

workingpaper

Developing Principles for *Project 2058*

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About the Author

Hayley is a research analyst at Sustainable Future. She has a Masters in Environmental Studies and a background in botany and ecology.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper was to develop a set of principles for guiding *Project 2058* and its outputs. In order to do this, the work, ideas and principles of a number of different organisations, people and programmes involved in sustainability was reviewed. These groups were chosen in order to represent a range of perspectives, some for their relevance to New Zealand, and some for their broader global perspective.

The process of developing these guiding principles for *Project 2058* has been beneficial for the team as both an input into the methodology – as this document’s work ultimately became – and as a means for pause and reflection on the journey already taken and the one yet to come. While previous iterations of the *Project 2058* methodology contain a review of the principles detailed below, it was decided that a synthesised version would be more meaningful. Indeed, *Project 2058* recognised the need to clearly articulate a set of principles to call its own. Sections 2 and 3 (below) describe the principles and process used.

2. Principles

The following seven sources of ideas, principles and criteria form the basis of *Project 2058*’s own principles.

2.1 New Zealand government

The Sustainable Development Programme of Action (SDPOA) was a three-year (2003–2006) project initiated by the New Zealand government to deliver sustainable development outcomes. It proved to be New Zealand’s first, and currently last, experiment with whole-of-government planning under the mantle of sustainable development. Although not, in Sustainable Future’s eyes, a National Sustainable Development Strategy, it is as close as New Zealand has yet come to such a document. The ten principles from the SDPOA are:

The government recognises that its decisions should ensure the wellbeing of current and future generations. It will take account of the social, economic, environmental, and cultural consequences of its decisions by:

1. Considering the long term implications of decisions
2. Seeking innovative solutions that are mutually reinforcing, rather than accepting that gain in one area will necessarily be achieved at the expense of another
3. Using the best information available to support decision making
4. Addressing risks and uncertainty when making choices and taking a precautionary approach when making decisions that may cause serious or irreversible damage
5. Working in partnership with local government and other sectors and encouraging transparent and participatory processes
6. Considering the implications of decisions from a global as well as a New Zealand perspective
7. Decoupling economic growth from pressures on the environment

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8. Respecting environmental limits, protecting ecosystems and promoting the integrated management of land, water and living resources
9. Working in partnership with appropriate Māori authorities to empower Māori in development decisions that affect them
10. Respecting human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity. (DPMC, 2003: 10)

For more information on the SDPOA, see

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/sustainability/programme.html>.

2.2 Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori aspirations

One in-depth framework that has specifically incorporated Māori aspirations and goals is the Auckland Regional Growth Forum. The Regional Growth Forum is part of the One Plan initiative of the Auckland Regional Council in collaboration with all the territorial authorities of the region. The region's Mana Whenua responded to the Forum's Sustainability Framework with a Mana Whenua Framework. This, detailed below, incorporates some principles developed by Cooper and Brooking (2002) and adopted by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) for its 2002 review of sustainability in New Zealand (PCE, 2002).

Recognition and respect of the worldviews of Mana Whenua, including Mana Whenua relationships with ancestral taonga, their cultural practices and traditions and future development;

- Effecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi;¹
- Contribution to Māori needs and aspirations;
- Effects of sustainability challenges, strategy and policy on Mana Whenua;
- Active participation of Mana Whenua;
- Accountability, and 'walking the talk';
- Practical requirements;
- Clarity and consistency, and
- Other ways of doing better. (Auckland Regional Growth Forum, 2007)

For more information on the Auckland Regional Growth Forum and One Plan initiative, see

<http://www.aucklandoneplan.org.nz/>.

¹ To read the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi, follow this link: <http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/treaty/default.asp>.

2.3 Brundtland definition

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also known as the Brundtland Commission, produced the widely cited and sometimes controversial definition of sustainable development:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (WCED, 1987)

While this definition is concise and friendly to use, it has been criticised for being overly simplistic, for being human-centric, and for giving no recognition of environmental limits or the interplay between the environment and the economy.

