - and the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset toward a more sustainable enterprise.

Keywords: *small enterprises, leader mindset, sustainable action, transition, sustainability, systems-consciousness, futures studies, human development theory, sustainable development theory*

Acknowledgements

Dedication

To Dianne Dillon Ridgley for her heart work in environmental and human advocacy and our fortunate happenstance at GLOBE 2016.

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Forward

This research explores the link between inner transformation and sustainable action, with particular emphasis on the inner journey of business leaders; an area often neglected in sustainability research. The research project's primary focus is on business leaders of small enterprises (SEs), with particular emphasis on SE leaders of sustainability-driven models of organization, a group whose critical role is often overlooked and underestimated as an engine for economic growth and prosperity. A sustainability-driven model of organization, for the purposes of this research, is foremost understood as a business that seeks to blend environmental purpose with business methods. However, upon further research into alternative ways of approaching sustainability and the prevailing lack of attention to social sustainability in the public dialogue - as compared to economic and environmental sustainability - it was expanded to include businesses that seek to blend environmental and/or social purposes with business methods. See Appendix A: Defining Sustainability for the four domains of social sustainability according to the Circles of Sustainability approach used by the United Nations. Sustainable action is therefore understood as any business activity, which aims to deliver specific environmental and/or social outcomes that are measurable, scalable and importantly, profitable. Based on this more expansive understanding of sustainability, in-depth interviews with eleven SE leaders - each with several years' experience leading a more environmentally and/or socially-driven model of business - were conducted and used to collect qualitative data on their inner journeys of transformation, including but not limited to: early upbringing, most significant lessons learned, current worldview, visions for a preferred future and

how these events shaped or changed their concepts of sustainable action. The findings from an internal exploration on the inside causes for a shift in SE leader mindset toward sustainable action led to several key insights into the possible conventional and unconventional conditions in the transition to sustainability at the individual level. Additionally, the findings from an external exploration on the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset toward sustainable results led to several key insights into the possible range of desired actions, as well as to the identification of a continuum of SE leader mindset development in the transition to sustainability at the organizational level. Both the internal and external explorations serve as input for the analysis of findings, for identifying the barriers in the transition to sustainability as well as, for identifying the strategic implications in overcoming such barriers. This research project therefore concludes with a proposed development plan of action for the transition to sustainability at both the individual and organizational level. In presenting findings, this research was inspired by the emblematic story of corporate sustainability leader Ray Anderson of Interface Inc. It also combines various theories of human development, futures studies as well as theories of change for sustainable development to provide a multidisciplinary approach to the challenge of transforming both people and businesses for sustainability. Overall, the results of this research project would suggest that creating the conditions in which a shift in SE leader mindset can occur could lead to accelerating the transition to sustainability that the future requires of us.

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

Ray Anderson, founder and Chairman of Interface Inc., is widely recognized as a pioneer in sustainable business and one of few vocal proponents of environmentalism's role in business among corporate leaders. Anderson founded Interface in 1973 and grew it to be a $1 billion dollar company. In the mid 1990s, he experienced what he refers to as an "epiphany" in his 1999 book, *Mid-Course Correction: Toward a Sustainable Enterprise* (Anderson, 1999). This epiphany came to him after reading Paul Hawken's book *The Ecology of Commerce*, where he learned that industry - as its been traditionally practised - is one of the main drivers of ecological destruction (Anderson, 1999; Hawkin, 1993). This newfound knowledge of the current reality he states, "hit him like a spear in the chest;" awakening him to the fact that his business actions were harming the world or as he recalls, "stealing our children's futures" (Anderson 1999). Woven into Anderson's story is his realization that he was, by virtue of his company's actions, "a convicted plunderer of the earth" (Anderson, 1999; Makower, 2012). In an effort to personally transform from a plunderer of the earth to an agent of its restoration, Anderson challenged his company to adopt a bold new vision for the future: "to become the first company that, by its deeds, shows the entire industrial world what sustainability is in all its dimensions: people, process, product, place and profits - by 2020 - and in doing so become restorative through the power of influence" (Anderson, 1999; Interface, 2015). From his vision for 2020, Interface's Mission Zero was born - a mission that required new thinking and a new model for business if it was to achieve no negative impact on the environment (Anderson, 1999; Interface, 2015).

In order to lead Interface toward a more sustainable way of business, Anderson created a path for this mission which he called "the climb up Mount Sustainability." This path was set to scale Mount Sustainability on seven ambitious fronts, as shown in Figure 1: The Seven Fronts of Mount Sustainability.

Front 1 Eliminate Waste	Front 2 Zero Problem Emissions	Front 3 Switch to Renewable Energy	Front 4 Close the Loop	Front 5 Use Resource-Efficient Transport	Front 6 Sensitize Stake-holders	Front 7 Redesign Commerce

Create a new business model that demonstrates and supports the value of sustainability-based commerce.

Help build a culture that integrates sustainability principles and improves people's lives and livelihoods.

Move people and products efficiently to reduce waste and emissions.

Redesign processes and products to close the technical loop using recovered and bio-based materials.

Operate facilities with renewable energy sources: solar, wind, landfill gas, biomass, geothermal, tidal, low-impact/small-scale hydro or non-petroleum-based hydrogen.

Eliminate toxic substances from products, vehicles and facilities.

Remove all forms of waste in every area of business.

Figure 4
Seven Fronts: from Elimination to Redesign
Source: Interface

Figure 1: The Seven Fronts of Mount Sustainability (Anderson, 2009)

This fundamental rethinking and redesign of business processes meant that Ray Anderson would become a reputable force not only for seeing the value in sustainability to sell carpet but for seeing it as an opportunity to transform both people and commerce. As such, Anderson is now well regarded in sustainability circles for understanding the true value of sustainability from an environmental and economic perspective: To increase sales, cut costs and foster innovation (Makower, 2012). According to Anderson's 2009 book, *Confessions of a Radical Industrialist*, since 1994 Interface has: cut greenhouse gas emissions by 82 percent, cut fossil fuel consumption by 60 percent, cut waste by 66 percent, cut water use by 75 percent, invented and patented new machines, materials, and manufacturing processes and perhaps more interestingly, increased sales by 66 percent, doubled earnings, and raised profit margins (Anderson, 2009). However, perhaps more notably, Anderson is now well regarded in sustainability circles for understanding the true value of sustainability from a more social perspective: To delight employees, engage customers in the dialogue, influence other external players and build an enviable reputation for a company (Makower, 2012). That is, as a result of his radical departure from "business as usual," Anderson left a legacy of sustainability success proving to the business world that inner transformation (or the inside cause) determines sustainable action (or the outside effect) with respect to environmental, economic and social purposes. Refer to Figure 2: The Reinforcing Loop Between Inner Transformation & Sustainable Action.

determines

SUSTAINABLE
ACTION
(OUTSIDE EFFECT)
+

INNER
TRANSFORMATION
(INSIDE CAUSE)
+

R
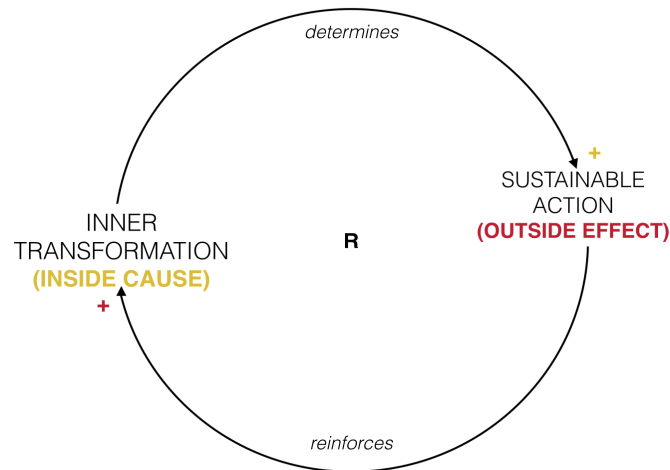
reinforces

Figure 2: The Reinforcing Loop Between Inner Transformation & Sustainable Action

So why aren't there more enlightened corporate leaders picking up where Anderson left off? Joel Makower, chairman and executive editor of GreenBiz Group, attempted to answer this very question back in 2012 in an article he dubbed: Why Aren't There More Ray Andersons? (Makower, 2012). After interviewing several Interface employees and members of the "Dream Team" of sustainability that Anderson assembled in the early 1990's, he came away with no definitive answers but these exchanges provided what he called, "a window of perspective" into sustainability leadership and the six characteristics, exemplified by the late Ray Anderson, that can be used to define it:

1. **An entrepreneur's vision** - Having a vision of what your company could be regardless of what others see or think
2. **A passion for learning** - Combining a problem-solving capability with a hunger for learning more
3. **Missionary zeal** - Believing you have a purpose
4. **Conviction and control** - Sticking to your guns regardless of risk
5. **The willingness to rethink everything** - Embracing innovation in new ways and engaging in new kinds of partnerships with a wide range of external players
6. **Relentless storytelling** - Learning to tell the story of your true 'nature'

In his article, Makower argues that in today's corporate world these seven characteristics are likely to remain few and far between, however, that it was not unreasonable that others would follow in Anderson's footsteps (Makower, 2012). Some examples include: Patagonia's Yvon Chouinard, Stonyfield Farm's Gary Hirshberg, Seventh Generation's Jeffrey Hollender, Method's Adam Lowry and Eric Ryan (Makower, 2012). Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, is another more recent example of corporate leadership that is pushing the envelope of sustainability (Boynton, 2015). Soon after he became CEO in 2009 - amidst the throes of financial crisis - Polman launched the 10-year Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, which seeks to decouple the company's growth from its environmental footprint with a bold objective to double revenue by 2020 and reduce environmental impact by 50% (Boynton, 2015; Unilever, 2010). Though uncertain whether Unilever will achieve these audacious environmental and economic goals by 2020, Polman expressed in a recent interview with Forbes that his main intention is to bring about "*a shift in people's mindsets*" (Boynton, 2015). Details of Unilever's integrated vision for 2020 can be found in Appendix B: Strategic Planning for Sustainability. However, despite the best efforts of corporate leaders like Ray Anderson and Paul Polman to influence other corporate leaders to personally transform and redesign their business practices, the field of contestants as Makower writes, is "*limited and often fleeting*" (Makower, 2012). Moreover, while Makower emphasizes the critical need for engaging "*tomorrow's leaders*" in a dialogue on the future of sustainability leadership to redesign commerce, he has narrowly defined these leaders to exclude more than 90% of business owners today by focusing solely on business

leaders of large corporations (Makower, 2012; Gasiorowski-Denis, 2015). On the one hand, this could be because we need to get better at celebrating the sustainability success stories of 90% of the world's businesses that are small enterprises (SEs) and on the other hand it could be that the importance of SEs and the critical role of SE leaders is often overlooked and grossly underestimated as an engine for economic growth and prosperity (Gasiorowski-Denis, 2015; Vinck, 2014). Whatever the case, perhaps more critically, we should be asking not; 'Why aren't there more enlightened leaders?' but rather 'Where are these enlightened leaders if not the large corporate sector?' 'What impact might enlightened leadership in small enterprises (SEs) play in the transition to sustainability?'

Primary Research Question

The aim of this research project is therefore to explore the link between inner transformation (or the inside causes) and sustainable action (or the outside effects), with the goal of uncovering how leaders of small enterprises (SEs) are reconciling their role in the world today and into the future - and what it will take to realize that future in the transition to sustainability. The primary research question that frames this research work is:

> **How might the inner transformation journey of SE leaders serve as a platform for the transition to sustainability that the future requires of us?**

RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS & FRAMES OF REFERENCE

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Using a multidisciplinary approach this research draws appropriately from multiple disciplines to redefine the challenges in the transition to sustainability outside normal boundaries in order to reach solutions based on a new understanding of this complex problem (Wikipedia, 2001). With respect to current and pioneering work in theory of human development, strategic foresight and a theory of change for sustainable development, there are three underlying assumptions of this research and therefore three possible frames of reference in which to view this research work from: the individual level, the organizational level and the contextual level. That is, in order to better understand how we might transition to sustainability at the contextual level or within the context of larger systems, this research focuses primarily on why individuals - or SE leaders more explicitly - personally transform using a systems approach to analysis that focuses on how these different frames of reference interrelate. This research therefore starts at the individual and expands outward to also include insights and analysis at the organizational and contextual level. Refer to Figure 3: Frames of Reference in Transition to Sustainability.
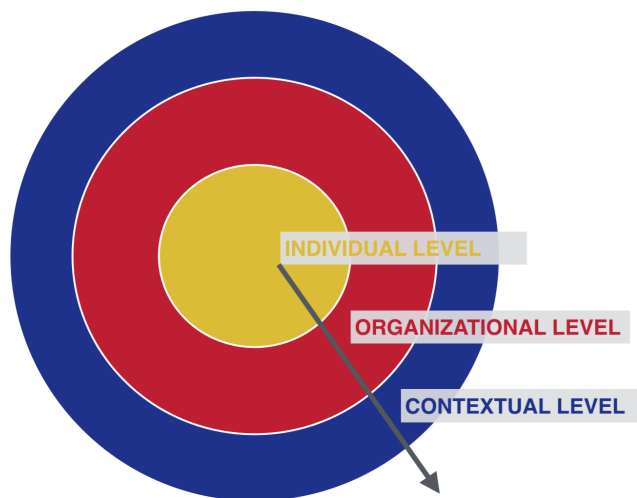
Figure 3: Frames of Reference in Transition to Sustainability

Assumption 1

Mindsets Determine Sustainable Action

An initial assumption of this research is grounded in human development theory and the fairly obvious notion that mindsets determine how we act as individuals and as organizations (Avastone Consulting, 2007; Cook-Greuter, 2004). The term mindset is used to refer to interior patterns of the mind, or ways of thinking, from which individuals see the importance of their actions in enacting a specific result (Avastone Consulting, 2007). In this regard, your mindset determines your behaviours and your behaviour produces specific results that reinforce your mindset (Bellinger, 2004). Refer to Figure 4: The Reinforcing Loop Between Mindset, Behaviour & Results.
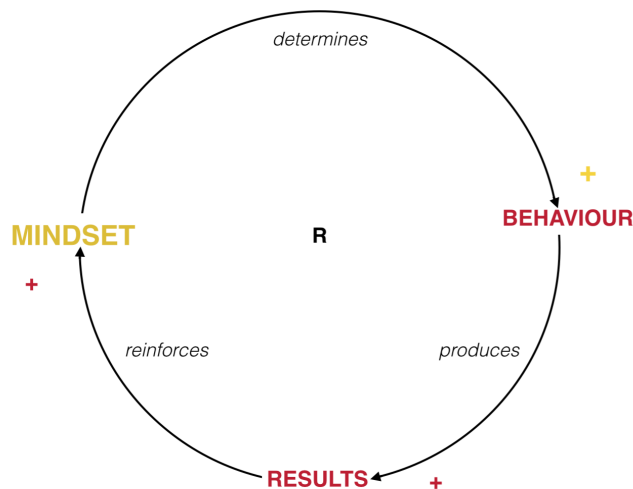
Figure 4: The Reinforcing Loop Between Mindset, Behaviour & Results

From this system's view, a shift in thinking patterns can determine different behaviours and produce different results that reinforce the development of a new mindset at the individual level.

