

Multi-stakeholder Organising for Sustainability

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly referenced), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

The following presentations and papers relate to work undertaken for this dissertation:

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Abstract

Multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations have been considered as ‘panacea’ for complex local to global problems confronting governments, businesses and society. And for over a decade now, they have also been increasingly promoted as mechanisms to achieve sustainability. There is, however, a dearth of empirical studies that give deeper insights into the practical dimensions and various implications of such processes for sustainability. This dissertation explores how multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability occur in local settings. It relies on a theoretical framework that combines institutional and social movements theoretical perspectives. Such a theoretical cross-fertilisation has been helpful in explaining: (a) how the macro institutional context of sustainable development influences micro interactions of individuals during collaborations; and (b) how those micro interactions may influence the sustainability movement organised at macro societal levels. The dissertation is philosophically based on the principles of critical hermeneutics. It draws on the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas to understand the nature of reality, society and human relationships. The study also uses literature on sustainable development, organising, dialogue, collaboration, stakeholder engagement, emotions and time.

Three cases of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations organised to address sustainability of two regions in New Zealand were investigated through observations, interviews with participants and documentary research. These processes were developed in response to a regulatory change in New Zealand – the new Local Government Act (2002) which emphasises sustainable development of communities. The data across the three cases was analysed using principles of grounded theory and critical hermeneutics.

Analysis reveals how various kinds of institutional pressures (engulfing cultural-cognitive, regulative and normative institutions connected with sustainable development) confront different stakeholders with varying intensities. Those pressures influence stakeholders to become involved in and commit to such collaborations. And as stakeholders participate in such processes, they are shown to engage with one another rationally and emotionally, and with different conceptions of time. The collaborations thus can be characterised by a complex fusion of rationality, emotionality and temporality. On the one hand, multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations stimulate learning, facilitate relationship building and build social capital for implementing sustainable development. They thus prove themselves as potent governance mechanisms that can help to institutionalise sustainable development.

On the other hand, multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability are highly messy, unpredictable, paradoxical and conflict-ridden processes of stakeholder engagement. They are shown to suffer from three major problematics: problematic of misunderstandings; problematic of stakeholders' emotions; and problematic of stakeholders' time. They thus, ironically and paradoxically, are also problematic solutions for sustainability.

Part I

Overview

and

Overarching Framework

Chapter 1

Research Overview

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give an overview of my Ph.D. research. My doctoral dissertation is an investigation of communicative relationships among different individuals who have been drawn to the sustainability movement because of personal or professional reasons. I call these individuals ‘stakeholders’¹. The study is set against the context of a regulatory change in New Zealand - the revision of the Local Government Act (1974) in 2002 which emphasises ‘sustainable development’ of communities. In my research, I examine three multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability that were organised in two different regions of New Zealand in response to the Local Government Act (2002). The relationships among stakeholders involved in those processes were developed through dialogue and built on communicative understanding and action (Gadamer, 1989; Habermas, 1984).

In section 1.2, I highlight the rationale for my inquiry and the research questions that guide my Ph.D. investigation. In section 1.3, I introduce myself, and explain how my professional background influenced me to undertake this study. In section 1.4, I identify gaps in my fields of study and locate my research in those under-investigated domains. In section 1.5, I briefly introduce the three cases I investigated. In section 1.6, I highlight my research focus and some of the contributions I intend to make through my research to scholarship and

¹ In this dissertation I use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to emphasise a word or phrase which may have a particular or problematic interpretation, and double quotation marks (“ ”) to present a direct quotation.

practice related to organisations and sustainability. In section 1.7, I explain the structure of my dissertation. In section 1.8, I conclude this chapter.

1.2 Rationale for my Ph.D. inquiry and research questions

For over a decade now, multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations have been popularised as ‘panacea’ for complex local to global problems confronting governments, businesses, and society, at large (Gray, 1989; Gray, & Wood, 1991; Hoffman, 1998; Macnaghten, & Jacobs, 1997; Presas, 2001). Those processes have been increasingly promoted as potent institutional mechanisms that can not only help understand sustainable development, but also develop policies that can ultimately help achieve sustainability² (Agenda 21, 1993; UNCED, 1992; WCED, 1987). However, multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations are not unproblematic solutions in themselves (Gray, 1989; Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002; Pillay, Rosswall, & Glaser, 2002).

Recognising multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration as potent, yet highly complex and problem-ridden governance mechanisms that are being increasingly used to institutionalise sustainable development, I decided to investigate the organising of such processes and their implications on sustainability. The overarching question that has guided my Ph.D. inquiry is **‘How do multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability occur in local settings?’** Under this overarching question I attempted to gain deeper insights on the following sub-questions:

² I recognise ‘sustainability’ as a long-term goal, a future destination which represents a sustainable state; and ‘sustainable development’ as a philosophy that underlies the social process or journey towards reaching that future state (Connor, & Dovers, 2004). I have used these terms accordingly in the dissertation. The stakeholders in my research, however, often employed these two terms synonymously. Notably, even Agenda 21 uses these terms interchangeably (Dresner, 2002). I further explain the difference between sustainable development and sustainability in section 4.3 of Chapter 4.

- (1) Why do various stakeholders participate in collective organising processes for sustainability?
- (2) How do stakeholders' intentions influence multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability?
- (3) How do various characteristics of sustainable development influence stakeholders and their collective organising for it?
- (4) How do various characteristics of multi-stakeholder organising, in general, influence such processes for sustainability, in particular?
- (5) How do stakeholders' perceptions on outcomes influence multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability?

1.3 Genesis of my intellectual inquiry

Seeds of my Ph.D. research were laid within me, unconsciously and slowly, from 1997 onwards in New Delhi, India, when I started my professional life. I began working as a Research Associate in the Communications Services Division of The Energy and Resources Institute. In 2000, I was hired by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a Scientific Affairs Specialist. I was responsible for facilitating and developing U.S.-India government dialogue and collaborations on public health and technology management. Thus over a period of five years I built my professional career around policy research, and planning and managing inter- and intra-governmental, and multi-stakeholder dialogues and collaborations on sustainable development. I often attended seminars and workshops wherein I would hear calls emphasising the need to include a wide range of stakeholders for successful planning and implementation of sustainability policies. Those discussions would often make me hopeful, but sceptical at the same time, mostly because of the challenges I had experienced while planning and implementing multi-party dialogues and collaborations. Intrigued by those

discussions, I would find myself wondering about the on-the-ground realities of collaborations for sustainability. Even though such collaborations sounded perfect in an ‘ideal’ world, were these relationships really possible in today’s ‘material’ world, where everyone is at least partially driven by their own personal needs and goals? Could such collaborations generate meaningful impacts on sustainable development? Or were they just clichés and public relations gimmicks employed to show organisational commitments towards sustainability?

In 2002 I immigrated to New Zealand. With those questions from my past still lingering on in my mind, I decided to do a Ph.D. study on multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. Thus, my professional experience enhanced my theoretical sensitivity and helped me formulate the research questions, highlighted in section 1.2, which guide my Ph.D. inquiry. I was not so much interested in identifying specific outcomes of such processes. Instead, I aimed to know how and why stakeholder relationships may or may not develop during collaborations, and how they may influence achievement of sustainability.

1.4 Locating my research

In this section, I highlight some of the gaps that I identified within the broad organisation studies literature. I explain how my research is positioned with respect to filling the following gaps, and thus contributing to new knowledge within my fields of study.

a) Dearth of rich empirical studies on non-traditional organisations and organising

Organisation scholars have traditionally focused on investigating distinct ‘forms’ of organisations as opposed to ‘processes’. A number of commentators have recognized that organisational theorising would be further enriched if scholars attended to ‘organising’ as opposed to organisations (see Clegg, & Hardy, 1996; Harrison, 1994; Hatch, & Yanow,

2003; Scott, 2003; Weick, 1979; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005); and if, instead of simply focusing on ‘centres’ of organisations, they also attended to ‘borders’ where different identities interact and intersect (Trujillo, 1999; see also Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001). Moreover, scholars have predominantly researched traditional bureaucratic organisations in comparison to non-mainstream and democratic organisations³ (Taylor et al., 2001). It has been stressed that more research on democratic organisations, as alternative to hierarchical and bureaucratic modes of organising, is needed. Eisenberg (1994) and Harrison (1994) claim that insights on questions like the following will enrich organisational theorising: (a) how do democratic organisations come into being? (b) how do members’ behaviours evolve within those? and (c) how do such organisations find the right balance between expressions of diverse view points and achievement of organisational goals while keeping the true principles and spirits of democracy alive? According to Eisenberg (1994, p. 281), “the litmus test for a democratic organization is its ability to handle diversity”. Investigating communication that plays a critical role in fostering and sustaining democratic organisations would help to generate new and richer understandings of the complex, dynamic and rapidly evolving multiple realities of such “idiosyncratic” organisations (Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997, p. 129; Trujillo, 1999).

Dialogue is “one potentially fruitful set of practices” that can powerfully “constitute democratic organizing” (Eisenberg, 1994, p. 283) and help democratic organisations reap benefits of diversity. Dialogue offers a unique third space for organisational members to embrace dichotomies emerging from conflicts and further organisational goals (Putnam, & Boys, 2006). Therefore, in order to understand non-hierarchical and democratic models of

³ Democratic organisations, in contrast to bureaucratic ones, are characterised by a less restricted and less regulated environment, in which organisational members are not constrained by their status differentials. Based on their skills, knowledge and expertise, members in such organisations may get nearly equal access to organisational resources, and are encouraged to interact equally as they contribute towards organisational goals. Thus, democratic organisations are strongly embedded in diversity, and conflict is also often a central and inescapable feature (Harrison, 1994).

organising centred on issues of conflicts and negotiations, a focus on dialogue within organising has been recommended (Taylor et al., 2001)

b) *Dearth of empirical studies on micro processes of organising within a macro institutional context*

It has been pointed out that organisational communication phenomena within broader institutional contexts are under-investigated (Taylor et al., 2001). Putnam challenges researchers to adopt a macro-institutional focus while studying micro-organisational processes, including those that address broader and complex social problems (Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997; see also Gray, 1989). It has been recommended that investigation of organisational communication processes in relation to their macro contexts would help expose the complex linkages and the dynamics of interaction between micro processes and macro forces in society, and generate deeper insights into organisation-stakeholder relationships (Deetz, 1995; Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997; Stohl, 1993). Such studies may also contribute to development of organisational theories rooted in communication.

My research is based on three cases of dialogic collaborations. These collaborations represent non-traditional and democratically inspired multi-stakeholder processes organised locally for sustainability. I have focused on dialogue as an organisational communication phenomenon and studied stakeholder behaviour during these collaborations. I have investigated how dialogue constituted the organising (see Putnam, & Boys, 2006; Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996) of these micro processes of collaborations embedded in the macro context of sustainable development. Thus, my dissertation exposes characteristics of stakeholders' interactions with each other (during their micro collaborations), and with sustainability (targeted at macro-levels of society). I uncover how those interactions influence stakeholder behaviour in the three processes, and ultimately, sustainability. In doing so, I reveal the complex and dynamic 'micro-macro' linkages that characterise

dialogic collaborations for sustainability. Institutional theory has helped me to understand and expose such macro-micro linkages and reveal the dynamics of those interactions⁴.

