

A WORKBOOK AND ONLINE COMMUNITY for Co-CREATING OUR SUSTAINABILITY ETHIC

Section IV - Mapping the Territory Chapter 3 - Validating the Map

Gestalt: a structure, configuration, or pattern of physical, biological, or psychological phenomena so integrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable by summation of its parts.

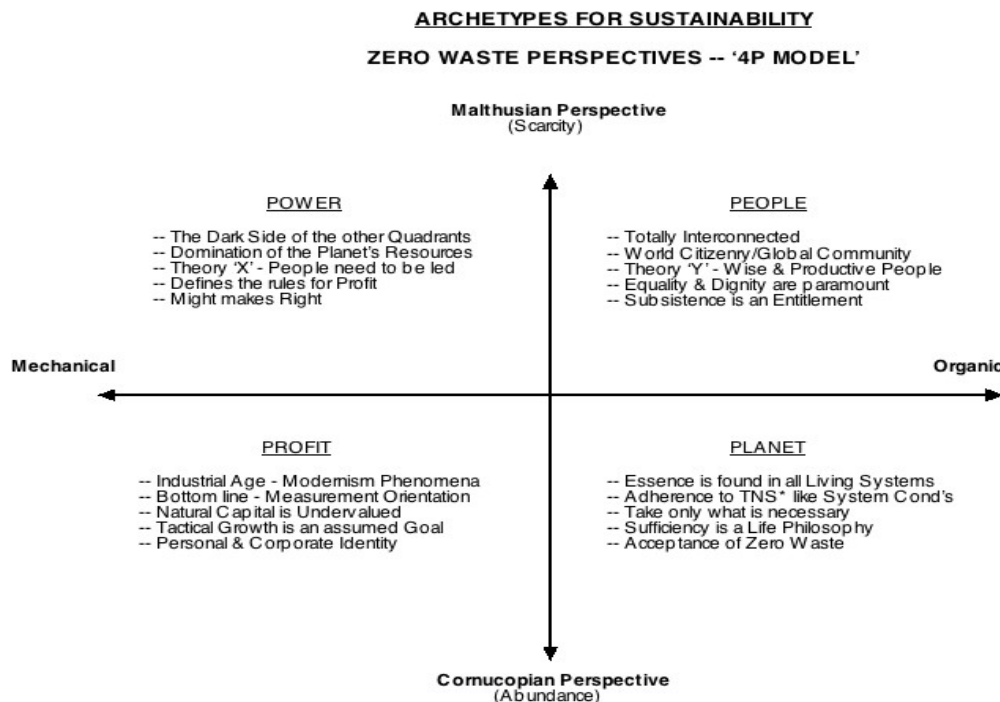
Merriam-Webster Dictionary

How might 'Archetypes for Sustainability' provide a base for enhanced thinking?

In the Spring of 2004 I attended a Sustainability Leadership workshop sponsored by the Zero Waste Alliance. One of the presenters spoke of the 'triple bottom line.' The term 'bottom line' is often used by business people when they speak of either getting to the point in conversation, or the net result of financial analysis. When they speak about sustainability, they also include their ecological and social concerns by expressing their work in terms of Profit, People and Planet – the triple bottom line.

When the presentation ended, participants were

asked to tell about their work in sustainability. One woman told of introducing a gardening program into a state prison. I was struck by the irony of being in a Zero Waste Alliance workshop in which the incredible waste of incarcerating 'People' went unaddressed. I raised this point to the other participants, but no one wanted to stray from the agenda and talk about it. I left with some dissonance, and woke up the next morning with the following addition to my Archetypes for Sustainability construct:



*TNS is 'The Natural Step'

When I mapped the triple bottom line into the Archetypes for Sustainability, I found that the three distinct subjects - Planet, People, and Profit - mapped into three of the four quadrants very nicely. The dissonance I had with labeling of the upper-right quadrant the 'Sustainability Perspective' abated somewhat when I overlaid it with 'People'. I think that when our world view is one of scarcity and we are concerned with life, then our foci become social issues – how will the poor fare when there is a shortage of resources. I also think that in Western cultures we are much more oriented toward social justice than ecological integrity, and I think that bias was reflected in Dr. Gladwin's questions. Thus, the people who attended workshops like the one in Portland ended up in the upper right hand quadrant which he labeled the 'Sustainability Perspective.'

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you can see, is that the Mechanical/Scarcity quadrant is 'Power.' It is interesting to note that those who discern 'Power' through the lens of the 'Planet' tend to see a cooperative, 'relational power' rather than 'power over.'

Once each of the quadrants was relabeled, I took some time to list the guiding principles that I associated with each of the four P's. I've presented this chart several times as a method for stimulating conversation, and each conversation brings revisions. It is intended to be a work in progress.

It seems to me that Dr. Gladwin's matrix with its Mechanical/Organic x-axis, and Scarcity/Abundance y-axis, is validated as a very powerful way to define the archetypes. The only modification to his original matrix is to rename the upper right hand quadrant the 'Social (or People) Perspective.'

The question that begged an answer was, "What is the upper left quadrant?" And the answer, as

Reflection

As you look at The Triple Bottom Line construct, what changes might you make, particularly in the bulleted description of each 'P'?

- Could they be described more completely or fairly?
- What is the wisdom that is to be gained from each quadrant?
- How are you informed regarding personal changes you may wish to make?