Assumption 2

Desired States Determine Sustainable Results

The second assumption of this research project is grounded in strategic foresight and the perhaps less obvious notion that it is the relation between the desired state and the current state that forms the basis for strategic planning and subsequent sustainable results (Harel, van Arkel, van der Pluijm & Aanraad, 2013). Meaning, if the goal or objective is a desired sustainable state within a business context - as Ray Anderson exemplified by his vision for 2020 - then a balancing loop is created which attempts to move the current state (the results or way things are) to a desired sustainable state (goal or objective) through its sustainable actions (whatever is done to reach that goal) (Anderson, 1999; Bellinger, 2004). Refer to Figure 5: The Balancing Loop Between Current State & Desired Sustainable State.
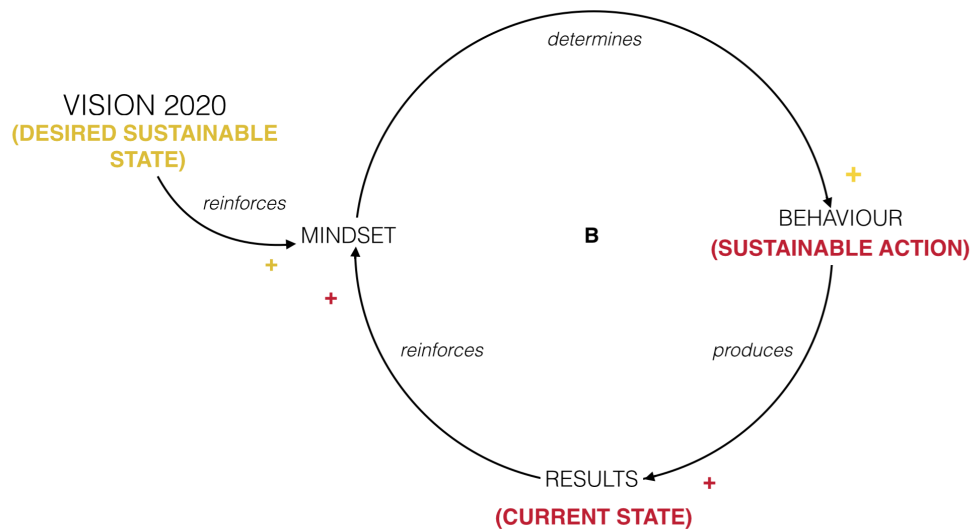
Figure 5: The Balancing Loop Between Current State & Desired Sustainable State

The difference between the desired sustainable state (or Vision 2020) and the current state of the business in this case creates a gap (Bellinger, 2004). This gap - as perceived by the mindset - is what drives the leader to further sustainable action (Bellinger, 2004). The sustainable actions then taken by the organization as a result - as exemplified by the seven fronts in the climb up Mount Sustainability - adds to the current state or results of the business and if successful subtracts from the gap (Anderson, 2009; Bellinger, 2004). When the sustainable action succeeds in moving the current state to a point where it is equal to the desired state, the gap is reduced to zero (Bellinger, 2004). Therefore, much like in the emblematic story of Ray Anderson, this process can be referred to as Mission Zero (Anderson, 2009; Bellinger, 2004). Refer to Figure 6: The Balancing Loop Gap Analysis & Mission Zero.
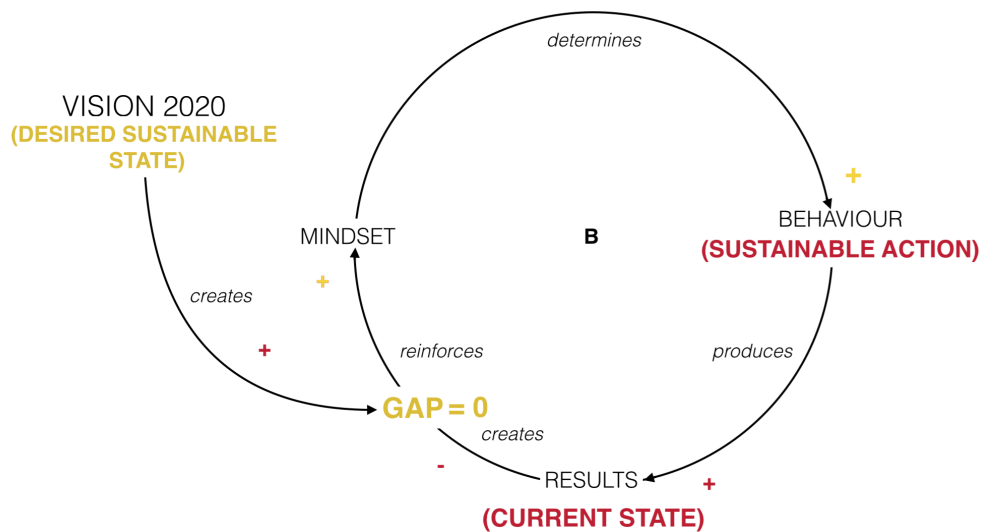
Figure 6: The Balancing Loop Gap Analysis & Mission Zero

From this system's view, a vision for a desired sustainable state is where leaders will need to start in order to design a plan of action that will lead them from the current state and towards the desired sustainable future that they want to create

(Harel, van Arkel, van der Pluijm & Aanraad, 2013). This approach to strategic planning is called backcasting in futures studies and is a form of creative thinking that doesn't start with today in mind or speculations about the future but instead starts with a vision for a desired state, and then asks what actions are needed to get there (Harel, van Arkel, van der Pluijm & Aanraad, 2013). Refer to Appendix B. Strategic Planning for Sustainability for a visual on the process of backcasting as used by The Natural Step Canada.

Assumption 3

Individuals Lead Sustainable Change

The final assumption of this research project is grounded in a theory of change for sustainable development which affirms that the transition to sustainability begins by increasing individual capacities to integrate sustainability into all decision-making and actions of organizations (The Natural Step Canada, 2013). According to The Natural Step Canada - a non-profit organization with over a decade of experience helping organizations and individuals make meaningful progress toward sustainability - as awareness, commitment and competence develops in individuals (green spirals), they begin to collaborate with others to build awareness, commitment and competence in organizations (blue spirals) and eventually, these qualities create the conditions for collaboration and systems-level change toward a more sustainable society (purple spirals) (The Natural Step Canada, 2013). Refer to Figure 7: Theory of Change for Sustainable Development.
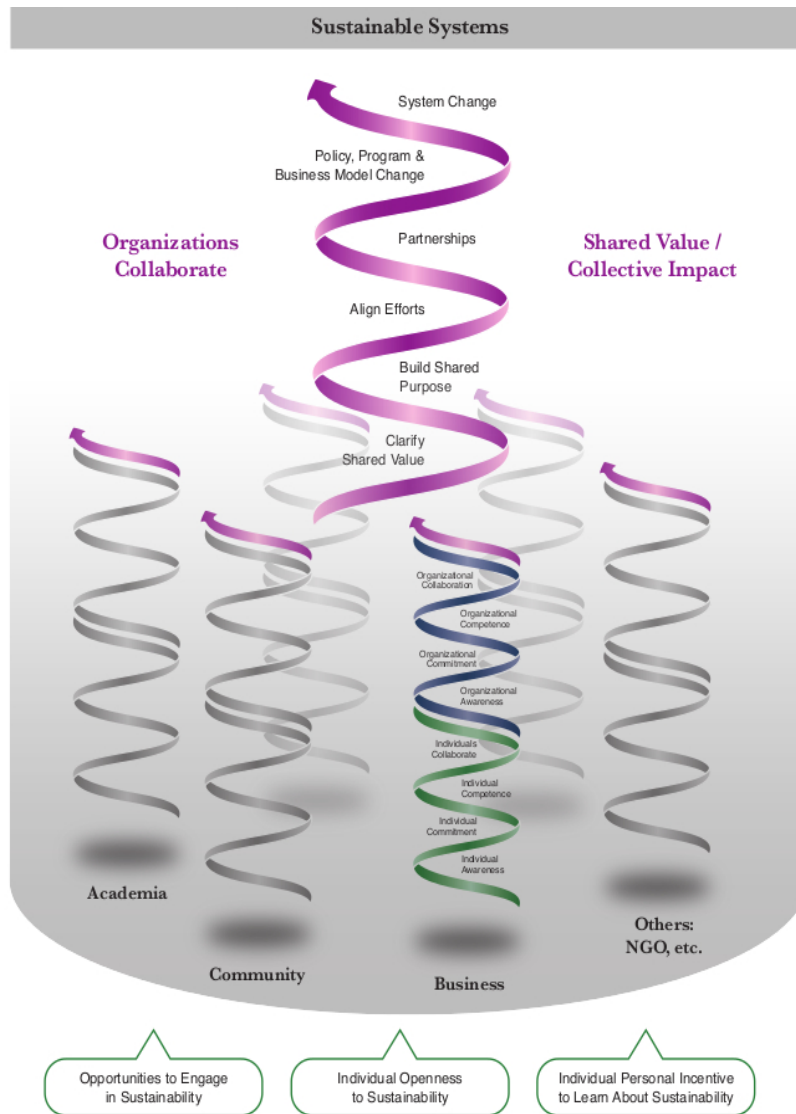
Figure 7: Theory of Change for Sustainable Development (The Natural Step Canada, 2013)

To expand on this system's view, this theory of change believes that organizations cannot themselves be sustainable in an unsustainable society and that in the end, it is our systems that must evolve to become more sustainable (Anderson, 2009; The Natural Step Canada, 2013). However, while most action and investment to spur the transformation will take place in the context of institutions, this theory of change suggests that the transition to sustainability will

be led by individuals (The Natural Step Canada, 2013). From this system's view, in order to transition to a more sustainable society we need first to design new opportunities for individuals to engage in sustainability, develop an individual's openness to sustainability and discover an individual's personal incentive for learning about sustainability (The Natural Step Canada, 2013).