In the next section, I briefly highlight the cases I investigated in my research. I give greater details on the cases in Chapter 4B.

1.5 Research cases

My investigation is based on three cases of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability initiated in two different regions of New Zealand. *Urban-Rural Regional Sustainability Organisation* (URRSO) is a pseudonym for a multi-stakeholder bottom-up civil society organising process. *Metropolitan Regional Community Outcomes Process* (METROCOP) - *I* and *II* similarly represent two interconnected but independent processes of multi-stakeholder collaborations involving local government stakeholders of another region. As I am focusing on the ‘process’ and ‘dynamics’ of stakeholder involvement in those collaborations, I have labelled the organising of such collaborations as “multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.” The dissertation has also been titled accordingly.

I underscore that in this dissertation my conceptualisation of stakeholders is not just restricted to organisational members representing different sectors. It also includes those who participate in particular processes as individuals interested in collaborating with others for sustainability - without being affiliated to, or representing any organisation. I recognise all these participants involved in such collaborations as stakeholders for two reasons. One, they influence and are influenced by the course of the collaborations in which they

⁴ In Chapter 6, I present detailed discussions on the application of institutional theory in research on collaborations and organisation-stakeholder engagement for sustainability.

participate (Freeman, 1984). Second, they influence and are influenced by the macro institutional context of sustainable development.

Moreover, since the collaborations I investigated in this research were developed on grounds of dialogue, I have further classified them as multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. My use of the term ‘dialogic’ (see Freire, 1972; Misfud, & Johnson, 2000; Smith, & Arnston, 1991; Stewart, & Zediker, 2000; Taylor, & Robichaud, 2004) refers to something that is related to, or takes place through a process of dialogue. As I recognise that dialogue ‘constituted’ the organising of those three cases of collaboration, I therefore use the terms ‘multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability’ and ‘multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability’ interchangeably in this dissertation.

In the next section, I outline my approach.

1.6 Research focus and intended contributions

I position my research within the broad field of organisation studies; specifically it fits within scholarship on organising for sustainability. I intend to make the following contributions to my fields of study:

1.6.1 Intended contributions to theory

I recognise the strong emergence of the global to local drive, inspired by the philosophy of sustainable development, and the social change efforts organised at various levels of society to achieve sustainability as a ‘new social movement’ of the 21st century. I have termed this drive ‘the sustainability movement’. My research draws on and encompasses a wide range of scholarship, including that on sustainable development, dialogue, collaboration, stakeholder theory, institutional theory, social movements theory, and organisational

behaviour including emotionality and temporality of organising. This dissertation relays my interpretations of multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability as fluid, dynamic, paradoxical⁵, rapidly evolving and highly complex processes of communicative relationship building among stakeholders that are influenced by different stakeholders and their multiple institutional realities (Diani, 2003; Gadamer, 1989; Gray, 1989; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Hoffman, 2001; McCarthy, Smith, & Zald, 1996; Weick, 1979; Scott, 2003) related to sustainability.

Through mostly mundane and sometimes dramatic accounts of stakeholder engagement, which I observed, read about and heard about in interviews across the three collaborations, my dissertation unmask complexities involved in developing and maintaining human relationships during such micro processes, and which also impact the macro context of sustainable development. I underscore that I studied these three processes as ‘they were happening’ in a particular moment of time and space. Moreover, I also studied them, ‘retrospectively,’ that is after they had been formed, and as they accomplished or did not accomplish their set objectives. I have thus attempted to showcase these processes as ‘living’ phenomena governed by stakeholders’ minds and hearts – they are run by rational plans, but are also susceptible to emotions and irrational behaviours. These processes breathe with tensions, contradictions, expectations, opportunities and threats related to successes and failures.

I call my dissertation a ‘subtle’ case-based interpretation. It does not give any account of tangible successes and radical transformation of society or stakeholders through such processes. I do not prescribe wholesale solutions to challenges that stakeholders encounter as they engage with others during such processes. Instead, by unmasking the potentials of

⁵ Paradox is a condition characterised by seemingly impossible but simultaneous existence of two contradictory and inconsistent states at the same point in time that has the potential to generate tension and chaos in organisations (Clegg, 2002). I further discuss this concept in Chapter 6.

such processes and the various problematics involved, my research explains how multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations are organised in local settings. I thus generate deeper theoretical insights into the complex world of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. To facilitate comparison and contrast of subtle and nuanced aspects of the three organising processes, I do not present my empirical analyses as individual case studies.

1.6.2 Intended contributions to methodology

In addition to using grounded theory (see Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2001; Glaser, & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990) and case study approaches (see Gersick, 1988; Naumes, & Naumes, 1999; Stake, 2005; Sutton, & Callahan, 1987; Yin, 1994), I have also used critical hermeneutics (see Balfour, & Mesaros, 1994; Gummesson, 2003; Heracleous, & Barrett, 2001; Janson, & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2005; Prasad, 2005; Prasad, & Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002) in my research methodology. Such a methodological approach has enabled me to capture the emergent character of stakeholder relationships and the dynamics of collaborations, and further analyse them in the macro context of sustainable development. Critical hermeneutics gives researchers methodological opportunities to interpret and critically reflect upon the linkages between ‘texts’ and the ‘context’ of research (see Phillips, & Brown, 1993; Prasad, 2002). I thus also intend to offer this methodological approach as a relatively new tool with which to investigate stakeholder relationships for sustainability.

1.6.3 Intended contributions to practice

While sharing some of the insights on multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability I also make some practical recommendations that may facilitate others’ understanding and implementation of such processes. However, in doing so, I confess that unfortunately I remain doubtful, to some extent, of the ‘practical’ feasibility of my own

'ideal' set of recommendations. Based on my experience and study of these processes, I think that the practical recommendations I ultimately make in this dissertation may, paradoxically, be very difficult to follow and accomplish in reality. They hint at an ideal that may never be achieved. I therefore leave my recommendations open to tests of practical feasibility. Moreover, I not only present several paradoxical accounts of stakeholder relationships in these processes I also, based on my analyses, give paradoxical reflections as a researcher in several instances. Thus, through such accounts I unmask and underscore paradox as an inherent and prominent characteristic of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability.

In the next section, I discuss how I have structured the dissertation.

1.7 Dissertation structure

This dissertation is divided into two parts, and is organised according to the following sequence of chapters:

PART I

In this part, I highlight the methodological, theoretical and conceptual foundations that frame my understanding of sustainability, society, organisations and stakeholders in this dissertation.

In **Chapter 2**, I give an overview of the research methodology that underpins my dissertation, and the research methods I employed. I justify why I took an in-depth qualitative approach in my dissertation. I explain how I used case study and grounded theory research strategies, and how I collected data through participant observation of organisational meetings, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and review of strategic

organisational documents. I discuss the epistemological and methodological⁶ dimensions of critical hermeneutics, which I employ to analyse the data. I also highlight various practical and methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas I encountered during my research.

In **Chapter 3**, I present the theoretical framework that underpins my conceptualisation of the macro context of sustainable development. I draw on institutional theory and social movements theory. Institutional theory helped me conceptually understand various institutions and their role in society, and the broader and macro processes of institutionalisation and institutional change. Social movements theory enabled me to appreciate the role of social movements in bringing about institutional changes in society. By integrating the two theories, I am able to show how various institutional forces in society have influenced, and can further influence, the emergence and prominence of the sustainability movement, and how those institutional forces and the movement impact organisations and stakeholders.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the global to local institutional landscape of the sustainability movement. I have divided this chapter into two parts rather than present readers with a single overly long chapter. In **Chapter 4A**, I discuss the global context of sustainable development. I give an historical account, beginning from 1972, of what started as an environmental movement at a global level, and gradually evolved into the sustainability movement towards the end of the 20th century. I describe various elements that constitute the philosophy of sustainable development and highlight some of the conceptual intricacies within the philosophy. In **Chapter 4B**, I explain the New Zealand context for sustainable development, in terms of why and how the government is

⁶ Epistemology reflects “What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?”, and methodology indicates “How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?” (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22)

attempting to steer the sustainability movement in the country. I then give a detailed description of the three cases I investigate in this research.

In **Chapter 5**, through a review of literature on organising, dialogue, collaboration and stakeholder engagement, I present my conceptual understanding of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations as an ‘ideal’ mechanism to solve social problems. I highlight collaboration as a ‘dialogic’ action and discuss some of the characteristics, intentions and perceptions on dialogue and collaboration that popularise such processes in society. Further, I draw on institutional theory and sustainable development literature to present my arguments on the potential and legitimacy of multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations as ideal governance mechanisms for understanding and achieving sustainability.

In **Chapter 6**, I give an overview of a deeper philosophical foundation of my dissertation that relates to the ‘practical’ aspects of dialogue and collaboration. I explain my ontological understanding⁷ of society and human relationships as seen through the lenses of Gadamer (1989) and Habermas (1984, 1987), the two German philosophers renowned for their social theories developed on dialogic grounds. With that ontological understanding, I discuss the ‘practicalities’ of organising multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. I highlight some of the issues and challenges which organisations and stakeholders may face as they use dialogues and collaborations as institutional mechanisms to achieve sustainability. I hence contend that such multi-stakeholder processes are not unproblematic solutions for sustainability.

⁷ My ontological stance projects my understanding on “What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?” and gives a philosophical foundation to my research (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22).

PART II

In Part II of the dissertation I first present the empirical analyses of the three collaborations. I then weave the empirical and theoretical strands of my research to theorise multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. Each of the three initial chapters focuses on a different theme arising in the analysis.

In **Chapter 7**, I present my empirical analysis on the dynamics of understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders as they dialogically engage with each other during their respective collaborations. I reveal how those understandings and misunderstandings positively or negatively influenced the three cases.

Chapter 8 is an empirical analysis of the dynamics of stakeholders' emotions. Again, because of length I have divided this chapter into two parts for ease of reading. In **Chapter 8A**, through a brief literature review on sociology of emotions, I explain my conceptualisation of emotions and their influence in organisations. I then extend my argument to the context of sustainable development and present a conceptual discussion on emotionality of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. I also highlight some of the methodological challenges related to my research on emotions. I then present my empirical analysis of the various kinds of emotions that URRSO stakeholders felt and expressed around sustainability as they dialogically engaged with others. I discuss how those emotions influenced the organising of URRSO. In **Chapter 8B**, I present my analysis on the various kinds of emotions stakeholders felt for each other and their respective collaboration, and how those emotions influenced their dialogic engagement in the three processes.

In **Chapter 9**, through a brief literature review on sociology of time I explain my conceptualisation of time and its influence in organisations. I highlight some of the

methodological issues connected with research on time. I then present my empirical analysis of the various temporal influences on stakeholders, which were at play during the three processes. I discuss how those influences affected stakeholders' collective engagement for sustainability.