2.4 The Natural Step

The Natural Step is an international, non-government organisation that has a widely recognised and used framework to help organisations and communities make the transition to sustainable lifestyles and systems. As part of this, the Natural Step has developed four conditions for system sustainability. These principles were not designed to define how a sustainable society should look, but to provide a framework for discussing conditions that, if violated, would not lead to a sustainable society:

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

1. concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust
2. concentrations of substances produced by society,
3. degradation by physical means, and that,
4. in society, people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs. (Robèrt et al., 2002: 198)

See more of the Natural Step's work at their website,

<http://www.naturalstep.org.nz/index.asp>. This text can be accessed on the Natural Step website at <http://www.thenaturalstep.org/en/canada/the-system-conditions>.

2.5 The Auditor General of Victoria

The Auditor General of Victoria states in a paper titled *Measuring and Reporting on Sustainability: Beyond the Triple Bottom Line*, that although sustainability is difficult territory, it has been a powerful stimulant for public sector performance. The work of the Auditor General is useful as the focus is on performance and accountability of government and the public sector, a key part of Sustainable Future's focus on creating change within the public sector. The Auditor General indicates there is no universal definition, and instead promotes six commonly accepted principles of sustainability:

1. Sustainability comprises at least three pillars (environmental, economic and social);
2. The pillars are inter-related;

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3. Sustainability strives for equity within generations (intra-generational equity);
4. Sustainability strives for equity between generations (inter-generational equity);
5. Sustainability uses the precautionary principle; and
6. Sustainability conserves biological diversity. (VAGO, 2004: 6)

To see more of the work of the Auditor General of Victoria, see their website at <http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/>.

2.6 Economist Herman Daly

The ecological economist Herman Daly lays out two basic rules of the environmentally sustainable use of resources (Daly, 1991). These are:

1. Input rules:
 - a. Renewable resources (e.g. fish stocks) must be used at a rate no faster than the rate at which they regenerate.
 - b. Non-renewable resources (e.g. fossil fuels) must be used at a rate no faster than the rate at which renewable substitutes replace them.
2. Output rule:
 - a. Pollution and waste must be emitted at a rate no faster than the rate at which natural systems absorb them, recycle them or render them harmless. (Daly, 1991)

To read some of Daly's seminal *Steady-state Economics*, see <http://dieoff.org/page88.htm>.

2.7 Futures Thinking Aotearoa (Futures Trust)

Futures Thinking Aotearoa began a project in 1992 called the 20/20 Group, which aimed to identify trends likely to occur by 2020. The Group developed a set of five principles to help guide their work:

1. New Zealand as a nation and a community should seek to ensure that all its people are able to satisfy their aspirations; in different generations, in different ethnic and social groups, and wherever they live in New Zealand.
2. In its own long term interest, New Zealand should act in a way which does not impact adversely on the perceived interests of the world at large.
3. New Zealanders of one generation should seek to ensure that those that follow may enjoy the same or better opportunities for personal development and achievement as they had themselves.
4. New Zealand's perceived heritage of a 'clean green' environment must be preserved and strengthened through our continuing efforts to improve and enhance that environment for present and future generations.
5. Undue rigidity in structures and conventions, or over-commitment of resources, can lead to acute problems when the situation changes very suddenly: diversity and flexibility allow more scope for adjustment to meet new challenges. (Futures Trust, 1994: 4)

Publication of the 20/20 Group's work can be found on the Sustainable Future website, at http://www.sustainablefuture.info/Site/Hot_Topics/Future_Thinking/Long_Term_Thinking.aspx. To see more work by Futures Thinking Aotearoa, see <http://www.futurestrust.org.nz/>.

3. Process

Taking the above principles, a list was made of all the different ideas. A tally was taken of each time an idea appeared, and then each idea was colour coded to identify similarities (first iteration).

Those ideas categorised with the same colour were shifted so that they were adjacent to one another, then combined and redefined (second iteration). The ideas were then re-categorised one more time (third iteration). Each of these three iterations is depicted in Table 1 (below).

Following this, each principle was reviewed and expanded. Taking the resulting seven principles, the *Project 2058* team was then given an opportunity to review and critique them in light of what the project is and aims to be. A final list of the principles was then circulated at the end of this process.