Core Drivers of Sustainable Change

Based on the research assumptions there are two core drivers of change identified in the transition to sustainability: 1) Inner Transformation or a shift in leader mindset toward the development of a new mindset at the individual level and, 2) Outer Transformation or a shift in business practices toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level. Refer to Figure 8. Core Drivers of Sustainable Change.
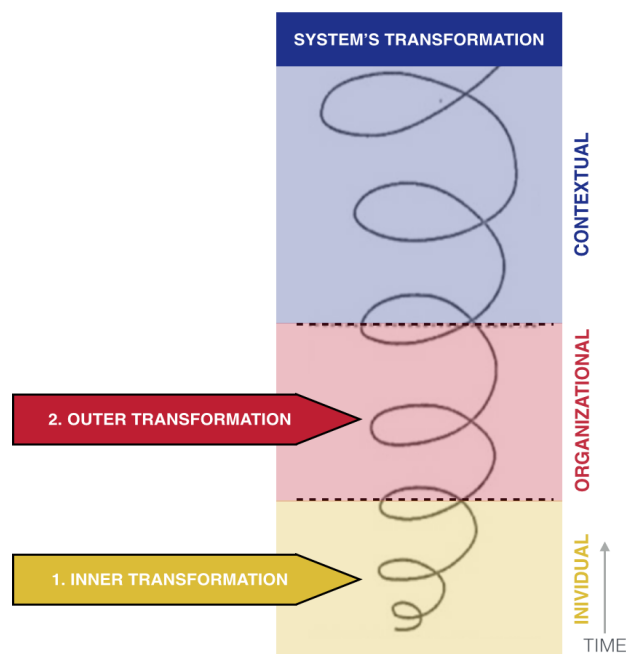
Figure 8. Core Drivers of Sustainable Change Adapted from the Theory of Change for Sustainable Development (The Natural Step Canada, 2013)

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the dawn of the 21st century marked a new sustainable development theory that a more prosperous, socially just and environmentally sustainable world for present and future generations can only emerge from a radical transformation of all man-made systems, including ourselves (Borg, 2003; Brown, 2006; Cortese, 2003; Edwards, 2005; Esty & Winston, 2006; Elkington & Hartigan, 2008; Fresco, 2011; Laszlo, 2008; Meadows, Randers & Meadows, 2004; Scharmer, 2009; McDonough & Braungart, 2002). This human development perspective of transforming both people and businesses for sustainability is now reaching a critical mass in response to the need for profound and rapid change in the transition to a more sustainable society (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Confino, 2012; Cook-Greuter, 2004; Gratton, 2012; Hardman, 2009; Henriques, 2013; Hoskins, 2012; McEwen & Schmidt, 2007; The Natural Step, 2016; Wilber, 2009). In a recent article by The Guardian entitled, "*Moments of revelation trigger the biggest transformations*," Executive Editor Jo Confino suggests that if you delve into the triggers for transformation among business leaders - much like in the emblematic story of Ray Anderson - it is often an epiphany rather than greater knowledge that leads to the raising of consciousness as well as to concrete action (Confino 2012). However, Sir Brian Hoskins - the director of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change at Imperial College London - adds that we often do not hear about these moments in the business world because they fall outside of what is considered to be "*appropriate lexicon*" and can often be "*too personal*" for many business leaders, despite often being triggered by something very ordinary (Confino, 2012; Hoskins, 2012). Hoskins elaborates using the example of Paul Polman of Unilever, whose inspiration for the Sustainable Living Plan - as

mentioned earlier in this report - was stated to have come from, "*looking into his children's eyes and recognizing he would be failing them if he did not do all the he could to ensure their future well-being*" (Confino, 2012; Hoskins, 2012). Moreover, Lynda Gratton - a London School of Business professor and top 50 management thinker - has been exploring triggers for transformation among business leaders and based on her in-depth research into 60 prominent companies has almost invariably found that sustainability programs have developed as a result of an individual's "*inner experience*" (Cofino, 2012; Gratton, 2012). Based on her findings, Gratton describes sustainability leaders as people who have taken both an "*outer journey*," with respect to best practices and business strategy and an "*inner journey*," with respect to how those leaders have found their voice, their courage and their authenticity (Cofino, 2012; Gratton, 2012). By and large these inner journeys include what Gratton calls "*leadership crucibles*," or transformative experiences through which an individual comes to a new or altered sense of identity (Confino, 2012; Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Gratton, 2012). Moreover, as Gratton describes, business schools and corporations are very good at the outer journey - that is, training people in business strategy - and eludes to the fact in an exclusive interview with The Guardian that perhaps these programs need to get better at preparing leaders for the inner journey (Confino, 2012). Similarly, Dr. John Hardman - PhD in Educational Leadership from Florida Atlantic University - argues in his scholarship based on a two-year study with 24 successful leaders of increasingly sustainable organizations, that there must emerge a profound shift in how leadership is developed and performed, grounded in a shift toward increased emphasis on systems consciousness development

(Doppelt, 2005; Ferdig, 2007; Hardman, 2009; Scharmer, 2007; Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur & Schley, 2008; Wilber, 2000). Similar to Gratton, Hardman defines consciousness development as it relates to the "*inner work*" necessary for individuals to become more fully aware of their own unique nature so that they may access, integrate and employ a systems-level view (Hardman, 2009). Based on these findings, it would seem, that expanding an individual's capacities towards a more integrated self-theory and expanded worldview might be the only way to a sustainable future (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Confino, 2012; Cook-Greuter, 2004; Gratton, 2012; Hardman, 2009; Henriques, 2013; Hoskins, 2012; McEwen & Schmidt, 2007; The Natural Step, 2016; Wilber, 2009). According to further research, the link between mindset development and sustainability was explored in-depth by McEwen & Schmidt in a report entitled *Mindsets in Action* (2007). Their study conducted on 10 leaders of prominent companies each with substantial sustainability experience, identifies the direct relationship between leader mindset development and the realization of complex sustainability outcomes (Avastone Consulting, 2007). Based on their findings, embracing the complexity of sustainability outcomes calls for understanding it at a "*new level of consciousness*," as such they have incorporated five stages of business activity (or "*gears*") along the business sustainability journey using a framework entitled: Gearing Up (Avastone Consulting, 2007). Refer to Appendix C: The Progression Toward Sustainability & Profile of 10 Prominent Companies for descriptions on the five gears of the Gearing Up Framework and the position of 10 prominent companies along this progression. Integral to their findings on the five gears is the important role of leader mindset in bridging the gap to higher gears of

business activity for sustainability (Avastone Consulting, 2007). However, of the 10 participating organizations in that particular study, none of the business leaders interviewed achieved a stage of consciousness higher than the 4.0 Integrate Gear - where sustainability becomes increasingly strategic and integrated in the business - and the majority (or 60%) of the business leaders studied do not view the 5.0 Redesign Gear - where business contributes to systems-level change - as "*business-relevant*" (Avastone Consulting, 2007). This particular finding suggests that perhaps along with a profound shift in leader mindset development there must emerge a profound shift in which business leaders we look to as enablers in the transition to sustainability and therefore, which organizations we invest resources in to make the most progress toward systems-level change. In other words, if sustainability is being strategically integrated in small businesses (SEs) and if SE leaders increasingly believe systems-level change to be "*business-relevant*" perhaps the time has come that they command our full attention and some creative thinking about the best way to boost them (Vinck, 2014). Based on these collective secondary findings on three studies conducted on a total of 94 prominent companies with sustainability experience and on the latent potential for this number to increase when expanded to include small businesses, it would appear as though the foundations for transformation are already being put in place by a growing set of role models, which over the next several years, as Gratton predicts, will become "*beacons*" for how other organizations - of all sizes - behave (Cofino, 2012; Gratton, 2012). It would seem, therefore, that leaders across a variety of industries and sectors are already transforming their sense of "*self*," bringing us back to the reality of nature

and human nature and creating more inroads for alternative economic models. The challenge for those working to support businesses in the transition to sustainability therefore becomes: If new patterns or ways of thinking are required for a more sustainable future, then what new mindset is required? How do we shift into it? Or perhaps more explicitly, what are the implications for shifting SE leader mindset to see systems-level change as "*business-relevant*" in the transition to sustainability?

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity 1

Reframe The Problem

Based on in-depth research into the extensive and cutting edge human development work of Susanne Cook-Greuter - an internationally known expert in mature ego development and self-actualization - there are two aspects driving mindset growth and expansion: horizontal development and vertical development (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Horizontal development refers to the expansion in capacities through increases in knowledge, skills and behaviour whereas vertical development refers to how we learn to see the world through new eyes, how we change our interpretations of experience and how we transform our views of reality (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Refer to Figure 9: Horizontal and Vertical Transformation (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Horizontal = expansion at same stage (developing new skills, adding information & knowledge, transfer from one area to another)

Up = Transformation, vertical development, new more integrated perspective, higher center of gravity

Down = temporary or permanent regression due to life circumstances, environment, stress and illness.
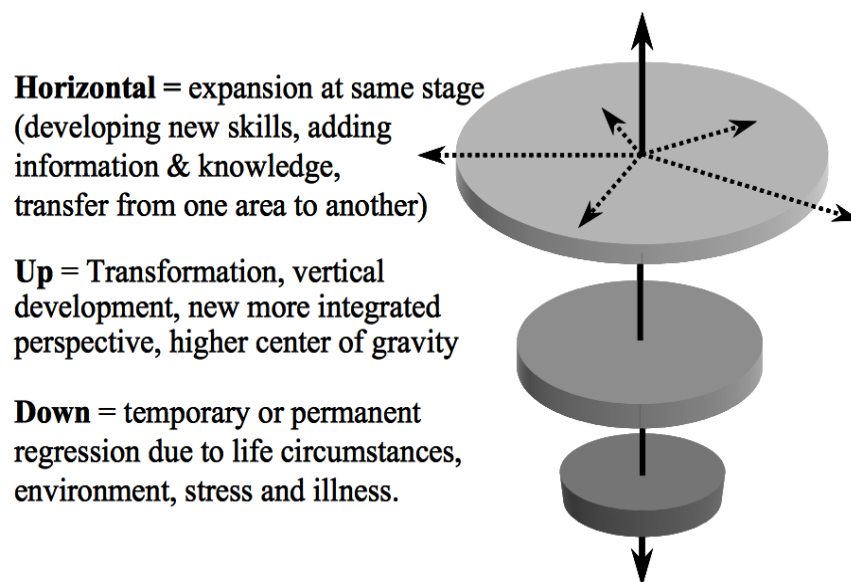
Figure 9: Horizontal And Vertical Transformation (Cook-Greuter, 2004)

Similar to Ray Anderson's Mount Sustainability, the metaphor of a mountain is used as an illustration of vertical development and what it means to gain an increasing higher vantage point, whereby the closer you get to the mountain's summit (or Mission Zero) the easier it becomes to see beyond your current view toward broader horizons (Anderson, 2009; Cook-Greuter, 2004). However, despite the transformative nature of vertical development, most growth of individuals is of the horizontal kind - that is, people learn new skills, new knowledge, new facts and new ways of organizing knowledge and yet their current state remains unchanged (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Perhaps this is because a vertical shift toward a new more integrated perspective is estimated to take about five years in individuals - if the circumstances are favourable and if the individual is open to change - or minimally one year in the case of a well-designed development program (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Or perhaps more critically, this is because most conventional training and development programs do not design intervention strategies to be one development stage or two higher than the individuals they are being designed for - that according to a well-known study on '*Promoting Ego Development Among Adults*,' is integral to vertical growth in most individuals   (Manners, Durkin & Nesdale, 2004). The different developmental stages of vertical growth are more clearly understood using Cook-Greuter's Leadership Development Framework (LDF). Overall, the LDF describes nine stages (or action logics) of a leader's development, however, the following seven outline the most common stages in business leadership (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Refer to Figure 10. The Leadership Development Framework of Human Development (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Stage/Action Logic	Main focus	% adult pop. N=4510
Alchemist and above Deep processes and intersystemic evolution rules principles	Interplay of awareness, thought, action, and effects; transforming self and others	2.0
Strategist Most valuable principles rule relativism	Linking theory and principles with practice, dynamic systems interactions	4.9
Individualist Relativism rules single system logic	Self in relationship to system; interaction with system	11.3
Achiever System effectiveness rules craft logic	Delivery of results, effectiveness, goals, success within system	29.7
Expert Craft logic rules norms	Expertise, procedure and efficiency	36.5
Diplomat Norms rule needs	Socially expected behavior, approval	11.3
Opportunist and below Needs rule impulses	Own immediate needs, opportunities, self-protection	4.3

Figure 10: The Leadership Development Framework of Human Development (Cook-Greuter, 2004)

Additionally, the LDF distinguishes between conventional - or the adult stage per se - and postconventional - or the system's view - in reference to what is known in human development theory as "*tiers of human consciousness*" (Cook-Greuter, 2004). When applied to the seven action logics referenced in Figure 10 the leader's development stages can be seen as occurring throughout these different tiers of human consciousness creating what Cook-Greuter refers to as The Spiral of Human Development. Overall, the LDF describes four tiers of human consciousness, however, the majority of the seven action logics can be seen as occurring within the conventional and postconventional tiers of human consciousness. Refer to Figure 11: The Spiral of Human Development in the LDF, where OPP represents the Opportunist stage, DIP represents the Diplomat stage and so on.

INTEGRATION | SEPARATION

6+ Transp

TRANSPERSONAL

IRON 6

5/6 MAG

POSTCONVENTIONAL

STRA 5

4/5 IND

Conventional cultural-social ceiling

ACH 4

CONVENTIONAL

3/4 EXP

DIP 3

2/3 OPP

IMP 2

PRECONVENTIONAL

BIRTH
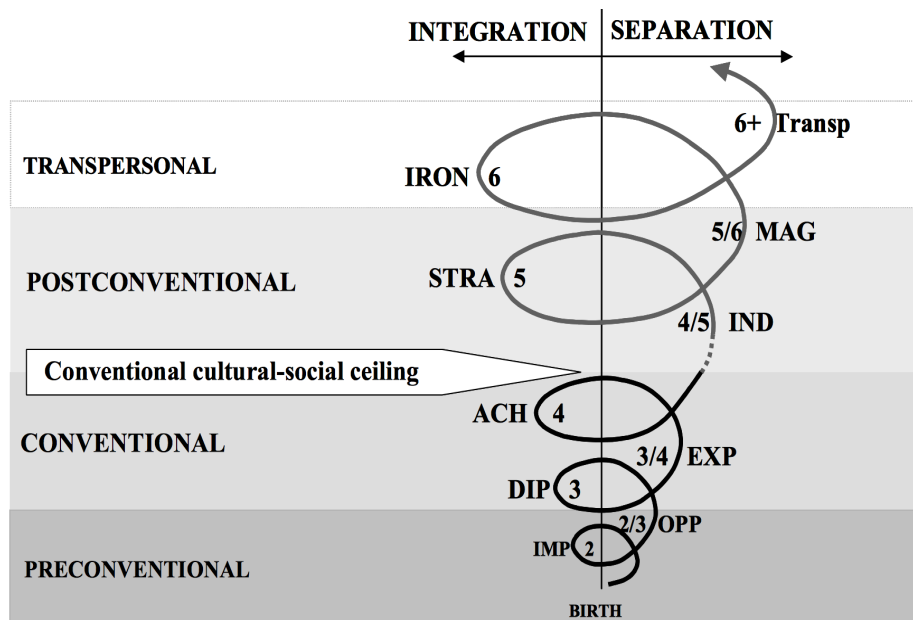
Figure 11: The Spiral of Human Development in the LDF (Cook-Greuter, 2004)

Based on Cook-Greuter's findings, 75-80% of individuals in modern society function at the conventional stages while only 10-20% of adults demonstrate postconventional action logics (Cook-Greuter, 2004). From this human development perspective, a shift in leader mindset can best be understood as a transition away from conventional consciousness and toward postconventional or systems-consciousness - or in other words - from the achiever (ACH) action logic to the individualist (IND) view of reality in the LDF model (Cook-Greuter, 2013). This finding presents a research opportunity to reframe the problem to include a shift in mindset toward postconventional or systems-consciousness in the transition to sustainability at the individual level.