In **Chapter 10**, I present my explanation of how multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability occur in local settings. I weave together the various theoretical and empirical strands of my research. I integrate my ontological and epistemological underpinnings of critical hermeneutics with my conceptual understanding of organising, sustainable development, stakeholder engagement, dialogue, collaboration, emotions, and time. I further draw in my theoretical framework, which combines institutional theory and social movements theory with my critical hermeneutic analyses of the dynamics of stakeholders' understandings and misunderstandings, emotions, and time as witnessed in the three cases.

In **Chapter 11**, I conclude my dissertation by discussing the broad implications of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations on sustainable development. I make some theoretical and practical recommendations. I also highlight the intellectual contributions and limitations of my research. I suggest some new lines of inquiry that can be pursued to generate deeper understandings of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I gave a broad overview of my Ph.D. research. I highlighted the rationale of my research inquiry from a societal and personal perspective, and located the topic within the overall field of organisation studies, and specifically within scholarship on organising for sustainability. I gave brief details of the three cases I investigated in this dissertation. I explained the approach I have taken in presenting my analysis of multi-stakeholder

organising for sustainability. I also outlined the structure of my dissertation. Below, in Figure 1a I pictorially represent the structure of this dissertation. From next chapter onwards I cover in detail various dimensions of my research. I have dedicated the following Chapter 2 to discussions on research methodology and methods that I employed in this research.

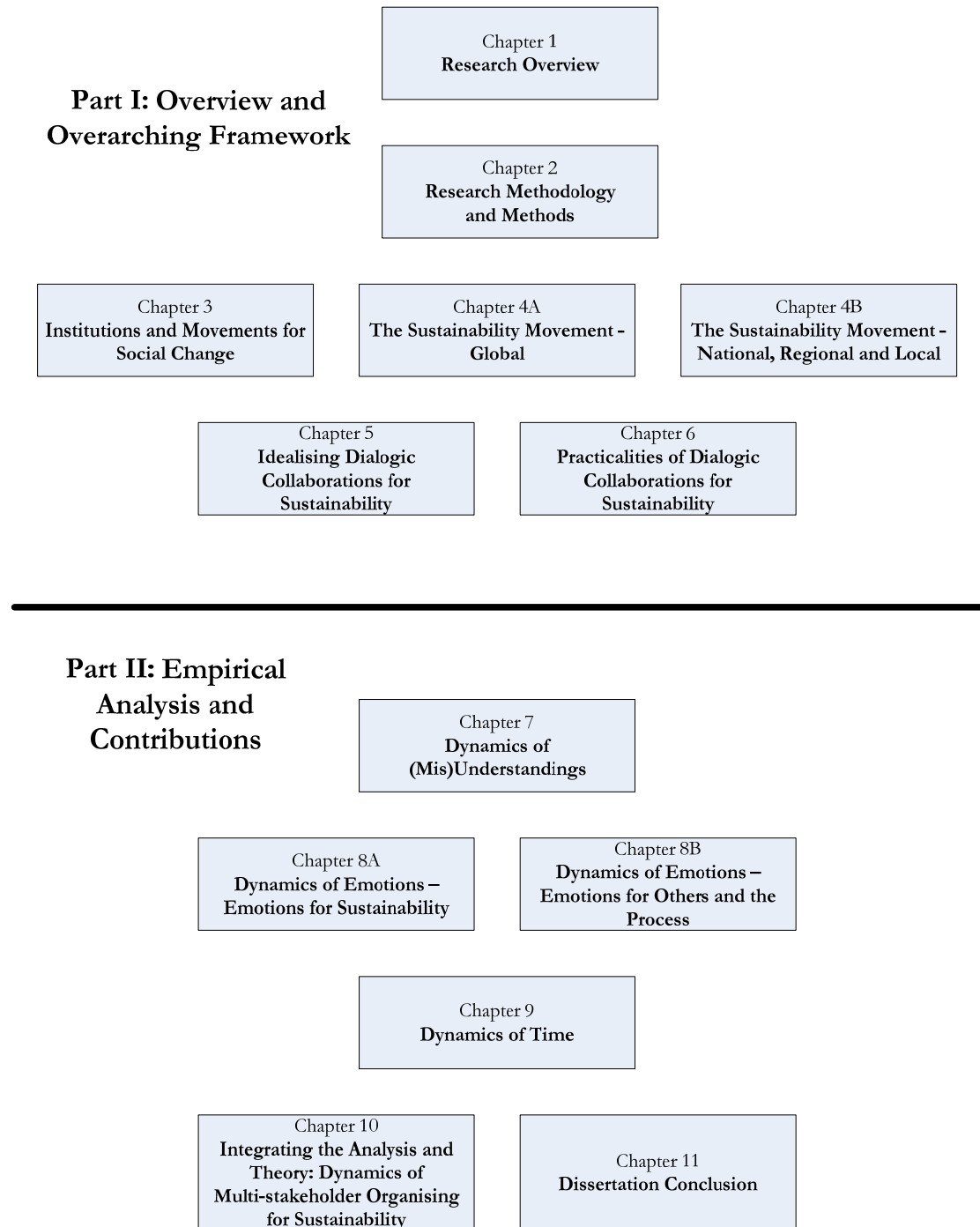


Figure 1a: Dissertation Structure

Chapter 2

Research Methodology and Methods

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give an overview of the research methodology that underpins my dissertation, and the research methods I employed. My Ph.D. research is a qualitative, grounded theory, multiple case study-based inquiry of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. I have developed my research on the foundations of critical hermeneutics⁸. The qualitative data, involving the three multi-stakeholder collaborations, was collected over a period of two and a half years (2003-2005) using multiple techniques, which I describe in this chapter.

In section 2.2, I explain my research approach. In section 2.3, I highlight the research methods that I employed across the three cases, and some of the research politics and ethical dilemmas I experienced during the process. I explain how I present my empirical analysis on the emergent themes and theorisation on multi-stakeholder organising process for sustainability in this dissertation. In section 2.4, I conclude the chapter.

2.2 Research approach

In this section, I give an overview of my research methodology. First, I justify why I took a qualitative research approach in my dissertation. Second, I explain how and why I used a case study strategy. Third, I discuss how I used a grounded theory research approach to

⁸ Critical hermeneutics is not just an epistemology and a methodology. It also represents an ontological position. In this chapter I cover only the epistemological and methodological dimensions of critical hermeneutics. In Chapter 6, I discuss how my ontological underpinnings are influenced by critical hermeneutics, and the philosophies of Gadamer and Habermas.

generate my understanding of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. Fourth, I explain how I employed principles of critical hermeneutics while analysing the data.

2.2.1 Qualitative research

As mentioned earlier, my decision to investigate multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability in my Ph.D. was inspired by my past work experience in developing and managing multi-party dialogue and collaboration on sustainable development issues. My work exposed me to the multiple realities of people in the social world of collaborations for sustainability, and made me recognise and appreciate the importance of diversity of perspectives. I have carried on the belief that individual's perceptions and interactions are generally not static; they are not formed and finalized once and for all. They develop and evolve continuously in the ebbs and flows of social interactions (Passy, 2003; Lofland, 1996). Moreover, they are not something that can readily be measured and experimentally examined (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005).

With the above beliefs, I wanted to develop a 'rich' understanding of the social world of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. I was not as much interested in knowing 'what' would be the ultimate outcomes of such collaborations as I was in understanding the 'hows' and 'whys' of stakeholders' collaborative relationships for sustainability. I therefore decided to employ a qualitative research approach for my Ph.D. I collected and analysed qualitative data guided by my overarching research question "*How do multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability occur in local settings?*"

Qualitative research has been recognised as a 'craft' (Prasad, 2005) that allows researchers to creatively undertake transdisciplinary, multiparadigmatic and multimethod research, and gain deeper 'insights' into a phenomenon (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990). Adopting a qualitative approach in my research has enabled me to interpret: (a)

various meanings that stakeholders attach to sustainable development, and to their relationships with others involved in the sustainability movement; and (b) how and why those meanings evolve during their collaborative attempts to achieve sustainability.

2.2.2 Case study research

I decided to base my Ph.D. research on case studies. Case studies are helpful in understanding contemporary phenomena within a real-life context, “especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p.13; see also Eisenhardt, 1989) They help researchers carry out an ‘in-depth’ study of individual(s), organisation(s) or situation(s) and understand even the ‘subtle’ aspects of an issue under investigation (Naumes, & Naumes, 1999). Yin (1994) emphatically points out that case studies are more than just a data collection tactic or a research design; it is a “comprehensive research strategy” (p. 13). Case study investigations thus have the potential to reveal not only important theoretical knowledge but also practical insights of real life phenomena. They are popular among qualitative researchers who want to develop a theory (Gersick, 1988; Naumes, & Naumes, 1999; Stake, 2005; Sutton, & Callahan, 1987; Yin, 1994). Case study research has also been considered potent for understanding the complexities and ‘dynamics’ of formation and evolution of inter-organisational collaborations – and especially those that address complex and protracted problems confronting our society (Gray, & Wood, 1991).

I used a multiple case study design in my research⁹. The three cases – URRSO, METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II – that I selected are ‘instrumental’ (Stake, 2005). An instrumental case study is one in which the case is of a “secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (Stake, 2005, p.

⁹ A multiple case study strategy further supports the constant comparison method and theoretical sampling techniques used in generating grounded theory. I discuss these techniques in detail in the next sub-section.

445). Such cases are examined to get deeper insights on an issue that is of primary interest to a researcher. In this dissertation I have primarily focused on organising within ‘dialogic’ collaborations for sustainability. The unit of my analysis is therefore a ‘multi-stakeholder organising process for sustainability.’ The three cases, which are exemplars of dialogic processes of organising, together enabled me to deeply understand the complex world of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability within these holistic, real-life settings. Moreover, as my focus has been on the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions related to multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability, I adopted an ‘explanatory’ case study approach in my research (Dobson, 2001; Gummesson, 1991; Yin, 1994).

I, however, acknowledge that METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II are not identical to URRSO. It would be unrealistic to expect to find an exact replica case because each case tends to be distinct and unique because of the different resources, membership, location, timing, strategies, goals etc. it possesses. Moreover, in multiple case study research it is the particularities, both in terms of distinctiveness from and similarities with other cases that are important. In the following paragraph, I discuss some of the differences and similarities among the three cases¹⁰.

These three cases are similar because: (a) all three were based on the foundations of multi-stakeholder dialogue for sustainability; (b) all three addressed sustainability from a regional perspective; (c) all three were direct offshoots of the revised 2002 Local Government Act and were conceptualised in and around the same time. They were different in the following ways. (a) URRSO is a civil society organising process, and METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II are local government organising processes. (b) URRSO addresses sustainability of a predominantly agricultural and rural region of New Zealand, the other

¹⁰ In Chapter 11, I recognise the fundamental differences among URRSO and METROCOP processes as one of the limitations of my research.

two address sustainability of a metropolitan region of New Zealand. (c) URRSO is more of a ‘bottom-up’ organising effort that ‘mushroomed’ for regional sustainability, and METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II are predominantly ‘top-down’ ‘mandated’ processes ‘strategised’ for regional sustainability¹¹. (d) While URRSO involved a wide number of stakeholders without a predefined organisational agenda and timeline, the other two involved a small group of local government stakeholders who had a predefined agenda and a fixed timeline. I discuss these issues in greater depth in Chapter 4B. In Chapters 3, 4A and 4B, I also underscore why both such top-down and bottom-up processes are essential for institutionalising sustainable development.