During the first iteration, some detail was lost from the source principles. In particular, the criteria from the Natural Step principles and Daly's (1991) input-output rules were generalised, as they were considerably more detailed than some other criteria. A similar generalising of the specificity of criteria also occurred for the Auckland Regional Forum Mana Whenua Framework. Sustainable Future has decided that it is more appropriate to investigate guiding principles for undertaking research on or about Māori or Māori perspectives in sustainability. Such an approach is discussed in Report 7 – *Towards a Tikanga-Kaupapa Perspective on Sustainability* (Sustainable Future, in press).

However, we will keep at the forefront of our thinking the principles of the Natural Step and Daly, and will continue to watch how the relationship between Maori, non-Maori and sustainability, is being thought about and how it is enacted.

3. Process

Table 1 Sorting and combining principles

NB. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of times an idea occurred in the source principles

First iteration	Second iteration	Third iteration
Long term approach (3)	Long term approach (3)	Planning and decision-making must have a long-term focus.
Innovation through mutual enforcement (1)	Innovation through diversity, flexibility and mutual reinforcement (2)	Sustainability must be pursued through the integration of cultural, economic, environmental and social goals in a way that recognises the interconnected nature of our world. Planning should take a systems approach, respect and celebrate diversity and human rights, and seek mutual solutions to mutual problems.
Diversity and flexibility to meet new challenges (1)	Respecting human rights, law and diversity (1)	
Respecting human rights, law and diversity (1)	Integration of cultural, economic, environmental and social (2)	
Best information for decision making (1)	Decisions based on best available information from wide range of stakeholders and countries (2)	Decision-making should be based on the best information. Research on sustainability must aim to be timely, accurate and meaningful.
Global and local impacts inform decision making (1)	Acknowledge critical environmental limits and importance of precautionary approach in complex decisions (7)	Environmental limits must be respected and recognition made of the intrinsic value of all life systems. A precautionary approach should be taken when making decisions about complex systems.
Precautionary approach to complex systems (2)		
Environmental limits, integrated management (4)		
Strengthening 'clean green' heritage (1)		
Partnerships and participation (1)	Importance of partnerships and participation, particularly between Māori and non-Māori (3)	Sustainability must be progressed through participation and partnerships. It is vital for Māori and non-Māori to work together towards active participation and to give effect to Treaty of Waitangi obligations.
Partnerships between Māori and non-Māori (2)		
Decoupling economic growth and environmental degradation (2)	Focus on <i>development</i> instead of growth — ie. Daly's steady state economy	New Zealand should focus on sustainable <i>development</i> rather than <i>GDP growth</i> .
'Needs' meeting (2)	Maintaining and promoting opportunity and equity for current and future generations (7)	Sustainability requires maintaining and promoting opportunity and equity for current and future generations.
Future / generational responsibility (2)		
Maintaining generation equity / opportunity (2)		
Ability for all people to satisfy aspirations (1)		

4. Principles

To find a set of principles to apply to the project, we have analysed the work of a number of different organisations and programmes. Through a process of review, synthesis and reflection, we have refined our ideas down to six basic principles for *Project 2058's* methodology.² These will be referred to throughout the project to help guide our ideas and output:

1. Planning and decision-making must have a long-term focus.
2. Sustainability requires maintaining and promoting opportunity and equity for current and future generations.
3. Sustainability must be pursued through the integration of cultural, economic, environmental and social goals in a way that recognises the interconnected nature of our world. Planning should take a systems approach, celebrate diversity, respect human rights, and seek mutual solutions to mutual problems.
4. Sustainability must be progressed through participation and partnerships. It is vital for Māori and non-Māori to work together towards active participation and to give effect to Treaty of Waitangi obligations.
5. New Zealand should focus on sustainable *development* rather than *GDP growth*.
6. Environmental limits must be respected and recognition made of the intrinsic value of all life systems. A precautionary approach should be taken when making decisions about complex systems.
7. Decision-making should be based on the best information. Research on sustainability must aim to be timely, accurate and meaningful.

These principles are action-focused and solutions oriented, reflecting the critical standpoint from which Sustainable Future and *Project 2058* take their meaning and reason for existence – that is, that current governance, social and economic systems are inappropriate for long term sustainability and well being.

To see these in the *Project 2058 Methodology*, follow this link:

http://www.sustainablefuture.info/Site/Publications/Project_Reports.aspx.

² Please also note that the principles below are a little more detailed than those in the methodology.

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