Opportunity 2

Reimagine the Critical Role

Internationally, the SME abbreviation is used to mean Small and Medium Enterprise and is defined by Industry Canada as businesses with less than 500 employees. SE, in this case, is used to mean just Small Enterprise which are defined by Industry Canada as businesses with less than 99 employees (World Library, 2015). As of December 2012, SMEs account for 1.1 million employer businesses in Canada: 98.2 percent of which are small enterprises (SEs) (Government of Canada, 2013). In 2012, SEs alone employed more than 7.7 million people across the country (Business Development Bank of Canada, 2012). Not to mention, in the 2002 to 2012 period, SEs were responsible for over 77.7% of all jobs created in the private sector having created 100,000 new jobs on average each year (Business Development Bank of Canada, 2012). Additionally, according to the Network for Business Sustainability, SEs can - and often do - embrace social, environmental and economic sustainability as part of their business operations (Network for Business Sustainability, 2016). Their smallness also allows them to adapt quicker, leaving them well-positioned to embrace new niche innovations for products and services with environmentally and/or socially responsible components (Network for Business Sustainability, 2016). Based on these findings it would appear as though SEs not only represent the large majority of businesses in Canada but are an important engine for economic growth and prosperity. However, despite their importance, the critical role of SEs is often overlooked and the job of SE leaders therefore, grossly

underestimated (Vinck, 2014). According to professor Sabine Vinck - Associate Dean, Executive Education, London School of Business - SE leaders need to adapt their talent strategies at every stage of the business' growth, working around many macro-economic trends, in order to scale up and expand their businesses (Vinck, 2014). As such, SE leaders not only have to reinvent their businesses but they have to reinvent themselves during every stage of the business' growth and therefore are well positioned to commit to self-awareness, self-management and self-improvement initiatives (Vinck, 2014). Their smallness can therefore be seen as an advantage in this case, as SE leaders themselves are more willing to change and therefore more able to strongly influence organizational behaviour and results (Network for Business Sustainability, 2016). So why is it that the critical role of SEs and SE leaders is all too often overlooked and underestimated? On the one hand, it could be that we need to get better at raising the profiles of SE leaders or perhaps more broadly, it is due in part to SEs accounting for only 27% of Canada's GDP which has remained consistent over the past decade (Government of Canada, 2013). Whatever the case, raising the profiles of SE leaders should be a priority, especially those with already integrated notions of sustainability that seek to blend environmental and/or social purposes with business methods. A research opportunity has therefore been identified to reimagine the critical role of SEs, beginning with an understanding of the perspectives of SE leaders, to shift business practices toward desired sustainable states in the transition toward sustainability at the organizational level.

RESEARCH PROCESS & RATIONALE

The process to conduct this research followed: (1) Defining the research problem; (2) Discovering the relation to SEs more explicitly; and, (3) Designing possible solutions. Details on the research process and rationale are described in greater detail below.

Stage 1

Defining the Research Problem

In the early stages of the research project, an emblematic story of change was used to help define the research problem and make sense of the link between inner transformation and sustainable action. The use of an emblematic story of change at the problem formulation stage helped to merge synthesis and analysis, making the abstract concept of inside causes and outside effects more concrete. As the precursor to a more formal exploration and analysis, it was also used as a tool for information-gathering in identifying the research opportunities as well as for narrative-gathering from research participants to gain a better understanding of the related human emotions and issues that might otherwise be missed or misunderstood through a more structured approach (Harrington & Mickelson, 2009).

Stage 2

Discover the Relation to SEs

In the next stages of the research project, internal explorations on the inside causes and external explorations on the outside effects were conducted to discover its relation to SE leaders more explicitly. These explorations helped to gain more descriptive data about the inside causes for a shift in SE leader

mindset toward sustainable action and the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset toward sustainable results. The data collected from the internal and external explorations formed the basis for a more formal analysis of findings. As the precursor to solution formulation, this analysis of findings was used to identify the barriers in transition to sustainability and for identifying the strategic implications in overcoming such barriers.

Stage 3

Design Possible Solutions

In the final stage of the research project, a synthesis of the qualitative data collected was conducted in order to provide a proposed development plan for overcoming the barriers in the transition to sustainability. The design of a strategic plan at the solution formulation stage helps to give a framework for thinking about how we might transition to sustainability at the individual and organizational level. Refer to Figure 12: Research Process.

Figure 12: Research Process

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to conduct this research included: (1) Studying an emblematic story of change demonstrating the link between inner transformation and sustainable action; (2) A literature review to identify similar work done in this area; (3) Primary research on the inside causes for a shift in SE leader mindset using in-depth interviews followed by a more targeted analysis of the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset using the data collected from the in-depth interviews. Details on these research methodologies are described in greater detail below.

Methodology 1

Emblematic Story of Change

The story of Ray Anderson is emblematic of the link between inner transformation (or the inside causes) and sustainable action (or the outside effects). It was used to help identify the two core drivers of change in the transition to sustainability; (1) Inner transformation or a shift in leader mindset toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and, (2) Outer transformation or a shift in business practises toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level.

Methodology 2

Literature Review

A literature review reviews key issues, thinking and tensions in a given field (Design Research Techniques, 2015). A literature review was conducted for the purposes of this research project to review similar research work done on the link

between inner transformation and sustainable action as well as to identify the research opportunities.

Methodology 3

In-Depth Interviews with SE Leaders

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants to explore their particular perspectives on a situation (Design Research Techniques, 2016). In-depth interviews were conducted for the purposes of this research project to provide an internal and external exploration of the inside causes for a shift in SE leader mindset and the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset more explicitly.

In-Depth Interview Questions

The in-depth interview questions were designed to be semi-structured and open-ended to encourage a full meaningful answer using the research participants' own knowledge and feelings. The interview questions for this internal and external exploration, as referenced in Appendix D: Interview Questions for SE Leaders, were created through a process of rapid iteration. That is, the first few rounds of interviews acted as a guidepost to inform any additional questions that were added from the learnings of the previous to subsequent in-depth interviews.

In-Depth Interview Selection Criteria

The research project draws on in-depth interviews with a total of eleven SE leaders with a diverse set of backgrounds, education, training and life experiences. The SE leaders selected to participate in this research project had between 2-8 years' experience leading a more sustainability-driven organization. SE leaders were selected on the basis of their role as either founder, executive or acting president of an SE that seeks to blend environmental and/or social purposes and business methods. The SE cases considered, while representative of traditional for-profit and nonprofit models, included several alternative models such as: Green Businesses, Certified B-Corps, Social Enterprises and Management Consulting Firms in Sustainability and Social Good. The age of the SE leaders of these alternative enterprise models varied, along with the size of the SEs, which varied between 1 and 29 employees. Both the SE leaders selected and SE cases considered were also geographically diverse and included: 5 from Ontario, 4 from British Columbia, 1 from Manitoba and 1 from the United Kingdom.

FINDINGS

The findings from the explorations were grouped into four items, two from the internal and two from the external. In the internal exploration on the inside causes for a shift in SE leader mindset two key findings were identified in the transition to sustainability at the individual level: (1) Conventional conditions and, (2) Unconventional conditions. In the external exploration on the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset two key findings were identified in the transition to sustainability at the organizational level: (3) The range of desired actions and, (4) The continuum of SE leader mindset development. Details on these findings are explored in greater detail below.

Inside Causes for a Shift in SE Leader Mindset

Finding 1. Conventional Conditions

For the purposes of this research project conventional conditions are understood as conditions that create capacities for conventional ways of thinking in the transition to sustainability at the individual level, as referenced above in Figure 11. The data collected from the in-depth interviews with SE leaders revealed three possible conventional conditions: I) The role of early upbringing and growing up, II) The stage of maturity and, III) The gap between value-systems and current reality. Examples illustrating these findings are explored in greater detail below.

Finding 1. I) The Role of Early Upbringing & Growing Up

When the research participants were asked about the role of early upbringing and growing up, the majority of the SE leaders interviewed mentioned the nature of its significance in determining their goals and objectives. This particular finding on the role of early upbringing and growing up shared three common elements among the SE cases explored: i. Parental Influence, ii. Community Influence and/or, iii. Nature's Influence. The following are examples of those research participants who expressed strong beliefs in the role of early upbringing and growing up.

Example 1.I) i/ii. Parental & Community Influence:

> *"I think my bias toward "doing good" or being considerate about the world around you is absolutely rooted in my upbringing. I happen to have parents who come from a very middle-class background [...] I think they've always viewed community and community participation as a very important part of their life but not as something that is exceptional - done only in your spare time - but as something that is integrated into the day to day life."*

Example 1.I) iii. Nature's Influence:

> *"I was always spending time in nature growing up and for me, it was this early access to nature that galvanized my sentiment that the environment was worth protecting for future generations and also that it was something we should steward in our lifetime."*

This finding on creating the conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset would suggest that an individual develops their basic values, attitudes and behaviours that support sustainable action from their early years and that perhaps, in general, these elements of early upbringing and growing up can impact desired action and play an important role in the transition to sustainability at the individual level.

Finding 1. II) The Stage of Maturity

When the research participants were asked how they came to perceive themselves in the context of sustainability more specifically, the majority of SE leaders interviewed seemed to be middle-aged, more educated and/or more experienced when a significant change in their thinking patterns occurred. This particular finding on the stage of maturity shared three common elements or stages among the SE cases explored: i. College/University, ii. First career and, iii. Becoming a parent. This finding on creating the conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset would suggest that perhaps individuals are more receptive and ready to move in the direction of sustainability somewhere in their mid 20s to late 30s and therefore, the end of youth and beginning of true adulthood marks a critical time period in the transition to sustainability at the individual level.

Finding 1. III) The Gap Between Value-Systems & Current Reality

When the research participants were asked about their personal story of transformation that led them on this alternative path, the majority of the SE leaders interviewed expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the current reality. This particular finding on the gap between value-systems and current reality shared two common elements among the SE cases explored: i. Education gap and, ii. Experience gap. The following are examples of those research participants who expressed strong feelings of dissatisfaction.

Example 1.III) i. Experience Gap:

"I practiced law, and that was definitely not comporting with what I wanted to do, not that practicing law is not sustainable, but the nature of what I was doing investment-wise, I didn't feel, was facilitating the right kind of investment [...] That's what got me thinking about what I wanted to do next."

Example 1.III) ii. Experience Gap:

"Increasingly as I got further in my career [as a management consultant] *what I really felt was, I loved the intellectual challenge of helping large companies in most cases rethink their business strategy [...] But for me, it wasn't creating the same amount of emotional satisfaction. That's what got me thinking: Is there a different way to go about this? Is there a way to make businesses think more meaningfully and more materially about being a better 'citizen' from a social and environmental perspective? And, could this actually be a differentiator and a driver for business?'"*

Example 1.III) iii. Education Gap:

"I studied business, and I was never really interested in any of the other more traditional opportunities that were coming to other people as a result of going to business school. While I was studying, I didn't even know what a social enterprise [...] but when I learned what a social enterprise was, I was immediately interested in it. I thought it made so much sense like: 'Ok, here is a business that is able to operate and function within the framework of the world.'"