Further, recognising a case as a ‘system’, Stake (2005) suggests researchers should highlight the ‘boundedness’ and boundaries of a case to clearly identify, distinguish and focus on features internal or external to the organisation under investigation. So, even though I started my research with such a conceptualisation of boundaries, during the course of data collection and analysis it increasingly became clear to me that holding ‘static’ boundary conceptions would not be fully justifiable in my research. I needed to recognise the relevance of mobility, permeability and unpredictability of organisational boundaries in my cases and my research. I give two reasons for this position. First, holding a static boundary conception is contradictory to the conceptual foundations of my research. I have primarily focused on the ‘organising’ processes, as opposed to organisational forms, for sustainability, and the ‘dynamics’ of stakeholder relationships (Hart, & Sharma, 2004) involved in such processes¹². I recognise organisations are more typically dynamic ‘open systems’ made of fluid organising processes, and have highly permeable and rapidly evolving boundaries (Clemens, 2005; Clegg, & Hardy, 1996; Hatch, & Yanow, 2003; Scott, 2003). The external environment freely interacts with the internal environment, making organisations

¹¹ In Chapter 4B, I discuss how METROCOP-I and II are interlinked processes.

¹² I feature discussions around organising in Chapters 5 and 6.

increasingly susceptible to uncertainties and dynamic changes in the external environment. Conceptualising and defining boundaries of the cases, in my view, gives a more ‘static’ picture of the processes; it also narrowly confines the ‘dynamic’ implications of the processes within those borders of the organisations; and it hence prevents conceptualisation of the flow and extension of those implications to wider and macro societal-level organising, including the social movement on sustainability¹³. Second, these processes involve stakeholders, who represent other organisations, or who are participating as individuals. The stakeholders come to such processes with their own identities and boundaries as to what they wanted to discuss. In the later chapters, I empirically reveal that as stakeholders interact with others during the process, their organisational / individual identities and boundaries are prone to mixing and merging with others’ boundaries, to a lesser or greater extent. Moreover, based on my experience of investigating those three cases, I find that such processes emerge as highly unpredictable and messy encounters. As the processes attempt to integrate various socio-cultural, economic, and environmental perspectives and priorities on sustainable development, various kinds of ambiguities and uncertainties are encountered. I found it difficult for myself as a researcher to make sense of and demarcate clear boundaries, internal and external to those collaborations for sustainability. Even the stakeholders involved in the process confessed that they were not able to comprehend the boundaries of their collaboration. I empirically unmask and further discuss these boundary issues in later chapters.

¹³ Theoretical insights from institutional theory and social movements theory helped me address the ‘dynamics’ of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability, acknowledge existence of such processes at organisational field levels where various organisational boundaries mix and merge, and appreciate the implications of such processes beyond their immediate spatial and temporal boundaries. These issues are discussed in depth at various points in the dissertation.

2.2.3 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that is used to inductively develop theory about a phenomenon (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2001; Glaser, & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990). It has been noted as a process of “immersion-induction of sociological propositions” (Lofland, 1996). And with its emphasis on “process sociology as opposed to unit sociology” (Glaser, 1978, p. 69), it helps to yield a processual rather than a static analysis (Glaser, 1994; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 144), process is “a very powerful analytic notion” for grounded theory. It helps to account for and explain “change” occurring over a period of time. They suggest

To capture process analytically, one must show the evolving nature of events by noting why and how action / interaction – in the form of events, doings, or happenings – will change, stay the same, or regress; why there is progression of events or what enables continuity of a line of action / interaction, in the face of changing conditions, and with what consequences (Strauss, & Corbin, 1990, p. 144).

Research strategies involving case studies based on interviews and participant observation techniques support development of a grounded theory (e.g. Gallagher, 2004; Gersick, 1988; Glaser, 1978; Sutton and Callahan, 1987). Lofland (1996) recommends that a grounded theory case study approach is a very useful methodology that helps in studying ‘insurgent realities’ of society, including those concerned with social movements and social movement organisations (SMOs)¹⁴. As my research focus is more on ‘process’ than on ‘outcomes’, and as I wanted to generate substantive theory¹⁵, grounded in data, on multi-stakeholder

¹⁴ In Chapters 3 and 4A, I discuss social movements and SMOs in detail. Highlighting certain questions that are important to understand SMOs (for example, what are the beliefs of SMOs? How SMOs are organised? What are the causes, strategies and effects of, and reactions to SMOs? Why do people join SMOs?), Lofland (1996) demonstrates the applicability of grounded theory case study methodology in finding answers to such questions.

¹⁵ There are two types of ‘middle-range’ theories – substantive theory and formal theory. They differ in their level and degree of generality. According to Glaser (1992, p. 144), substantive theory implies a “theory developed for a substantive or empirical area of sociological inquiry – such as patient care, race relations, professional education, geriatric life styles, delinquency, or financial organizations” and formal theory is one which is “developed for a formal or conceptual area of sociological inquiry – such as status passage, stigma, deviant behavior, socialization, status congruency, authority and power, reward systems, organizations or organizational careers.” Both types of theory may be considered ‘middle-range’ theories that fall between “minor working hypotheses” of everyday life and the “all-inclusive” grand theories (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967,

organising for sustainability, a grounded theory approach¹⁶ was highly relevant for my research. I used it to investigate URRSO, which I have categorised as an SMO, as well as the METROCOP-I and II cases.

In a grounded theory approach, “data collection, analysis and theory stand in a reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss, & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). During the initial stages of my research, I did a preliminary review of the literature on sustainable development to scope the academic relevance of and potential for this study. According to Lofland (1996), as researchers adopt a grounded theory or immersion-induction perspective they should study the existing literature as “sources of flexible and variable consultation that stimulate their quest rather than as materials to be mastered in some strictly memorized fashion and applied in a mechanical manner” (p. 86). Yin (1994, p. 9) has also suggested that while formulating research questions, investigators should review the literature to develop “sharper and more insightful *questions* about the topic” rather than attempting to find “*answers* about what is known on a topic.” So my goal while carrying out the initial literature review was not to master my field of inquiry by deeply knowing the existing literature in my field; instead I wanted to enhance my theoretical sensitivity while keeping an ‘open’ attitude (Alvesson, &

p. 33). As the strategies for generating these two theories vary, a grounded theory analyst should focus on either one of them or on a specific combination. I have focused upon substantive theory generation. Glaser, and Strauss (1967) note substantive theory as a ‘strategic link’ and a very useful starting point to generate formal grounded theory. And it is often that substantive and formal theories are generated by different authors. I hope that the substantive theory I generate on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability will be a useful starting point for some other scholars to generate a formal theory on multi-stakeholder organising processes.

¹⁶ In this dissertation, I have utilised grounded theory techniques as espoused by Glaser and Strauss in their original work published in 1967 and Glaser’s subsequent works. I also recognise the scholarly differences that emerged between Glaser and Strauss in later years with Strauss’s publications – *Qualitative Analysis* in 1987 and *Basics of Qualitative Research* by Strauss and Corbin in 1990 – and the resultant debate and divergence in methodology. Glaser (1992, p. 101) notes Strauss’s model as “full conceptual description by a preconceived model” that “forces” rules on researchers drifting them into “preconception” rather than “emergence.” He is resentful of Strauss’s work to the point that he considers it “destructive” to the emergence and inductive philosophy of grounded theory. He finds the latter’s work unacceptable for it spreads misconceptions around the original methodology. Maintaining my allegiance to Glaser, I have not utilised Strauss’s strategies and rules, including those on theoretical sensitivity, open coding, axial coding, sampling, and memoing.

Deetz, 2000; Glaser, 1978). Strauss and Corbin (1990) underscore that researchers gain theoretical sensitivity not only from knowledge of existing literature but also from their professional and personal experiences. And as discussed in the previous chapter, my past work experience on multi-party dialogue and collaborations for sustainability helped me to frame my research questions, and gain greater theoretical sensitivity in my Ph.D. research.

Adhering to the principles of grounded theory, I began data collection early in my Ph.D. Having gained ethical approval from my university, I sought permission from members of URRSO to study that process. I started data collection in July 2003 by attending its meetings, observing them, writing field notes, as well as audio-recording discussions at the meetings. At the end of each meeting, I would come back to my office and immediately elaborate on my field notes, and try to finish transcribing the recorded discussions within a few days. I would then do line-by-line open coding of the transcripts and field notes to analyse the data and allow themes to emerge (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Glaser, 1978). I used Owen's (1984) criteria of recurrence, repetition and forcefulness to identify themes: 'recurrence' implying same meaning being conveyed using different words and phrases; 'repetition' when same word is repeatedly used to convey a point; and 'forcefulness' based on tone and voice modulation like dramatic stresses, pauses and increased volume. I also constantly compared data to generate analytical sub-themes and themes¹⁷.

And while I was collecting and analysing the data from the very initial stage of my research, I was simultaneously reading communication literature (focusing mostly on dialogue and organisational communication) and political science literature (including public policy, democracy and governance). I also read literature on sustainable development, qualitative research methodologies and methods, and works of various social philosophers including Bakhtin, Bohm, Freire, Buber, Heidegger, Baudrillard, Gadamer, and Habermas. In fact,

¹⁷ I discuss how I did constant comparison later in this chapter.

researchers using grounded theory methodology are often guided by data as well as extant literature as they draw out themes and explain relationships across and within those themes (see Gallagher, 2004; Suddaby, 2006)¹⁸.

However, as a deliberate strategy, I avoided getting deeply engaged in literature on organisation theory, organisational behaviour and stakeholder theory at the initial stages of my research. I did so, because I wanted to maintain the ‘local/emergent’ orientation of my research (Alvesson, & Deetz, 2000). I wanted to refrain from developing too many preconceived theoretical notions in my inquiry, as they could negatively influence my data collection and analysis. I was conscious that I should not try to ‘force’ my analysis by using extant theoretical concepts, as that would challenge the ‘emergence’ of the grounded theory that I subsequently aimed to generate (Glaser, 1992).

As I was collecting and analysing the data related to URRSO, there were early warning signals that this particular organising process would not last long. I, however, maintained my optimism and continued with the data collection and analysis. The last organisational meeting was held in December 2003. Since then, no meeting has been held. I continued collecting data by interviewing key stakeholders involved in this organising process.