This finding on creating the conditions for a shift in SE mindset would suggest that feelings of dissatisfaction with the current reality can cause an individual to identify a gap and that perhaps, in general, the identification of a gap can play an important role in the transition to sustainability at the individual level. Based on these collective findings on the conventional conditions it would seem that perhaps a possible trigger of desired action is unfulfilled needs, as an individual acts to fill that gap or to satisfy those unmet needs. These findings would suggest that there is perhaps an interdependent relationship between unfulfilled needs

and the conventional conditions and elements. Refer to Figure 13 for a synthesis

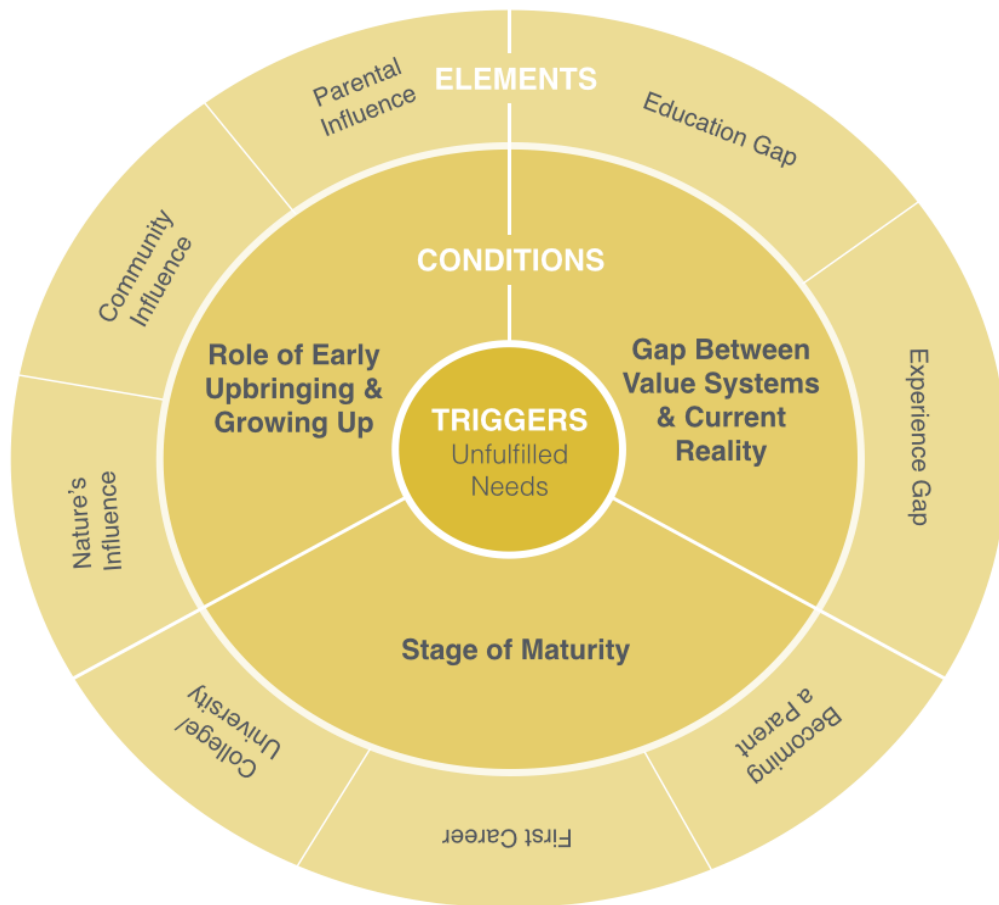of the data collected on conventional conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset.

Figure 13: Conventional Conditions for Shift in SE Leader Mindset

Finding 2. Unconventional Conditions

For the purposes of this research project unconventional conditions are understood as conditions that create capacities for postconventional or systems-consciousness in the transition to sustainability at the individual level, as referenced above in Figure 11. The data collected from the in-depth interviews, revealed three possible unconventional conditions: I) Moments of confrontation, II) Power of influence and, III) Emotional futures thinking. Examples illustrating these findings are explored in greater detail below.

Finding 2. I) Moments of Confrontation

When the research participants were asked about their personal story of transformation that led them on this alternative path, a few of the SE leaders interviewed shared a moment of confrontation that caused a significant change in their view of reality. This particular finding on moments of confrontation shared two common elements among the SE cases explored: i. Self-reflection and, ii. Self-inquiry. The following example is used as an illustration of this finding.

Example 2. I) i/ii. The Story of 300 Plastic Spoons:

> *"The specific example of the moment it really clicked was when I was hanging with this person I really cared about and I offered them a bowl of cereal and they asked for a spoon so I ran to my closet and grabbed the box of 300 plastic spoons that I had. I handed it to them and they looked at me and said: 'why do you have a box of 300 plastic spoons?' That kind of question enraged me and put me into a moment of reflection: 'Yeah, Um why do I have 300 plastic spoons when one metal one would be just fine? It was a little spark that started clicking in my head like I can change my actions and affect those around me."*

In the story of 300 plastic spoons the SE leader interviewed references a moment of self-reflection that forced them to question who they are and what really

mattered to them. This particular finding on creating the conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset would suggest that the ability of an individual to change their view of reality in some fundamental way as a result of a real experience in confrontation with someone (as in the case of the SE example provided above) or in confrontation with new information (as in the case of the emblematic story of change) can have significant impact on desired action and therefore, self-reflection and inquiry can play an important role in the transition to sustainability at the individual level.

Finding 2. II) Power of Influence

When the research participants were asked what events led to the creation of an alternative business or a more sustainability-driven model of organization, several SE leaders interviewed mentioned the influence of another stakeholder. This particular finding on the power of influence shared three common elements or stakeholders among the SE cases explored: i. Mentor influence, ii. New/close friend influence and, iii. New hire/employee influence. The following examples are used as an illustration of this finding.

Example 2. II) i. Mentor Influence:

> *"Yeah, it happened in this room in Toronto, I was sitting in on this interview and the interviewer asked: Where do you want this to go in 10 years? And* the founder *said: 'Well I don't necessarily want to be running this all over the place but I would like this model to exist elsewhere.' I was sitting beside him at dinner later that night and said: 'Hey, I would love to bring this to Toronto what do you think?' And he said: 'Yeah sure, let's do it!' [...] He was very much a yes man [...] I think how he views the world has really rubbed off on me."*

Example 2. II) ii. New/Close Friend Influence:

> *"My business partner and I, we met and had a meaningful conversation for the first time in person 4 years before we started this business. [...] It's a person you meet that you tuck away at the back of your head and think 'Hmm, maybe someday." [...] Fast forward 4 years, we had both reached the point in our careers and respective organizations where, where we felt those businesses needed to go and where the ownership of those businesses felt they needed to go were different. [...] So we were sitting having lunch one day at one of our usual spots and started talking about starting something of our own [...] It was very much a return to that conversation we had had over drinks 4 years ago."*

Example 2. II) iii. New Hire/Employee Influence:

> *"The one thing that spurred my interest in it was when we hired a great new manager from Australia who was able to implement more sustainable measures in our business which led to that spreading to other parts of our business."*

In the examples provided above, the SE leaders interviewed can be seen attributing desired action to the influence of one of these key stakeholders who seem to be in a position of trust with the SE leader. This particular finding on creating the conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset would suggest that the power of influence lies in building trust and connecting with others who share a different or perhaps more integrated and expanded worldview on sustainability, as similar to the emblematic story of change and the influence of Anderson's "*close friend and mentor*," Paul Hawkin (Anderson, 2009). This correlation would suggest that influencing others through their trust network can impact desired action and play an important role in the transition to sustainability at the individual level.

Finding 2. III) Emotional Futures Thinking

When the research participants were asked about their "*vision of tomorrow*" a few of the SE leaders interviewed - when anticipating these future events - expressed strong emotional reactions or feelings of concern in thinking about the future. This particular finding on futures thinking shared one common element among the SE cases explored: i. Influence of children & future generations. The following example is provided to demonstrate this finding.

Example 2. III) i. Influence of Children & Future Generations:

> *"Part of it for me is, absolutely driven by a personal part. Full disclosure, I have a five year old son and I worry about the world he will inhabit when he's 15 let alone when he's 50. And, I am not going to pretend that I, as an individual, have any real macro-influence on that. In fact I accept that I have actually no influence on that whatsoever but I believe that we don't get enough people pulling in the right direction. As a result, he's at a much higher likelihood of having a much scarier future and a much scarier life than I've had, I think, personally than we've had in any previous generation. [...] I think a big part of what we do* [at X Company] *is in the service or in the belief that we want to leave a better world and allow our children to live a better life than we have."*

In the example provided above, the SE leader interviewed can be seen attributing desired action to the influence of this critical stakeholder. This particular finding would suggest that perhaps children, by their very nature, force us to think about the future and that emotional futures thinking can have significant impact on desired action. Similarly, in the emblematic story of change, Ray Anderson mentions how the new knowledge gained from his moment of confrontation forced him to think about the future his grandchildren - alternatively, his children's children in this case - would inherit (Anderson, 2008; Makower, 2012). This correlation between emotional futures thinking and the emblematic story of

change would suggest that perhaps the influence of children and future generations forces individuals to take a longer view in the transition to sustainability at the individual level. Based on these collective findings on the unconventional conditions it would seem that perhaps a trigger of desired action in the transition to sustainability - as evidenced by the emblematic story of change - is an epiphany or a moment or sudden or striking realization. Moreover, these findings would suggest that there is an interdependent relationship between an epiphany and the unconventional conditions and elements. Refer to Figure 14 for a synthesis of the data collected on unconventional conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset.
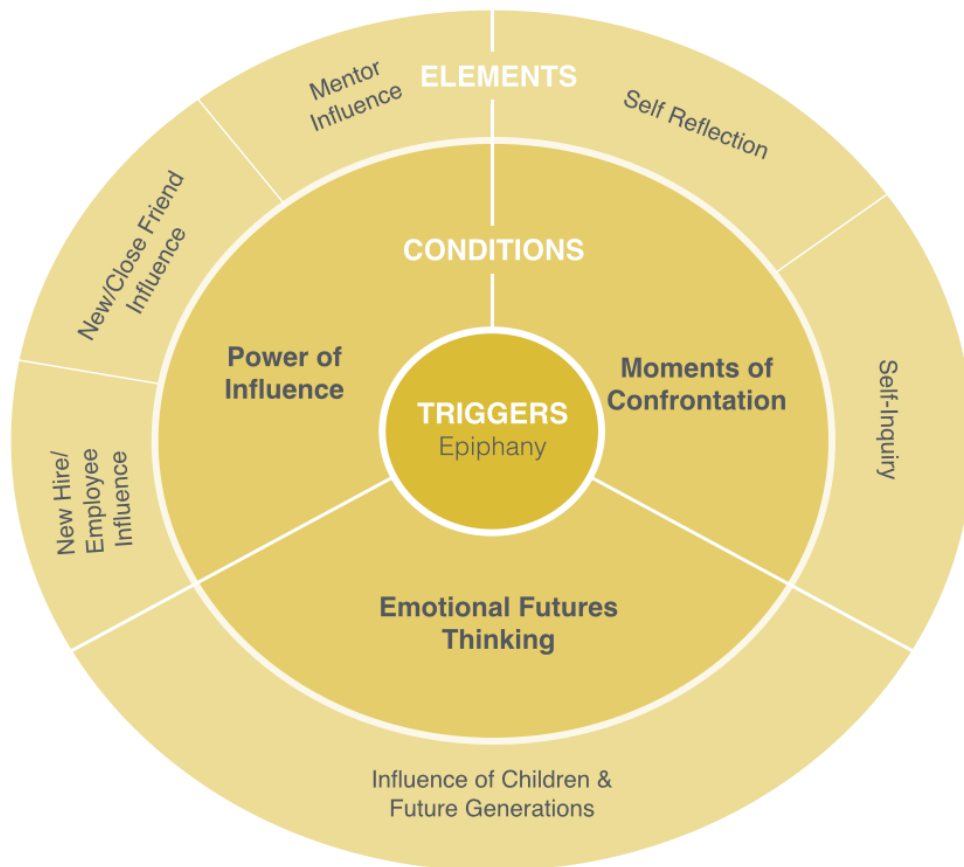
Figure 14: Unconventional Conditions for Shift in SE Leader Mindset

Outside Effects of a Shift in SE Leader Mindset

Finding 3. Range of Desired Actions

The data collected from the in-depth interviews revealed that one of the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset is the range of desired actions. The range of such actions included three possible action categories among the SE cases explored: i. Creating something new, ii. Transforming something existing and iii. Influencing others to do the same. To support this finding on the range of desired actions the following examples are provided as an illustration:

Example 3. i. Creating Something New:

> *"When I started going through my own shift, I realized [...] that I can bring a business to my community that would connect people."*

Example 3. ii. Transforming Something Existing:

> *"I would love to say that when it started in 1994 it was a sustainable company but it was not. We got that way over time and are certainly still on a continuum."*

Example 3. iii. Influencing Others to Do the Same:

> *"It all boils down to helping people make more conscious choices [...] because when you take a step back and respect people for who they are at the end of the day, I think most people, if they thought consciously or had the tools to think consciously would make very different choices"*

A more in-depth analysis revealed that among the SE cases explored: nine created something new, two transformed something existing and ten were in the business of influencing others to do the same. Therefore, the range of desired

actions can be seen as an important link between the shift in SE leader mindset and the transition to sustainability at the organizational level.