The URRSO process had collapsed after only 6 months. With its abrupt ending, I confess to feeling that a good research opportunity had been snatched away from me. Though I

¹⁸ For example, incorporating concepts from institutional theory and analysing case study data collected using survey and participation observation techniques, Gallagher (2004) develops a grounded theoretical model to explain how various cooperative and coercive influences exercised by stakeholders affect organisation’s environmental management systems design outcomes. Hendry (2004) uses grounded theory case study methodology, supported with interviews and document and website analysis, to develop a theoretical model that explains processes through which environmental non-government organisations influence corporate environmental strategies. While attempting to create this model, Hendry (2004) uses resource dependency theory, network theory, corporate social or environmental performance theoretical models. Moreover, by explaining circumstances where these existing theories might not be able to predict well, Hendry’s model also makes theoretical contributions towards expanding these theories. Prasad (1994) uses institutional theory and grounded theory techniques to explain how organisational communication was used as a legitimisation device by the petroleum industry in the U.S.A over the years 1975-1990. As his research is focused on communication processes, he also uses critical hermeneutics as an epistemological framework.

was accepting of the situation, I initially felt it was unfair on my Ph.D. and was dejected. I was unconsciously expecting an 'ideal' research scenario, wherein I could go smoothly into my field site, and collect data for as long as I wished. But, then I reminded and reassured myself that I was focusing on a 'real' research situation and not conducting 'experimental' laboratory research in which I could seek to control certain variables and predict particular reactions.

Moreover, at this stage, I had already generated a set of initial findings, based on the concepts that emerged from my data analysis, and an initial theoretical orientation, which now had to be checked and elaborated upon using theoretical sampling techniques, as espoused by grounded theory (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967). According to Glaser (1978, p. 36),

Theoretical sampling is the process of theory generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by emerging theory, whether substantive or formal.

I therefore began looking for a second case – another multi-stakeholder organising process for sustainability occurring at the local level. Glaser (1978, p.42) emphasises that a grounded theory analyst's criteria behind selecting the 'next' group for data collection is of,

theoretical purpose and relevance not of structural circumstance or of preconceived preconception. Groups are chosen as they are needed rather than before the research begins. Theoretical purpose, as criterion, is embodied in generated ideas or ideas deduced from them. These ideas are properties of groups not the group itself or its apparent description. Thus apples can be compared to oranges if the comparison is the kinds of vitamins found beneath and in the skin.

Initially, I began searching for a second process within the same region. Through stakeholders involved in URRSO, I became aware of another multi-stakeholder organising process. That process involved all the local authorities in the region to collectively address

regional sustainability in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002¹⁹. I approached the Project Leader and discussed my interest to participate in the process. She seemed keen to include me in it. Following several discussions with her, I developed and submitted a proposal for consideration and approval by all the team members. My request to participate in the process as an observer was ultimately declined. The team members were concerned about having an outsider's involvement in a process which was so new to them. Their fear may have been aggravated because of my prior involvement in URRSO, and the connections I had developed through it with some influential stakeholders in the region.

In the meantime, I also became aware of METROCOP-I, which was being conceptualised along very similar lines. This process was attempting to address sustainability of a different region - a metropolitan region of New Zealand. Moreover, METROCOP-I represented a multi-stakeholder dialogic collaboration involving local authorities of that region. My research objective was to study stakeholder behaviour during collaborations for sustainability by focusing predominantly on dialogic processes, and understand institutionalisation of sustainable development through such processes, and at various levels of institutional hierarchy²⁰. So I was less concerned about the organisational forms and specific locales to which such processes belonged. I requested permission to research METROCOP-I, and subsequently METROCOP-II²¹, as additional 'instrumental' cases to investigate multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. The local authorities in this region gave me the permission to study METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II.

¹⁹ Planned in response to the regulatory change, this process was connected with the 2006 Regional Community Outcomes and the Long-Term Council Community Plan for the region. I discuss these aspects in detail in Chapter 4B.

²⁰ I discuss institutions and the processes of institutionalisation and institutional change in Chapter 3, and with respect to sustainable development in Chapters 4A and 4B.

²¹ As METROCOP-I ended, the local authority stakeholders became involved in METROCOP-II, and I also carried forward my research and included METROCOP-II in the study. I discuss this progression and the interlinkages between METROCOP-I and II in Chapter 4B.

Selection of these two cases also made the data collection very convenient for me because I was now a resident of this region and did not have to travel long distance to collect data.

Following the constant comparison tradition of grounded theory, I constantly compared data: data on the same issue or incident as expressed by different individuals; data from the same individuals expressed over different periods of time; and data on similar concepts as expressed across the three cases (Charmaz, 1994). I compared: *incidents with incidents* to develop concepts; *concepts to more incidents* in order to theoretically elaborate, saturate, verify, and make dense those concepts and generate their theoretical properties; and *concepts to concepts* in order to develop conceptual relationships between various concepts and generate a set of conclusions which offered insights to the research questions that were guiding my inquiry (Glaser, 1978; Lofland, 1996). Further, I wrote theoretical memos to conceptualise new ideas, linkages and connections between codes, and between concepts. By raising the codes to higher abstract levels, I generated analytical themes and sub-themes and conceptually elaborated, extended and integrated those (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Glaser, 1978). I hence moved from ‘illustrative descriptions’ of data to ‘abstract conceptualisations’, a critical step in the theory-building process.

The more data I collected and analysed, the more my analysis started revealing similar aspects of dialogic collaborations for sustainability. When I felt confident that I had collected and analysed sufficient data, and discovered that no major new insights were forthcoming from my analysis, I stopped my data collection. Data collection for URRSO took place over 15 months (July 2003-September 2004) and for METROCOP-I and II over 15 months (September 2004-November 2005).

As I ended the data collection, I began generating the bases of my theory, which I then related further to various concepts and theories from extant literature in organisational

studies (see Hendry, 2004). My analysis revealed how regulatory institutional change on sustainable development through the revised Local Government Act 2002 had critically influenced the development of the three cases and stakeholder relationships within those processes. I recognised the need to theoretically understand the role of institutions and institutional change towards sustainable development. I began reading extensively on institutional theory and social movements theory, which constitute the theoretical framework of my research. Together, the two theories have enhanced my understanding of the context of sustainable development, the related processes of institutional change and institutionalisation required to achieve sustainability, and the role of multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration as institutional mechanisms in the sustainability movement.

My analysis yielded four major themes; each of which had several underlying sub-themes.

The themes and respective sub-themes are as follows. The first theme,

(mis)understanding, includes sub-themes (a) *(mis)understanding sustainability*, (b)

(mis)understanding institutions for sustainability, (c) *(mis)understanding collaborations for sustainability*,

and (d) *understanding institutional change towards sustainability*. The second theme, **emotions**

around sustainability (found only in URRSO), includes sub-themes (a) *excitement*, (b)

empathy, (c) *hope*, (d) *fear*, (e) *pride*, (f) *frustration*, and (g) *stress* (from busy lifestyle). The third

theme, **emotions for ‘others’ and the process**, includes sub-themes (a) *confusion and*

frustration, (b) *mistrust and suspicion*, (c) *fear and nervousness*, (d) *anger*, (e) *stress* (to make the

collaboration work), (f) *hope and satisfaction*, and (g) *pessimism and disillusionment*. And finally the

fourth theme, **time**, includes sub-themes (a) *time and sustainability*; (b) *time and collaboration*; (c)

time and politics.

Thus while generating my theory on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability in this dissertation, I have drawn and built upon: (a) my ontological and epistemological underpinnings of critical hermeneutics; (b) my theoretical framework that cross-fertilises

institutional theory and social movements theory; (c) my conceptual understanding of organising, sustainable development, stakeholder engagement, dialogue, collaboration, emotions, and time; and (d) my critical hermeneutic analyses of the dynamics of stakeholders' understandings and misunderstandings, emotions, and time as witnessed in the three cases.

2.2.4 Critical hermeneutics

In this sub-section I explain the key principles of critical hermeneutics²² that I employed in my research to analyse the data. Various scholars have recognised its potential and merits as a research methodology for management and organisation studies, especially because it addresses some of the limitations of traditional interpretive research (see Balfour, & Mesaros, 1994; Gummesson, 2003; Heracleous, & Barrett, 2001; Janson, & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2005; Phillips, & Brown, 1993; Prasad, 2002; Prasad, 2005; Prasad, & Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002). For example, traditional interpretive research on management and organisations has concentrated mostly on micro-worlds of local meanings and individual interactions, and in the majority of cases, has maintained a safe distance from macro worlds of institutional processes, structures and networks (Prasad, & Prasad, 2002).

²² Critical hermeneutics evolved from the hermeneutic tradition. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (n.d), hermeneutics “covers both the first order art and the second order theory of understanding and interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions”. The hermeneutics tradition dates as far back as the 17th century and is connected with ancient Greek philosophy. Its name is derived from the name of the Greek god Hermes who played the role of an interpreter of the messages of the gods. Later, it took the shape of biblical hermeneutics. Schleiermacher in the late 18th and early 19th century extended understanding of hermeneutics by propagating it as more than a technique to understand biblical texts. He highlighted its application to human communication and social phenomena and recognised that an act of interpretation is not just grammatical, it is also psychological. He thus stressed that psychology of the interpreter is an important component of the interpretive structure. Heidegger gave a philosophical turn to hermeneutics with his work *Being and Time* (1927), by recognising it as more than just an ‘act’ of interpretation, as espoused by Schleiermacher. His philosophy was extended by Gadamer with his work, *Truth and Method* (1960). Heidegger and Gadamer recognised that hermeneutics was not just restricted to linguistic understanding of texts but was concerned with an existential understanding of being in the world. By connecting hermeneutics to human existence their work thus gave it an ontological identity. Habermas and Ricoeur took the hermeneutic tradition in a critical direction, where they recognised the need for critical judgement and reflection that serves the purpose of emancipation and liberation. While Habermas through his work, including the *Critical Theory of Society*, propagated the importance of unmasking power asymmetries and hegemonies in social relations, Ricoeur (1971, 1991) called for simultaneously adopting a faith-based as well as a suspicion-based approach to interpretation. Critical hermeneutics thus calls for considering issues of power, justice, ethics, morality and domination and questioning the conditions of human interaction and communication while interpreting texts (Prasad, 2005).

In contrast, critical hermeneutics gives researchers an opportunity to “bridge the gap between micro practices and macro structures, and a platform to establish the connections between local subjective worlds and macro organizational and institutional processes and phenomena” (Prasad, & Prasad, 2002, p. 7). On the following pages, I explain how using various principles of critical hermeneutics, researchers are able to interpret ‘texts’ while simultaneously and critically reflecting upon the structures and taken-for-granted rules and norms that govern our social systems (Phillips, & Brown, 1993; Prasad, 2002).

The usage of word ‘texts’ in critical hermeneutics is not just physically confined to written documents; it also extends ‘metaphorically’ to include all situations, including economic and social structures, culture, organisational practices and institutions (Cheney, & Tompkins, 1988; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Ricoeur, 1971). Just like any written text, those situations, events and phenomena can also be read, understood and interpreted, and therefore are included under the broad category of texts (Prasad, 2002). I have also accordingly used the word ‘texts’ to include multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability. These texts are quite literally comprised of the organisational meetings and interviews, related transcripts and field notes, and strategic organisational documents that I analysed.