Finding 4. Continuum of SE Leader Mindset Development

The data collected from the in-depth interviews also revealed a continuum of SE leader mindset development or a progression toward a more integrated vision for a desired sustainable state over time. This particular finding on the continuum of leader mindset development shared three common evolutionary stages among the majority of SE cases explored: A) To increase efficiency through sustainable action, B) To increase economic and environmental sustainability and C) To increase economic, environmental and social sustainability. Additionally, a more in-depth analysis into one of the SE cases explored revealed an example of a possible performance result for each evolutionary stage. Refer to Figure 15 below for an illustration of the continuum of SE leader mindset development and the possible performance results.
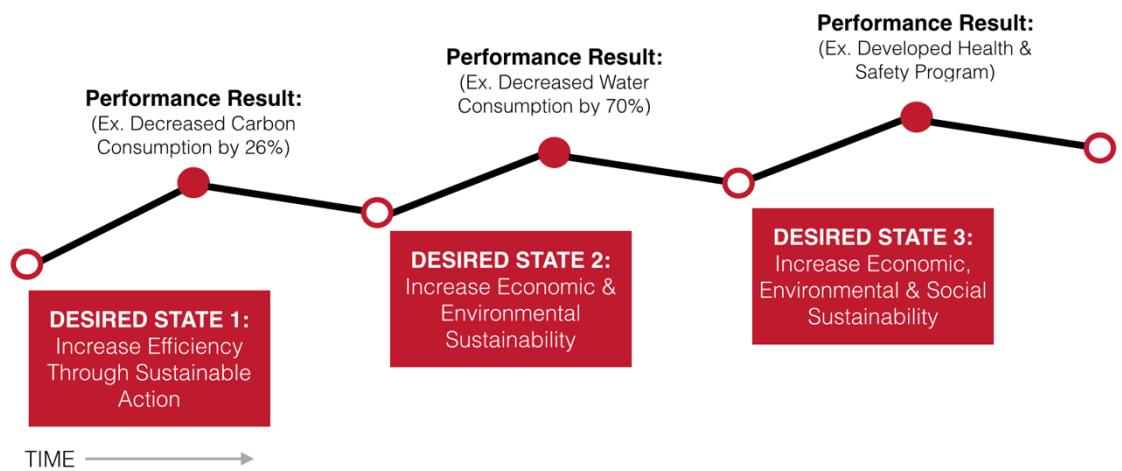

Figure 15: Continuum of SE Leader Mindset Development & Possible Results

To further support this finding on the continuum of SE leader mindset development the following examples are provided:

Example 4. i. Continuum of Leader Mindset Development:

> *"During the 2008 economic downfall we decided to stick with taking a class from **ClimateSmartBusiness** that helped us become more efficient as well as more sustainable. It was with this program which targets SMEs that we became carbon neutral. Really it was a way for us to initially become more efficient in our operations. Once you do that you also become more "green" or sustainable because you are watching what you use, what you throw away, diverting waste etc. [...] The sustainability program grew larger a year or so later when I realized that carbon was only addressing one thing and that water was also a huge priority for us [….] When I looked at sustainability more it really included not only carbon and water but also our stewardship program that we have had for a long time protecting areas of our property with covenants for non development ... Lastly, we are very people focussed and I realized that having a rigorous Health and Safety program as well as trying to better take care of our employees was completely consistent with our sustainability program as well. You have to want your employees to stay and work for you in order to carry out a sustainability program."*

Example 4. ii. Continuum of Leader Mindset Development:

> *"How would I define sustainable development? I think I changed in that respect, over the years. Sustainable development you need to have the whole system included […] So looking at who are all the stakeholders with this issue? What are their perspectives? […] I think, only when we come to make plans and decisions and agreements that are shared, which are built on the perspectives of all the stakeholders involved, that sustainable solutions can be achieved"*

This particular would suggest that a more integrated view for a desired sustainable state develops over time and is perhaps, reinforced by the performance results of the organization. Therefore, the continuum of leader mindset development can be seen as an important implication of a shift in SE leader mindset in the transition to sustainability at the organizational level.

ANALYSIS
OF FINDINGS

Based on the findings from the internal and external explorations, the sustainable mindset development matrix emerged as a useful tool for sorting the qualitative data collected from the eleven in-depth interviews with SE leaders of sustainability-driven models of organization. Details on the analysis of findings is provided below.

The Sustainable Mindset Development Matrix

The two axes of the sustainable mindset development matrix represent the two core drivers of change in the transition to sustainability as identified earlier in the report: 1) Inner Transformation or a shift in mindset away from conventional consciousness and toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and, 2) Outer Transformation or a shift in SE business practises away from the current state and toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level. Refer to Figure 16: The Sustainable Mindset Development Matrix.
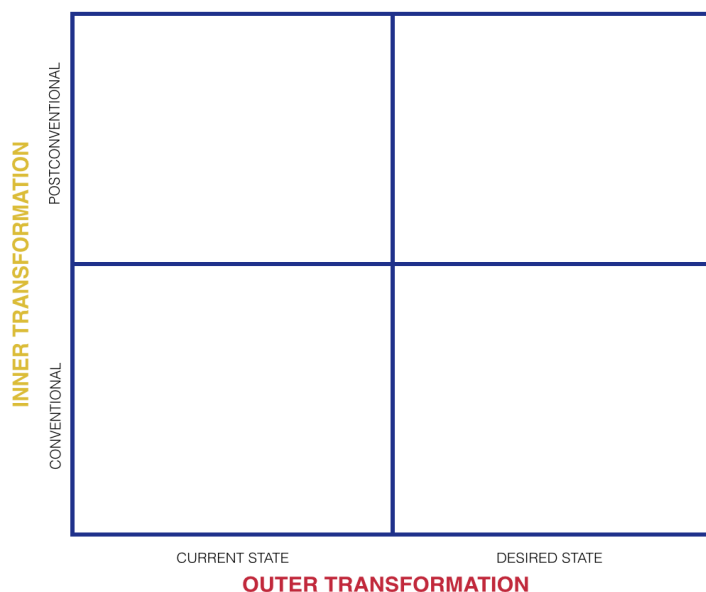
Figure 16: The Sustainable Mindset Development Matrix

SE Leader Mindset Mapping

Using the qualitative data collected from the internal exploration, the eleven SE leaders interviewed were plotted on the 2x2 grid of the sustainable mindset development matrix. Those research participants who openly shared more unconventional conditions in recalling their inner journey of transformation were plotted higher along the Y-axis as compared to those who shared more conventional conditions. Additionally, the research participants who took a longer view in describing their vision for a desired sustainable state were plotted further along the X-axis as compared to those with shorter term views. Refer to Figure 17 for results of the SE leader mindset mapping using the sustainable mindset development matrix.
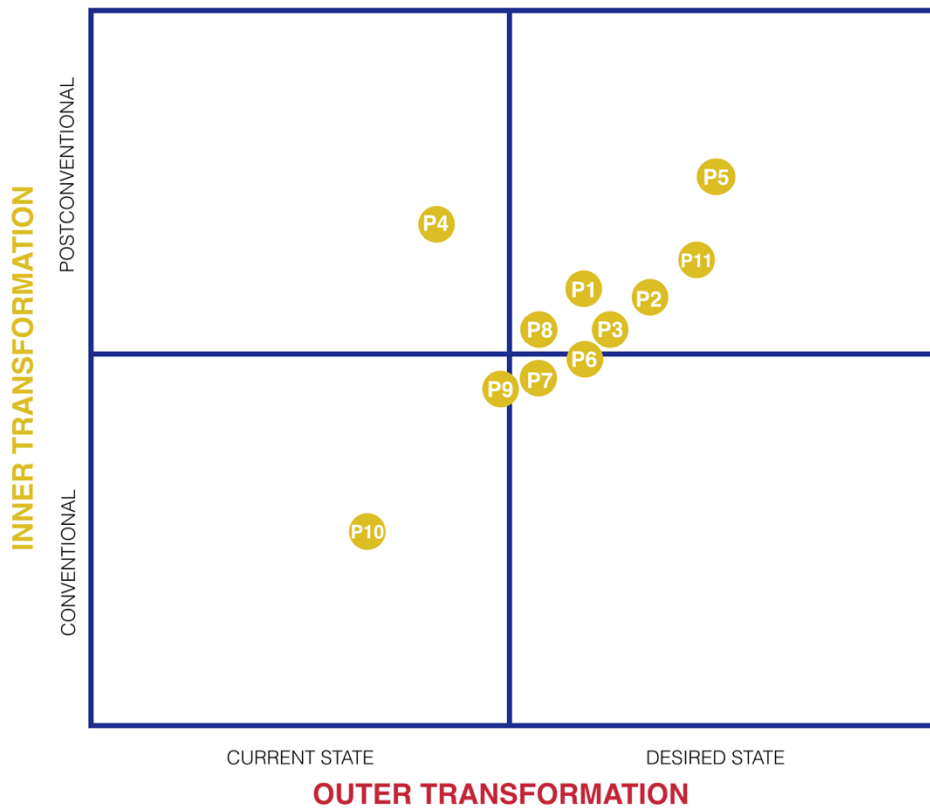
Figure 17: SE Leader Mindset Mapping Using the Sustainable Mindset Development Matrix

Additionally, using the qualitative data collected from the external exploration, each of the four quadrants was identified as representing a different evolutionary stage from the continuum of leader mindset development. Refer to Figure 18: Desired Sustainable States of the Sustainable Development Matrix.
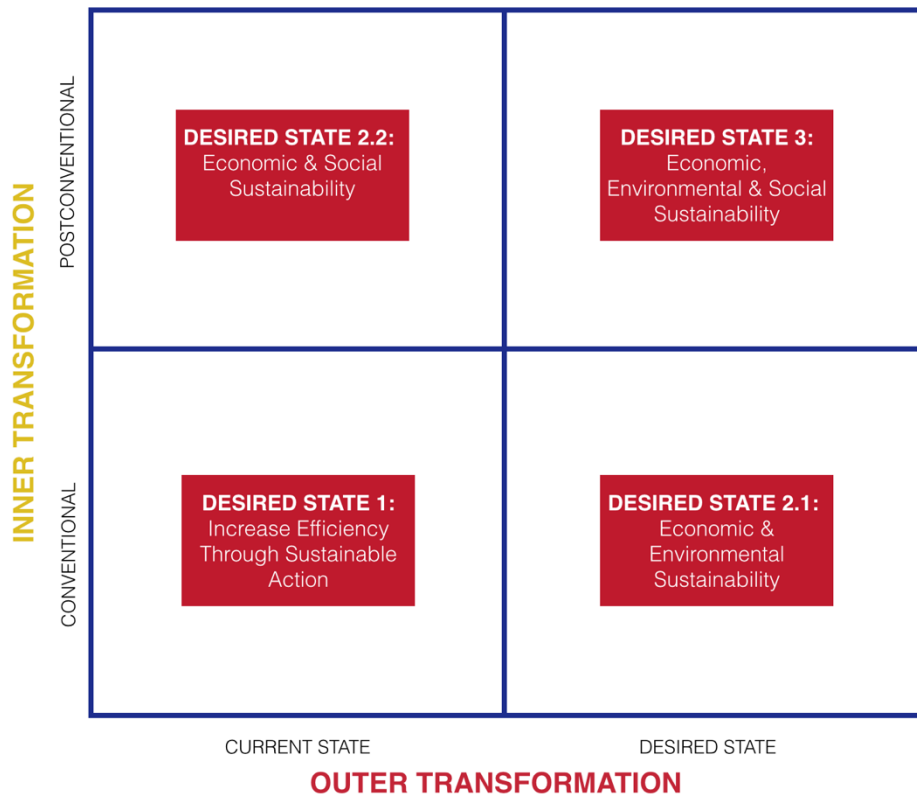
Figure 18: Desired Sustainable States of the Sustainable Mindset Development Matrix

In analysis of these findings, the majority or 54% of the SE leaders interviewed were identified as demonstrating systems-consciousness with a longer term view and a more integrated vision for a desired sustainable state, and therefore are represented in the top right quadrant of the sustainable mindset development matrix. Comparatively, 27% of the SE leaders interviewed were identified as demonstrating more conventional consciousness despite taking a longer term view, and therefore were identified as having a less integrated vision than their

postconventional counterparts as represented by the bottom right quadrant in the sustainable mindset development matrix. Additionally, two outliers emerged from the analysis, as represented by the plot points P4 and P10. In the case of P4, the SE leader interviewed demonstrated an alternative sequence of evolutionary stages with increased emphasis on a desired sustainable state for economic and social sustainability, as opposed to economic and environmental sustainability. This particular sequence contrasted the other SE cases explored, and therefore is represented in the top left quadrant of the sustainable mindset development matrix. In the case of P5, the SE leader interviewed clearly stated that the sustainability-driven model of organization was not the result of any "*personal transformation*" but rather a function of the business logic of sustainability, such as to increase the efficiency of business practices. This particular view greatly contrasted the views of the other SE leaders interviewed, and therefore is represented in the bottom left quadrant of the sustainable mindset development matrix. Overall, however, the analysis of findings would suggest that the majority of SE leaders interviewed experienced a vertical shift toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and/or a horizontal shift toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level in the transition to sustainability.

IDENTIFICATION
OF BARRIERS

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Based on the analysis of findings, there are two barriers identified in the transition to sustainability: 1) Inner journey or the vertical shift toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and, 2) Outer journey or the horizontal shift toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level. Using the systems approach to analysis, these barriers can be best understood as causing delays in the system. This is because delays in a system often indicate that things happen eventually, and therefore, a delay can be seen as barrier when change is needed fast or more urgently as is the case in the transition to sustainability. More details on these barriers and delays are provided below.

Barrier 1

Inner Journey

The first barrier identified in the transition to sustainability is the delay in the inner journey or the vertical shift toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level. Using the standard balancing loop from earlier findings, this delay in the system exists between the time a shift in mindset occurs and the time it is realized in order to affect the sustainable action being taken (Bellinger, 2004). This particular delay is seen as having enormous influence in the system, as it can frequently accentuate the impacts of the other forces in the system (Bellinger, 2004). That is, a delay in the inner journey can cause leaders to focus too much attention on the outer journey toward desired results at the organizational level. This happens because the delay in the inner journey is

subtle and is often taken for granted, ignored altogether and always underestimated in the transition to sustainability. Refer to Figure 19: The Balancing Loop with Delay in Inner Journey
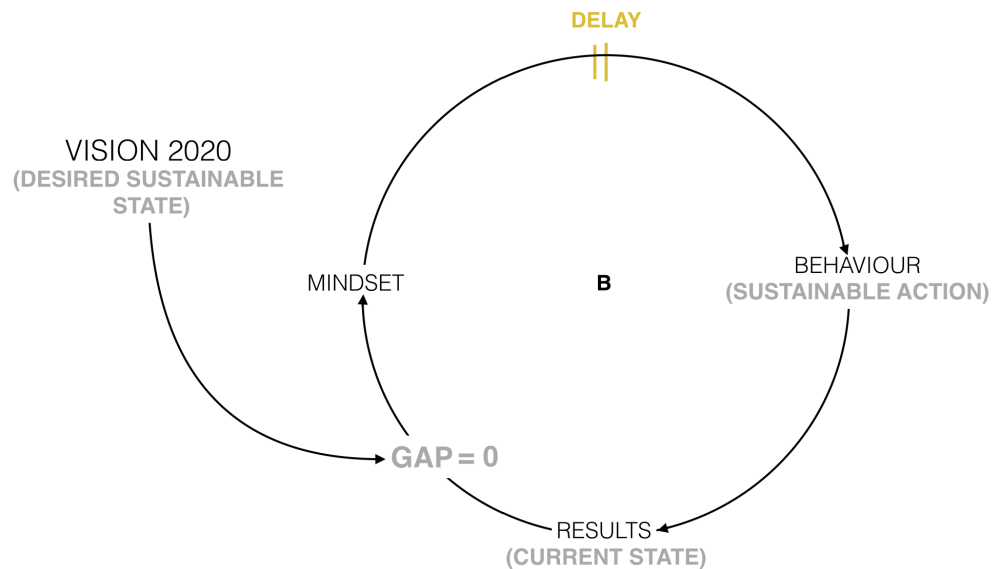
Figure 19: The Balancing Loop with Delay in Inner Journey

Barrier 2

Outer Journey

The second barrier identified in the transition to sustainability is the delay in the outer journey or the horizontal shift toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level. Using the same standard balancing loop as mentioned above, this delay in the system exists between the time the action is taken and the time the current state changes (Bellinger, 2004). This particular delay can be seen as one of the longest delays in the system and therefore, also has enormous influence in the system. This is because the delay in the outer journey is dependent on the acknowledgement of a delay in the inner journey. That is, if

the leader does not perceive a delay within the inner journey, they are more likely to overshoot or underestimate the requisite action in order to reach their goals which can result in larger and larger oscillations in the gap between the desired and current state over time. Refer to Figure 20: The Balancing Loop with Delay in Outer Journey.
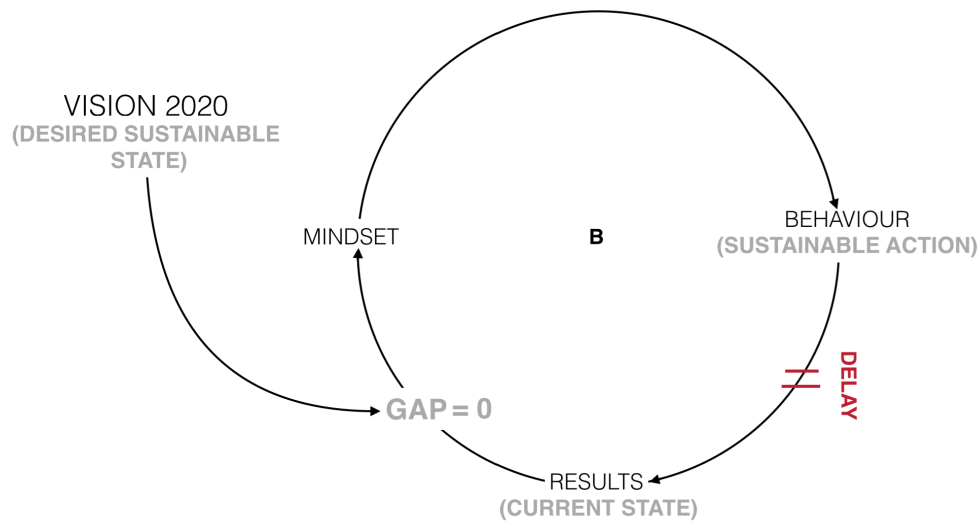
Figure 20: The Balancing Loop with Delay in Outer Journey

In summary, one or more delays within the structure can produce a very different behaviour pattern than with the standard balancing loop (Bellinger, 2004). Therefore, a delay in the inner journey and/or a delay in the outer journey can have enormous influence in the transition to sustainability at the individual and organizational level. That said, flagging these delays can be seen as a key method for speeding up cycle times and for identifying the strategic implications in overcoming barriers in the transition to sustainability at both the individual and organizational level.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Based on the identification of barriers there are two strategic implications for overcoming barriers in the transition to sustainability: (1) Vertical development of individuals and, (2) Horizontal development of SEs and SE leaders. Details on these implications are provided below.

Strategic Implication 1

Vertical Development

The first strategic implication for overcoming barriers in the transition to sustainability is to design effective strategies for the vertical development of individuals. As mentioned earlier in this report, vertical development refers to how we transform our views of reality (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Based on the findings on the insides causes for a shift in SE leader mindset, vertical development strategies should involve multiple stakeholders at different developmental stages - such as children, youth and adults - with a particular emphasis on emerging leaders or young adults in the mid 20s to 30s age range. Moreover, these vertical development strategies for emerging leaders should be designed a development stage or two higher than individuals they are being designed for by bringing diverse groups of people together and with particular emphasis on building individual capacities for self-reflective learning and emotional futures thinking. The findings from this research would therefore suggest that by designing strategies for the vertical development of individuals - and in particular emerging leaders - we can create the conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and therefore, accelerate the transition to sustainability at the organizational level.

Strategic Implication 2

Horizontal Development

The second strategic implication for overcoming barriers in the transition to sustainability is to design effective strategies for the horizontal development of SEs and SE leaders. As mentioned earlier in this report, horizontal development refers to the expansion in capacities through increases in knowledge, skills and behaviour. Based on the findings on the outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset horizontal development strategies should educate SE leaders on the range of desired outcomes and provide SEs with resources to track and measure the appropriate environmental and social outcomes at each evolutionary stage of the desired sustainable state as outlined in Figure 15 on the continuum of SE leader mindset development. The findings from this research would therefore suggest that by designing strategies for the horizontal development of SEs we can create the conditions for a shift in SE business practises toward a desired sustainable state at the organizational level and therefore, accelerate the transition to sustainability at the contextual level.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Based on the strategic implications for overcoming barriers, the proposed development plan emerged with two interrelated strategic plans of action for the transition to sustainability: (1) The Vertical Development Plan and, (2) The Horizontal Development Plan. The goal (or Vision 2020) of the integrated plan is therefore to answer the following: How might we make people and SEs see beyond their current view to new horizons of possibilities for the economic, environmental and social contexts in which their businesses and lifestyles operate based on new ways of thinking and seeing from 20 years out? The intended audience for the proposed development plan is any individual or organization working to support other individuals and/or organizations in the transition to sustainability. Details on the strategic plans for vertical and horizontal development are provided below.

Strategic Plan 1

Vertical Development Plan

The proposed vertical development plan involves a series of strategies for the vertical development of individuals in the transition to sustainability. For the purposes of this research project, vertical development strategies are understood as strategies that help create the conditions for individuals to shift toward postconventional or systems-consciousness. There are three vertical development strategies identified that make up the proposed vertical development plan: I) Re-Educate, II) Redesign and, III) Rethink. Details on the strategies for vertical development and their respective actors are explored in greater detail below.

Vertical Strategy I. Re-educate

The first vertical strategy is to re-educate children and youth for sustainability. This particular strategy involves aligning early childhood pedagogy and youth engagement initiatives with education for sustainability which might include examples such as the interdisciplinary approach, the use of outdoors for learning, teaching empathy and/or learning through immersive experiences and real life projects. The key actors for this strategy include local educational institutions and organizations working to support children and youth, and could also be expanded to include the involvement of parents, teachers and communities. An important consideration at this stage is to align the education for sustainability with the needs of the local community to foster the values, attitudes and behaviours that support sustainability within a particular community context.

Vertical Strategy II. Redesign

The second vertical strategy is to redesign training and development programs for young adults to help them develop the characteristics of sustainability leadership. This particular strategy involves building individual capacities for self-reflective learning and emotional futures thinking which might include examples like: public speaking engagements, group facilitation workshops and inspired-dialogue approaches, systems mapping exercises, using game theory and creative-problem-solving tools, and/or experiential futures design and interactive simulations. The key actors for this strategy would involve expert or trained facilitators in concert with higher-education institutions, and could also be expanded to include the involvement of larger organizations and foundations for sponsorship. An important consideration at this stage is to design training

programs for emerging leaders that nurture or help individuals develop the six characteristics of sustainability leadership as mentioned earlier in this report: (1) An entrepreneur's vision, (2) Missionary zeal, (3) Conviction and control, (4) The willingness to rethink everything and, (6) Relentless storytelling (Makower, 2012).

Vertical Strategy III. Rethink

The third vertical strategy is to rethink approaches to sustainable development by helping individuals and organizations look outside their walls for ideas and engage in open innovation that entangles them in new kinds of partnerships with a wide range of external players. This particular strategy involves bringing diverse groups of individuals together to collaborate and generate solutions to key issues related to sustainability which might include examples like: the formation of interdisciplinary teams within organizations or educational institutions, leadership forums for emerging leaders and pioneers of sustainability leadership across different organizations and educational institutions and/or mentorship pairing and matching individuals of diverse skill-sets within or across different organizations and educational institutions. The keys actors for this strategy would involve cross-sector partnerships between local educational institutions, organizations and government. An important consideration at this stage is to engage all members of a local community in the co-creation and co-design of possible solutions to the sustainable development challenges within a particular community context.

Strategic Plan 2

Horizontal Development Plan

The proposed horizontal development plan involves a series of strategies for horizontal development of SEs and SE leaders in the transition to sustainability. For the purposes of this research project, horizontal development strategies are understood as strategies that help create the conditions for a shift in SE business practices toward a desired sustainable state. There are five horizontal strategies identified that make up the proposed horizontal development plan: I) Personalize, II) Define, III) Integrate, IV) Design and V) Evaluate. The key actors for the horizontal development plan is individuals and/or organizations looking to support SEs more explicitly in the transition to sustainability, which may include independent consultants and/or management consultancy firms in sustainability. Details on the strategies for horizontal development are explored in greater detail below.

Horizontal Strategy I. Personalize

The first horizontal strategy is to discover an SE leader's personal incentive to engage in a dialogue on sustainability. This particular strategy involves inquiry into the SE leaders personal transformation journey toward a sustainable enterprise, which might include a private consultation or a more public consultation through the use of interactive media like blog posts, podcasts and/or video-recordings. An important consideration at this stage is to ensure the

perspectives of SE leaders are expressed, understood and shared across networks in an engaging, structured and balanced manner.

Horizontal Strategy II. Define

The second horizontal strategy is to define the current state of the SE. This particular strategy involves the design of mapping exercises that engage all stakeholders on the current opportunities, barriers and accomplishments of the organization. An important consideration of this stage is to ensure there is an objective as possible definition of the current state, as its relation to the desired state is what forms the basis for strategic planning and the subsequent sustainable action.

Horizontal Strategy III. Integrate

The third horizontal strategy is to integrate sustainability into a vision for a desired sustainable state of the SE. This particular strategy involves the design of visioning exercises that engages all stakeholders of the organization on the possible and preferred futures of the organization. An important consideration at this stage is to ensure there is an explicit, well understood and agreed upon definition of the shared vision for a desired state.

Horizontal Strategy IV. Design

The fourth horizontal strategy is to design a strategic plan of action for achieving the desired sustainable state of the SE. This particular strategy involves analyzing and synthesizing the data collected from the mapping and visioning exercises and incorporating the feedback into actionable steps for the

organization and its members. An important consideration at this stage is to ensure the actions required to achieve the desired sustainable state are specific, measurable, agreed upon, relevant and time-based (Haughey, 2015).

Horizontal Strategy V. Evaluate

The fifth horizontal strategy is to track progress toward the desired sustainable state of the SE. This particular strategy involves the use of measurement tools that track economic, environmental and/or social impact. An important consideration at this stage is to ensure progress toward the desired sustainable state is shared widely across networks and that any reevaluation of a desired sustainable state engages all members of the organization.