Critical hermeneutics is a “useful critical methodology for understanding how communication patterns both expose and conceal specific dynamics” (Prasad, 2005, p. 41; see also Prasad, 1994). It recognises that communication is often a complex and contested process that involves power differentials. The networks of texts generated in the process are not only ‘expressive’ in nature, carrying or reinforcing people’s anxieties, dreams, desires or fears; those can also be ‘ideological’ (Prasad, 2005). And accordingly, they may produce, impose and disseminate meanings that favour certain interests and legitimise asymmetrical relationships in the social interactions. Texts can be used to conceal realities and deceive

people. Moreover, texts not only have a structural element, they also have intentional, referential, and contextual elements (Phillips & Brown, 1993).

In critical hermeneutics texts are therefore not treated as innocent (Prasad, 2005). It is advised that a critical hermeneutic researcher should simultaneously and respectively exercise 'hermeneutics of faith' and 'hermeneutics of suspicion' when analysing texts (Ricoeur, 1991; Prasad, 2005; Prasad, 2002). In other words, while interpreting, researchers should not only analyse texts to identify their obvious meanings, they should also view them with a fair degree of scepticism, and dig deeper to find 'subtexts'. By unmasking 'subtexts' that hide deep below 'surface-texts' one can explore the latent meanings and generate deeper understanding of social and organisational realities at expressive and ideological levels. In doing so, one can expose inconsistencies, contradictions, power conflicts and class differences embedded in those texts (Phillips and Brown, 1993; Prasad, 2005). Thus, critical hermeneutics provides "a structured approach to the analysis of the role of meaning in the ongoing re-creation of organizations and their environments" (Phillips, & Brown, 1993, p. 1547). It may not be possible to achieve such deeper levels of understanding if one traditionally and more superficially interprets the texts to find out their obvious meanings.

While analysing the data, I have employed five key methodological principles of hermeneutics: (1) the hermeneutic circle, (2) the hermeneutic horizon, (3) the fusion of horizons, (4) the rejection of author-intentionality, and (5) critique (Prasad, 2005; Prasad & Mir, 2002). The first concept, the hermeneutic circle is based on the principle that

we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and details in terms of the whole.... The anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes actual understanding when the parts that are determined by the whole themselves also determine this whole (Gadamer, 1976, p. 291).

Thus the hermeneutic circle is an “iterative spiral of understanding” (Prasad, 2005, p. 34) that involves constant comparison between the text and the context (Cheney, & Tompkins, 1988) – that is, while, on one hand, deeper understanding of the wider social, historical, and organisational contexts helps to develop deeper understanding of the meanings of the texts, on the other hand, the context is also better understood by deeply understanding the texts (Prasad, 2005; Prasad, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, I regard the three multi-stakeholder organising processes that I investigated as the overarching texts of my research. The context of those texts is sustainable development, as the three processes emerged and derive their identity from this context. Prasad (2002) advises that critical hermeneutic researchers should actively define the context, along with its history, at different levels of comprehensiveness to generate a comprehensive and deeper understanding of the text. Therefore, in Chapter 4A, I give an overview of the global institutional landscape of sustainable development. I describe the history of the sustainability movement that started over two decades ago. I also highlight the various conceptual elements that constitute the philosophy of sustainable development. In Chapter 4B, I discuss sustainable development in the New Zealand context. In the forthcoming chapters, I conceptually argue and empirically demonstrate the circular linkage between the multi-stakeholder organising processes and sustainable development. I explain how such processes are deeply embedded in the context of sustainable development, and how sustainable development is, in turn, dependent on such processes.

The second principle, the hermeneutic horizon recognises ‘historical consciousness’ of our being and understanding, including that of a researcher. It calls for an ability to develop a ‘superior breadth of vision’ wherein one learns to see beyond the frontiers of present horizon of understanding and project into a historical horizon of understanding as well.

This principle ties in closely with the third principle of the fusion of horizons that I employ in my research. According to Gadamer (1976, p. 307), any process of understanding involves a “fusion of horizons,” which means that “as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded” by our present horizon of understanding.

Together, the two principles of hermeneutic horizon and fusion of horizons underscore the importance of ‘historicality’ in human understanding – that is the past influences one’s present and future understanding. In the forthcoming analysis and discussion chapters, I empirically unmask and discuss the historicality of stakeholder relationships. I uncover how past relationships among stakeholders and different organisations influence their present understanding of the multi-stakeholder process and their relationships with each other as they get involved in the process. I also expose how such historicality further impacts the context of sustainable development.

In addition to encouraging researchers to constantly compare the text and the context, critical hermeneutics also encourages engagement in critical self-reflexivity - that is to question and challenge one’s own prejudices and hermeneutic horizon during the act of interpretation (Alvesson, & Deetz, 2000; Prasad, 2002). Gadamer (1976, p. 269) states that a hermeneutically-trained consciousness must be sensitive to “text’s alterity”. He suggests that while trying to understand the text, one should foreground and appropriate “one’s own bias so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings” (p. 269). Thus, at various points of my dissertation, I give prominence to my historicality and past experience. I give a reflexive account of how my historicality could have influenced my hermeneutic horizon and my interpretations.

And as I engage in critical self-reflexivity, I also follow the fourth principle of the rejection of author-intentionality. According to this principle, the meaning of any text is more than

what the author intended it to mean. During analysis one needs to recognise that “any text is not solely the product of an individual author’s personal intentions and desires, but is the outcome of multiple socio-cultural and political forces reflecting broader institutional relationships and ideologies more than individual authors’ mindsets” (Prasad, 2005, p. 38). Critical hermeneutic analysis must therefore include all aspects of texts, including the critique of author’s authenticity, possible bias and ideological elements (Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002)²³. As “the hermeneutic ideal for a researcher is to learn more about himself or herself in the course of textual interpretation” (Prasad, 2005, p. 37), in the later chapters of my dissertation I often raise questions. By raising questions I have attempted to engage in dialogue with the texts (Gadamer, 1976; Prasad, 2002). I also share my doubts and faith, fears, hopes and prejudices related to stakeholders, sustainability, multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability, and my interpretations and position as a researcher and an individual who is passionately committed to the sustainability movement.

The fifth principle of critical hermeneutics is that of critique. In order to develop a critical frame of reference in my research I employ the four central problematics: “(a) the problematic of voice; (b) the problematic of rationality; (c) the problematic of organization; (d) the problematic of the organization-society relationship” (Mumby, & Stohl, 1996, pp. 53; Taylor et al., 2001)²⁴. I constantly engage the texts of multi-stakeholder organising

²³ Use of the term ‘author’ is not just restricted to me, the author of the dissertation; it also includes the stakeholders involved in the multi-stakeholder processes who are the authors of the texts that I have analysed in my dissertation.

²⁴ The ‘problematic of voice’ challenges the seemingly natural view of organisations by recognising existence of multiple voices within organisations. The voices also include those that belong to marginalised groups and processes, some of which may have been silenced by dominant and privileged voices. One can contribute to critical inquiry by challenging those privileged voices and dominant ways of seeing and thinking about organisations, and by understanding how communication serves or hinders the interests of the privileged and the marginalised participating in those organising processes. By ‘problematizing rationality’, one can transcend beyond traditional notions of purposive / instrumental rationality, develop an appreciation for social construction of reality and organising processes, recognise the affective elements of human interactions that also influence instrumental rationality in the process, and challenge understanding processes and outcomes based on managerially defined grounds and measures of effectiveness. By ‘problematizing the very notion of organisation’, one starts treating organisations less as reified structures and more as communicative processes of organising based on networks of social relationships. The ‘problematic of organisation-society relationship’ recognises the permeability, fluidity and indistinct character of boundaries between organisations and society. Such a problematisation encourages scholars to understand the dynamics of organisational processes in the

processes with the context of sustainable development, and unmask various ideological elements as the two interrelate with each other (Prasad & Mir, 2002). While doing critique, I question the naturalisation of social order which treats multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations and its organising as natural, self-evident, fixed and reified. I question the dominance of instrumental rationality over other forms of reasoning, which are critical to understanding realities of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. I also unmask the hegemony in the organising processes by exposing how interests of certain powerful stakeholders are privileged over others, how consensus is arrived at during those processes, and how domination often hides and suppresses meaningful conflicts²⁵ (see Alvesson, & Deetz, 2000; Deetz, 1995).

In this section, I have explained the methodological foundations of my research. The use of grounded theory case study approach and critical hermeneutics supports my research focus on ‘organising’, and my aims to understand the ‘dynamics’ of stakeholder interactions as they engage in dialogic collaborations organised in the context of sustainable development. I used these approaches to collect and analyse data as described next.

2.3 Data collection techniques and presentation

In this section, I elaborate on the methods that I employed to collect data in my research. Recognising that the three processes I was investigating were complex and dynamic phenomena involving different individuals with different personal and professional backgrounds, and deeply embedded in the macro social context of sustainable

context of more macro regional, national and global forces at play (see also Cheney, & Christensen, 2001; Stohl, 1993). One may, however, not be able to liberate the silenced or marginalised in any practical sense.

²⁵ As noted earlier, my research focus is on dialogue during the organising of multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. In the later chapters, I empirically demonstrate the influence of emotionality on such processes, and on sustainable development. I also demonstrate the distortions and dominations in stakeholder communications and interactions, and how such local processes are influenced by macro institutional forces, operating from global to national levels, on sustainable development.

development, I corroborated my research with multiple data sources such as participant observation, interviews, and organisational documents. Data from different sources are considered useful for generating a substantive theory (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967). Even though it is time consuming, such “triangulation” helped me undertake “*converging lines of inquiry*” (Yin, 1994, p. 93) so that I could develop a more holistic view of stakeholders and the organising processes. It has been noted that triangulation adds more “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth” to research (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005) and thus reduces chances of researcher’s biases creeping in – a major concern raised against qualitative case study research (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 1994).

In this section, first I elaborate how I used participant observation technique in my research. Second, I give details on the stakeholder interviews I conducted. Third, I highlight the organisational document review procedure I adopted. Fourth, I explain how I present my empirical analysis and conceptualisations in this dissertation. Fifth, I shed light on some of my experiences as a qualitative researcher, including issues of politics and ethical dilemmas during the research process.

2.3.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation as a data collection technique enables researchers to study ‘dynamic’ interactional phenomena in their natural settings without allowing a researcher to disrupt its naturalness (Ruane, 2005; Singleton, & Straits, 1988). It helps find answers to ‘how’ questions (Robson, 1993). Taking up the role of ‘participant as observer’, I had the opportunity to physically enter and observe how the social worlds of the three multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability were organised, and gain an ‘insider’s view’ of the organising processes (Daymon, & Holloway, 2002; Robson, 1993). Even though I could observe and participate in the meetings, I was not involved in the daily tasks and routines of the collaboration, nor did I get myself immersed totally in their politics. The

position of participant observer is, however, also a marginal position, and it can often become challenging and stressful for a researcher (Singleton, & Straits, 1988; Robson, 1993). For example, in my situation in order to gain entry into the multi-stakeholder organising processes I had to seek formal permissions from officials of the key organisers. While I was successful in getting permission in some processes, I failed to get it in one case, as discussed previously.