AREAS FOR
FURTHER RESEARCH

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It should be noted that the resulting proposed development plan for the transition to sustainability paints a picture of a strategic thinking process that draws our attention to creating the conditions for both the vertical development of individuals and the horizontal development of SEs and SE leaders, without dwelling too much on the practicalities of getting there. Therefore, a potential area of further research is to explore in-depth some of these aspects that involve the actual "doing" or experience of the proposed strategies in order to evaluate their future fit and provide a means to quantify how these actions are contributing to a more sustainable future within a particular business and/or community context. Additionally, the role of external factors, such as societal norms and pressures, may also influence the system or cause delays in the system cycle time toward the development of new mindset in the transition to sustainability at the individual level. Additionally, the role of external factors, such as the financial implications and/or tradeoffs as well as the related policies and restrictions around SEs to embrace environmental and social outcomes, may also influence the system or cause delays in the system cycle time toward a more sustainable enterprise in the transition to sustainability at the organizational level. As such, these practicalities and external factors have been identified as or of having enormous influence to accelerating the pace of change and scaling up to achieve impact in the transition to sustainability at the contextual level, or within the context of larger systems, and therefore warrant further research and attention.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, corporate sustainability leader Ray Anderson believed that: "*a sustainable society depends completely and entirely on a new mindset*" (Anderson, 2009). Similarly, as one SE leader interviewed stated: "*What we believe is possible is a mindset that needs to change at a cultural level, in order to see more resiliency and more sustainability in people's lives, businesses and government.*" While hardly exhaustive, this research project argues in a preliminary sense that the transition to sustainability therefore depends on two rather ambitious fronts: i) To reframe the problem to include a shift in mindset toward postconventional or systems-consciousness at the individual level and, ii) To reimagine the critical role of SEs in shifting business practices toward desired sustainable states at the organizational level. As such, in-depth interviews with SE leaders of sustainability-driven models of organization were conducted to provide an internal and external exploration on the inside causes and outside effects of a shift in SE leader mindset at the individual and organizational level, respectively. These explorations revealed several key insights into creating the conditions for a shift in SE leader mindset and affirmed earlier assumptions - as evidenced by the emblematic story of Ray Anderson - that an epiphany or moment of self-reflection can lead to the raising of consciousness as well as to concrete action. Further analysis of these findings also revealed that the majority of SE leaders interviewed, had perhaps, already experienced a moment or moments of sudden or striking realization within their respective developmental journeys– whether a vertical shift toward postconventional or systems-consciousness and/or a horizontal shift in business practices toward a desired sustainable state. As a result, both the vertical development of individuals and the

horizontal development of SEs and SE leaders has been identified as important strategic implications in the transition to sustainability. The resulting proposed development plan from these interrelated findings sets out that while it may not be possible to buy an epiphany off a shelf, it is possible to create the conditions in which inner transformation or a shift in mindset occurs and therefore, the real challenge in the transition to sustainability is to take inner transformation from an implicit, unconscious process at the individual level to being an explicit, conscious process taking place in many SEs and SE leaders at the organizational level in order to scale up and achieve impact toward a more sustainable society at the contextual level. The proposed plan is therefore about options not actions, it is about providing answers not to the question of what will we do to but rather how might the inner transformation journey of SE leaders serve as a platform for the transition to sustainability that the future requires of us? While nothing is inevitable about the road ahead toward a more sustainable society, there is a ray of hope. Ray Anderson left behind a vision of what "*tomorrow's leader*" looks like, to which Lindsay James, Interface's Director of Strategic Sustainability, describes:

> "She (or he) will be the one that completely re-imagines business, its role in our world and its potential. Like Ray, she will know a deeper level of truth that the rest of us are blind to, and she will articulate that truth in a compelling way until we can see it, too. In other words, like Ray, she will question the most basic assumptions that drive our complex systems. She'll be the one that sounds a little crazy to the rest of us, the one that's gone 'round the bend and understood what the future holds, and can map that back to what is needed today (Makower, 2012)."

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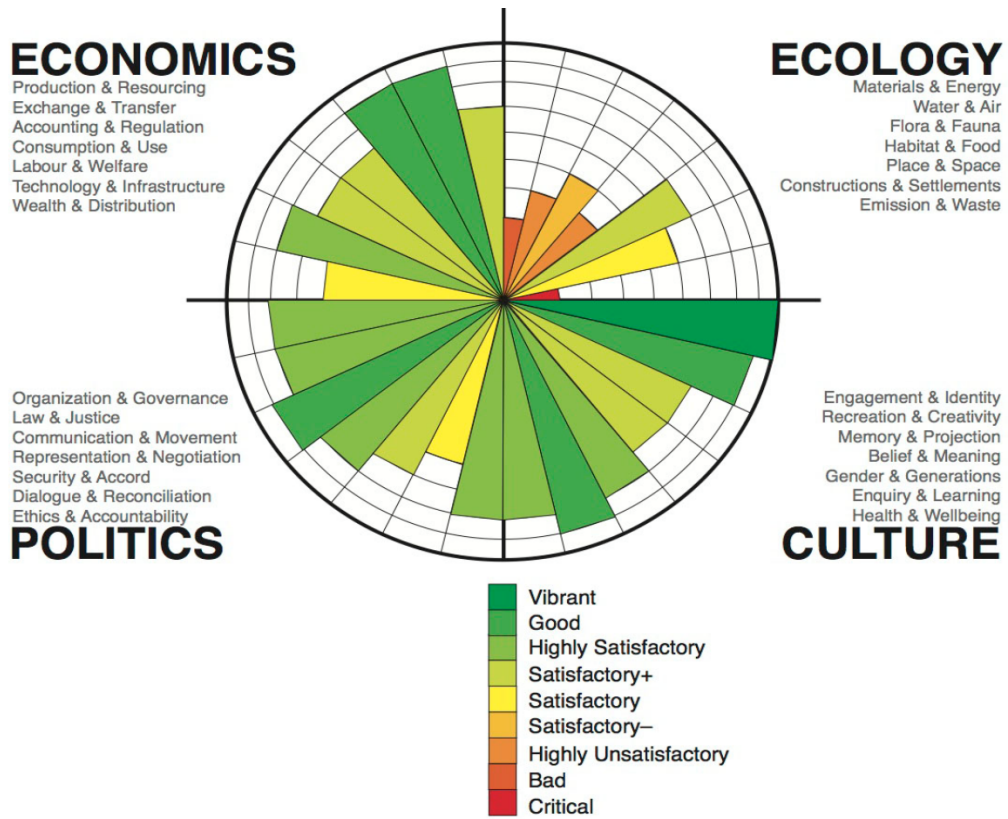
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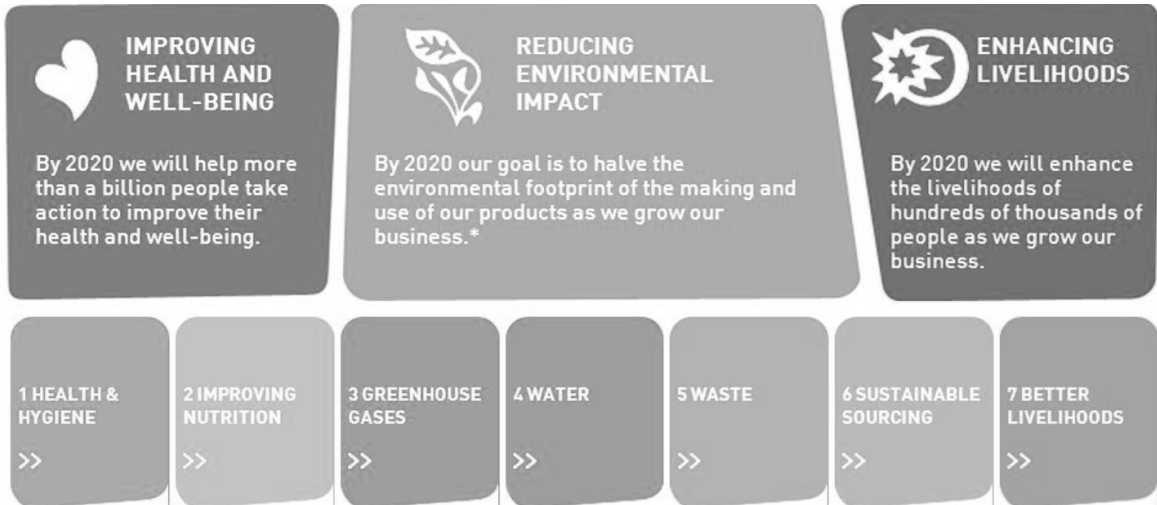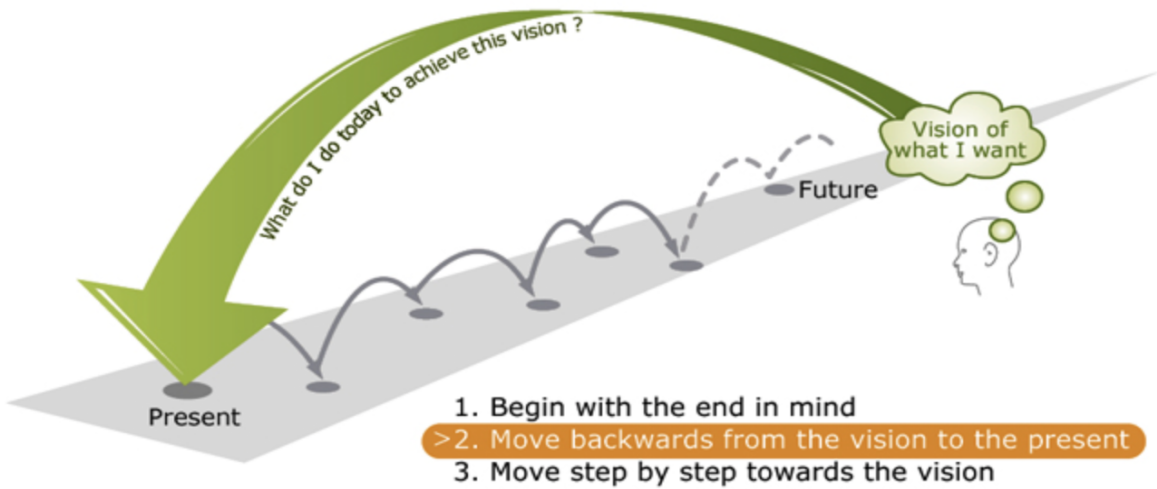
Appendices

Appendix A: Defining Sustainability

(Circles of Sustainability, 2009)

Appendix B: Strategic Planning for Sustainability

IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	ENHANCING LIVELIHOODS
By 2020 we will help more than a billion people take action to improve their health and well-being.	By 2020 our goal is to halve the environmental footprint of the making and use of our products as we grow our business.*	By 2020 we will enhance the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people as we grow our business.

1 HEALTH & HYGIENE >>	2 IMPROVING NUTRITION >>	3 GREENHOUSE GASES >>	4 WATER >>	5 WASTE >>	6 SUSTAINABLE SOURCING >>	7 BETTER LIVELIHOODS >>

(Unilever, 2009)

What do I do today to achieve this vision ?

Vision of what I want

Future

Present

1. Begin with the end in mind
>2. Move backwards from the vision to the present
3. Move step by step towards the vision

(The Natural Step Canada, 2013)

Appendix C: The Progression Toward Sustainability & Profile of 10 Prominent Companies
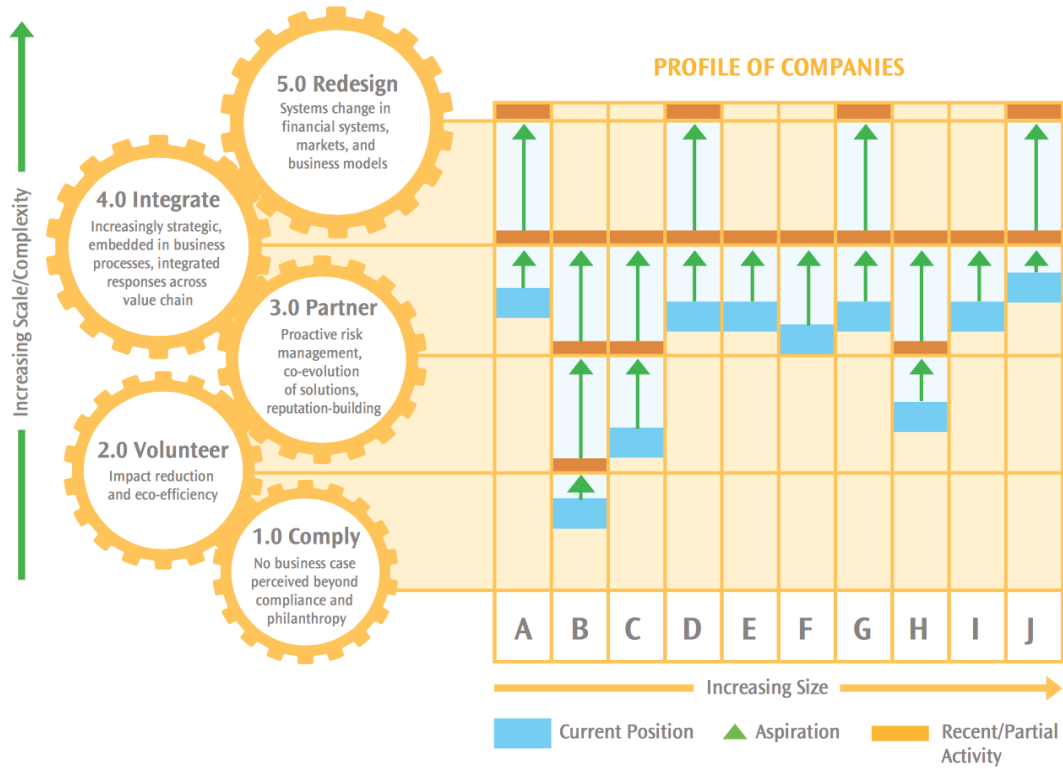
(Avastone Consulting, 2007)

Appendix D: Interview Questions for SE Leaders

Unpacking the Past

1. What is your personal story of transformation that lead you on this alternative path?
2. Is there something about your early upbringing and growing up that continues to play a strong role in determining what you seek or the goals/objectives that you have for your business?
3. How did you come to perceive yourself in the context of sustainability, specifically? Were you always this way? Or what has happened to cause this change in thinking?
4. What is your personal definition of sustainability?
5. What do you think is unique or distinctive about your worldview on sustainability?

Exploring the Present

6. What external event or events lead to the creation of your alternative business model?
7. What are some of the external factors that you've identified - either social or environmental – that surround your business or inform the activities of your business?
8. What are the forces at play contributing to these external factors or patterns that you are seeing? What about our current thinking allows theses issues or patterns to persist?
9. What do you believe is your organization's greatest challenge to achieving sustainability?
10. What are the impacts - social and/or environmental outcomes - of leading an alternative or more sustainable enterprise on your business?

Leading from the Future

11. Where is your organization heading? What does your vision of "tomorrow" entail for your business?
12. What is your preferred future scenario for the social and/or environmental contexts in which your business operates?
13. What new ways of thinking and seeing are needed to achieve this preferred future scenario?