The atmosphere in URRSO was very informal. I was allowed free and open access to the organisational meetings. I was allowed to audio-record conversations in the meetings and the members ensured that I was always invited to 'all' of their meetings. I was treated as an active member of their group and hence I had to often remind myself that I should not forget my role as a participant observer in this organising process. Singleton and Straits (1988) cautions researchers not to 'go native' as they become involved in data collection. Researchers may take up more of a participant role and lose sight of their observer role as they become too immersed in the setting. Thus I always tried to maintain a balance between my role as a participant and as an observer. It has also been noted that researchers may develop strong emotional attachments or detachments to the people they are studying, and may find it difficult to leave the research site or may withdraw early from the site, respectively (Alvesson, & Deetz, 2000; Singleton, & Straits, 1988). I give an account of my emotional interactions in URRSO and with some of the stakeholders in Chapter 8A.

With METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II, I had to go through lengthy procedures to get approvals to research those processes. I was requested to submit a detailed proposal to the key organisations highlighting my research objectives, supporting it with my academic and professional credentials, and offering assurances that I would strictly maintain member confidentiality in the publications that emanate from my research. I also agreed to a clause put in by the organisation chairing METROCOP-I: if the members preferred, my

dissertation would be embargoed till the publication of the regional Long-Term Council Community Plan in August 2006. I had to get formal approvals by several levels of management including respective Project Leaders, their Managers, and various local authority stakeholders participating in the two organising processes. It took nearly 6 months to get the approval. I attended the first METROCOP-I meeting, chaired by the regional authority, in September 2004. Considering the political sensitivities involved in the process, I think the long wait to get the approval was justified.

As METROCOP-I led by the regional authority ended, I moved on to a subsequent and related process, METROCOP-II, led by a territorial local authority. I applied for permission to attend this meeting and was granted it in February 2005. Getting approval this time to observe METROCOP-II was less time consuming possibly because I had developed good rapport with the METROCOP stakeholders and they had developed a reasonable level of trust in me, and interest in my research.

My association with those involved in METROCOP processes was at a very professional level, and my role was strictly observational. I was not an active member of the group. As I observed their processes, those members also observed my involvement and me. Over time they showed more interest in my research and were very encouraging towards it. They started including me in friendly conversations, and offered help in providing me with information, as and when I asked them for it. I was granted permission to attend 'most' but not 'all' the meetings. I was not allowed to attend some of the meetings, which the Project Leader expected would be controversial and may get very heated. But, I was given access to minutes of those meetings. I was also not allowed to audio-record the discussions. I could take notes as I observed the meetings, and was included in the members' distribution list which gave me access to minutes of the meetings, agenda, press releases, reports and any other communication emailed to all project members.

Participant observation involves a process of ‘analytic induction’ implying that as a researcher collects data through observation, he/she also interprets it at the same time (Robson, 1993). In the field notes I made I tried to capture verbatim statements, or summarised the discussion. I also took ‘jotted notes’, short but evocative words or phrases that would give me the cues to fully elaborate on once I left the research site (Ruane, 2005).

Qualitative researchers are often encouraged to inculcate and develop their sensitivity to observe and understand the situations, people, organisations and phenomena they are studying. This sensitivity should be reflected in the field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Yin (1994) advises case study researchers to develop good ‘listening’ skills, wherein listening is not just confined to ‘aural modality’ but also includes one’s sensitivity and ability to observe and capture contradictory evidence, mood and affective components of organisational members in order to understand their meanings. I endeavoured specifically to be sensitive to include the ‘not-so-vocal’ members in my field of focus, and identify subtle instances and facial expressions (Fineman, 2000; Fineman & Sturdy, 1999; Sturdy, 2003) reflecting some felt meanings. I gave prominence to the background conversations stakeholders had with others and with me in order to ensure that those ‘soft’ yet ‘passionate’ voices did not get lost in the world of ‘the bold and the loud’ and remain outside my research.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) also highlight that qualitative researchers should possess ‘theoretical and social sensitivity’ wherein they can step back and critically analyse situations, recognise and seek to avoid biases and think creatively and abstractly. In this regard, I tried to account for my prejudices, ethical and political dilemmas, and constantly challenged my own assumptions and stance. While observing meetings, I would also write down my personal impressions, feelings, ideas and hunches and theoretical memos. Thus, as I collected data, I allowed myself to flow with the natural course of the organising

processes. And as I analysed the data, I discovered different shades and patterns in the concepts emerging at different stages of data collection. I would often try to critically analyse the situation. I would freely express my excitement, relief, curiosity, surprise, confusion, fear, doubt and insecurities in my field notes. Some moments of data collection seemed very smooth and easy, giving me happiness and satisfaction at the end of the day. Other moments came with challenges that perplexed me, causing me worries and leaving me insecure, scared and exhausted, especially when I would see things and situations happening contrary to my expectations and becoming incomprehensible as the processes evolved. I sometimes wished to see more clarity, more predictability and more positive outcomes from the organising process. Those moments were never under my control right from the beginning. However, seeing the processes deviate from what I had expected was worrisome for me. My anxiety was not only because my Ph.D. was connected with these processes but also because of my personal aspirations to see tangible and successful collaborations for regional sustainability.

And as I reflected on my observations, interpretations and insights, I was also often intrigued. For example, I would often reflect on how permeable and intangible boundaries of these organising processes were. I would think about how fluid those processes were as I saw them mixing and merging with the context of sustainable development. I noted how difficult it was to capture and demonstrate the tangible outcomes of these processes, especially in terms of their effectiveness, and how difficult it was to clearly demarcate and pick out some of the ensuing complexities. I have engaged in critique and discussions around these issues at various points in the following chapters.

During data collection, if I observed recurrent themes emerging I would note them down as a reminder for myself. After attending meetings, I would come back to my office and complete elaborating and writing the field notes in a narrative style in order to ensure that I

provided thick and rich descriptions of the phenomena I was studying. I would also make a 'to do list', which included follow-up actions I needed to take after the meetings.

Sometimes I would follow up with some stakeholders to obtain some documents from them, or at a later stage, during an interview with them, ask them about something specific they had mentioned in the previous meetings. I would also make a list of theoretical leads on the topics that I needed to read in order to enhance my theoretical conceptualisations.

2.3.2 Interviews

I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with participants in the three processes to collect additional data for my research. I selected interviewees for the URRSO and METROCOP cases depending upon their active role in the organisation and based on my observations. I observed stakeholders' proactive involvement in the process and their interest on sustainability which some of them expressed openly, and others more subtly. I enjoyed conducting these interviews as they gave me additional opportunities to further understand those stakeholders, the stance they took and the decisions they made during the organising processes. The interviews also helped develop rapport and closer relationships with certain interviewees as we engaged in dialogue. Building relationships at this stage was helpful to me in my role as a participant observer, especially in case of METROCOP –I and II where I was doing participant observation and interviews around the same time.

The semi-structured interviewing style also gave me enormous flexibility (Robson, 1993). While the interview questions were broadly the same across the three case sites, they differed because of inherent differences in the processes. And within the same multi-stakeholder organising process, while I pursued the same interview framework, I had the flexibility to ask some interviewees certain questions in greater detail. As noted earlier, I also followed up with some of them on a particular stance they took or an issue or concern they raised during the past meetings. The duration of these interviews ranged from 30

minutes to 2 hours, and this time factor was mostly dependent on the interviewee's willingness to continue to engage in detailed dialogue with me. While some interviewees were more communicative and would give me a great deal of detail while responding to each question, others were briefer and more to the point.

I framed the interview questions in an open-ended way in order to give my interviewees the maximum opportunity to speak. I was conscious that I should not ask them leading questions. So, while preparing for each interview, I would jot down a number of sub questions under each broad question, which could be used as a probe during the interview. I also used probing techniques when interviewees seemed reluctant to freely express their concerns or if they were not very communicative. During the course of the interviews, I would also look out for and observe non-verbal cues from the interviewees and take note of their moods, sentiments and dispositions before, during and after the interview.

All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. I would begin interviews by asking the interviewees about their role in the organisation they worked for, or represented. This approach helped me establish rapport with the interviewee. It also made us feel more settled in our respective roles in the interview. I would then ask the main questions related to my research. I designed interviews in such a way that they were more like a dialogue, guided by my research objective, rather than pure question and answer sessions (Ruane, 2005). This style also greatly helped to ease the tension between the interviewee and me, and relax the interview environment. I recognised that as we became more relaxed, the interviewees would become more expressive, open and forthcoming in sharing their views and insights. I would also often use silent pauses to allow the interviewees to reflect on their thoughts and expand on them further (Bryman, 2001). I also used this silence as a probing technique at times. Certain skills, which I had developed from my previous work experience as a radio journalist proved helpful to me in conducting this style of interview.

Often, I observed that as interviews ended, and I switched off the tape recorder, some interviewees would start opening up to me and would want to talk more. In certain cases where I knew the interviewees wanted to speak more because they were enthusiastic about the interview and about getting an opportunity to express themselves, I would switch on the tape recorder again. In other cases, where I sensed that the interviewees had been bit cautious during the interview because their views were being audio-recorded, I would not switch on the tape recorder again. Instead, I would listen to them attentively, make mental notes of their comments or the stories they told me. I would then elaborate on those points in my field notes either when I reached my office, or while I waited to catch the intercity bus in the transport centre²⁶. I did not include the latter as direct quotes in this dissertation.

2.3.3 Organisational document review

In addition to participant observation of meetings and interviews, I also collected and reviewed organisational documents that were related to the processes (for example, the agendas of meetings, the Terms of Reference, lists of participants, emails, project briefings), as well as those which were outcomes of the processes (for example, Memorandum of Understanding, media releases, minutes of meetings, reports that were written for the stakeholders and the public). Analysis of these documents enabled me to: (a) provide the background for case descriptions which are presented in Chapters 4B; (b) to support the analyses of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from observation field notes, and meeting and interview texts; and (c) use excerpts from those documents as a basis for analysing the expected and realised outcomes of the organising processes.

The following is a comparative summary table of the various data collection techniques I used.

²⁶ During the later stages of my URRSO data collection, I moved to another city in New Zealand and therefore used the intercity bus service to travel to and from my research destination.

| | Case 1: URRSO | Cases 2 & 3: METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II |
|--|---|--|
| Period | July 2003-September 2004 | September 2004- November 2005 |
| <i>My Overall Role</i> | More active participation; Invited and given opportunity to voluntarily express my opinions and information on sustainable development in general; Often played the role of an informant when asked by interviewees on the latest status of the organisation; Had a more informal and friendly association with members. | More passive participation; Strictly observing; Neither invited nor voluntarily offered to express my personal opinion or share information on sustainable development; Had a more professional association with members. |
| Participant Observation | | |
| <i>Organisational Meetings</i> | <i>Number of Meetings Observed:</i> 9 <i>Duration of Meetings:</i> 1-2 hours <i>Number of Attendees:</i> 13-30 | <i>Number of Meetings Observed:</i> 6 <i>Duration of Each Meeting:</i> 2 hours <i>Number of Attendees:</i> 10-14 |
| <i>Data Sources</i> | Meeting transcripts, Field notes, Agenda, Meeting documentation, Minutes of Meetings, Emails (Permitted to audio-record meetings) | Field notes, Agenda, Meeting documentation, Minutes of Meetings, Emails (Not permitted to audio-record meetings) |
| Semi-structured Interviews | | |
| | <i>Number of interviews:</i> 15 <i>Duration:</i> 45 minutes – 2 hours | <i>Number of interviews:</i> 7 <i>Duration:</i> 30 minutes – 1 hour |
| <i>Data Sources</i> | Interview transcripts, Field notes | Interview transcripts, Field notes |
| Organisational Documents and Archival Records | | |
| <i>Multi-stakeholder organising process</i> | Announcements, Letters, Memorandum of Understanding | Announcements, Letters, Memorandum of Understanding, Reports and Studies, Press Releases, Proposals |
| <i>Select Stakeholder Organisations</i> | Annual Reports, Policy and strategic documents of local authorities in the region | Annual Reports, Policy and strategic documents of local authorities in the region |

Table 2.1: Data Collection Techniques

2.3.4 Data illustration and theoretical conceptualisation

I now briefly describe where and how the data from organisational meetings, interviews, observation field notes and organisational documents have been presented and theorised in this dissertation. In Chapters 7, 8A, 8B and 9, I illustrate the various themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data by including direct quotes from interviews and meetings, and excerpts from field notes and organisational documents. While presenting data I, at times, insert some stakeholders' quotes in the text. The quotes so chosen are the ones that are illustrative of the general opinions and feelings commonly expressed by

majority of stakeholders involved in the collaborations. And while highlighting some representative quotes, at times, I point out facial and physical expressions of some stakeholders that I observed during interviews and meetings. Overall, I have supported my empirical analyses with approximately 230 illustrative quotes selected across from the three collaborations. I also underscore that even though I have studied the three collaborations as cases I do not present my empirical analyses as case studies; rather I present the themes in such a way as to compare and contrast the three processes.

Once I illustratively describe the data in the above chapters, I then move on to the next higher and more abstract stage of theorisation in Chapter 10. In that chapter, I engage in discussion and critique around those themes and sub-themes, and I do so in line with the various principles of critical hermeneutics discussed in section 2.2.4 of this chapter and later in Chapter 6. I integrate my empirical analyses with my conceptual understanding related to those themes and sub-themes and the theoretical framework, and explain my theory on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.

2.3.5 Political and ethical stance

The data collection phase of my research, and the concurrent analysis proved physically, mentally and emotionally demanding and highly time-consuming. I experienced ethical and political dilemmas, some of which I have already covered in this chapter. In this sub-section, I highlight additional related issues that I confronted during this phase.

It is important for researchers to acknowledge their political position and the ethical stance they take during the course of the research (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990). Stake (2005) highlights issues of ethics faced by qualitative researchers in general and case study researchers in particular. As case study research often involves issues connected to general public who normally do not have the “right to know” (Stake, 2005, p. 459), case

study researchers enter those “private” fields as “guests.” They are hence bounded by the privacy and confidentiality clauses and often have to assure the members of the organisations under investigation about privacy and confidentiality issues.

As mentioned earlier, I received all the necessary administrative approvals and was given the permission to carry out in-depth investigation of three organising processes. And as a case study researcher, I carried out my investigation without trying to influence the organisational phenomena or manipulate stakeholders’ behaviours and responses during the process (Lofland, 1996; Stake, 2005; Yin, 1994). Before conducting interviews, I informed interviewees about the objectives of my research, and only when they agreed to participate in the interview and signed the Informed Consent Form, did I conduct any interview. I assured individual research participants that their confidentiality would be maintained at all stages, including in any publication that emanates from my research. Therefore, while representing views of stakeholders on a particular issue I have used pseudonyms without mentioning their organisational affiliations in the quotes.

I, however, acknowledge that it is difficult to maintain the anonymity of the two regions in New Zealand with which the respective cases are associated. Even though I have used pseudonyms for the local authorities involved in the processes, some readers may not find it difficult to recognise the regions I have focused upon. This possibility arises because New Zealand is a very small country and the two regions have distinctive characteristics. Further, there are only a few local government bodies in those regions that contribute towards the mandate of regional sustainable development. Therefore despite using pseudonyms, it is not completely possible for me to conceal the identity of the two regions and the local authorities involved in the three cases.

Further, in the case of URRSO, I came across conflict-of-interest situations during interviews. Often interviewees would express their concerns around the situation of URRSO foundering. A few proposed to me that I should take up more of an active role in this organising process. Some advised me to take up this role because it was connected with my Ph.D. and their belief was that if URRSO was successful, I would be able to project a more rounded ‘happily progressing’ story of sustainability of this region in my dissertation. They believed that it would help me achieve my degree. Some stakeholders felt that because of my neutral position in the organising process, as a non-aligned member, I would be able to steer the organisation more effectively as stakeholders would trust me more. One stakeholder suggested that once URRSO received its initial funding, I could probably take up a part-time administrative position in the organisation. I rejected such proposals and informed the interviewees of my commitment to my role of a participant observer, and that I had chosen not to be an action researcher. I thus ensured that I maintain my research ethics as a participant observer.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I elaborated on my research methodology and methods. I explained how I used grounded theory and case study approaches in my research. I also elaborated upon how I used certain principles of critical hermeneutics while analysing the data. In addition, I highlighted the various qualitative research methods that I used to collect data. The data collection phase came with its own set of challenges, promises, excitement and frustrations, including methodological and ethical challenges, some of which I have highlighted in this chapter. There were some additional challenges, including those related to research on emotions and time (themes that emerged from the data) that I cover in detail in Chapters 8A and 9, respectively. I also outline some of the methodological limitations in the final chapter of this dissertation.

In the next chapter, I explain the theoretical framework that underpins my understanding of the macro social context of sustainable development. I have developed this theoretical framework by cross-fertilising institutional theory and social movements theory.

Chapter 3

Institutions and Movements for Social Change

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework that underpins my conceptualisation of the macro context of my research. I have drawn on institutional theory to understand the institutional context of sustainable development. I have also used social movements theory to understand and recognise the global to local social change efforts, inspired by the philosophy of sustainable development, as a ‘new social movement’ of the 21st century. I have termed this drive ‘the sustainability movement’.

In section 3.2, I introduce, and draw on institutional theory to explain my conceptualisation of the terms ‘institutions’, ‘institutionalisation’ and ‘institutional change’. I have extensively used these terms in this dissertation while discussing the institutions, institutionalisation, and institutional change connected with sustainable development. In section 3.3, I introduce social movements theory and explain how social movements can act as institutional change agents. In section 3.4, I give an overview of the cross-fertilised theoretical framework that I have developed by integrating institutional theory and social movements theory. In section 3.5, I conclude this chapter.

3.2 Institutions and society

In this section, I present the first major component of my theoretical framework - institutional theory. First, I present a brief background on three perspectives within institutional theory and underscore my allegiance to ‘neo’- institutionalism. Second, I

explain institutions. Third, I explain my understanding of institutionalisation. Fourth, I clarify how I understand the institutional change process. In doing so, my aim is to highlight the role of institutions in society and explain processes of institutionalisation and institutional change²⁷.

3.2.1 Background on institutional theory

Institutional theory is a mature theory that can be traced back to its origin in ‘old’ institutional theory through ‘new’ institutional theory and on to ‘neo’ institutional theory (Jennings, & Greenwood, 2003). Old institutional theory focuses more on the political influences exerted by actors within organisational fields²⁸, as they negotiate, collaborate and make trade-offs with others. Such interactions create or further transform organisational fields and institutions (Hoffman, 2001). Old institutional theory chiefly emphasises regulative and normative controls, and has been criticised for not explaining how organisational fields may influence the ‘cultural beliefs of individuals’.

New institutional theory is helpful in filling that gap. It recognises institutions as more subtle, influenced by, and influencing cognitive forces and cultural beliefs in society (Hoffman, 2001; Westwood, & Clegg, 2003). It recognises that individuals, organisations and institutions are deeply embedded in social structures and institutional frames that are durable and historically-rooted. The concept of ‘institutional isomorphism’ helps in understanding how institutional pressures within an organisational field motivate individual actors and organisations, within that field, to conform to and exhibit similar characteristics

²⁷ According to Brint and Karabel (1991), the sociology of institutional forms and the sociology of institutional change together constitute the full sociology of institutions. Hence, in presenting a sociological discussion on institutions, I also discuss institutionalisation and institutional change.

²⁸ An organisational field is a relational field involving similar and dissimilar, interdependent and coevolving organisations. This concept helps in understanding various institutional pressures that operate and influence the complex, dynamic, non-linear and not-always-hierarchical interactions between social actors and institutions. Changes in organisational fields may initiate, invite and encourage participation in change towards sustainable development (Connor, & Dovers, 2004; Hoffman, 2001). I engage in detailed discussions on the importance of adopting a ‘field’ conceptualisation, especially in relation to inter-organisational collaborations, in Chapter 6.

and behaviour over a period of time (Lewin, & Volberda, 2003; Mckinley, & Mone, 2003; Orrù, Biggart, & Hamilton, 1991). Organisations which incorporate elements from their external institutional environment and become isomorphic with those elements are usually those that can gain greater legitimacy and more resources helpful for their strategic growth and survival (Meyer, & Rowan, 1991).

However, with its focus on isomorphism and conformity, new institutional theory suffers from some limitations. It primarily projects organisations as static entities that respond to legitimate rules and accordingly create their social world. A “preoccupation with isomorphism directs attention away from the source of institutional action (institutions and organizational field) and focuses on one possible outcome (organizational homogeneity)” (Hoffman, 2001, p. 172). As a result, new institutional theory is not equipped to account for deviation and change, and to explain the ‘dynamics’ of institutional change. Moreover, it does not consider issues around human agency and power (Jennings, & Greenwood, 2003; Phillips, 2003).

One cannot ignore that fact that as organisations respond to their institutional environment and transform themselves, power issues based on structure, knowledge, skills and capabilities, self-interest and internal relationship dynamics inevitably emerge, and influence the actions of organisations and individuals who work in them (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Brint, & Karabel, 1991). Because of relative differences in organisations, an organisational field will be characterised by power differentials. Actors in larger organisations may be more powerful in influencing the formulation of rules for the field, and dictating terms of actions on others in that field, and in ways that support their interests (Fligstein, 1991). Those vested interests and actions, in turn, influence the dominant realities of various organisations and individuals in the field (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Friedland, & Alford, 1991; Phillips, 2003). Thus, even though subjected to similar situations, organisations and

their members may perceive and confront various issues, as advantageous or disadvantageous. Based on their respective interpretations they may want to negotiate their internal interests, like allocation and availability of organisational resources, during the process of any 'structural' and 'cultural' transformation (Hoffman, 2001).

Thus, recognising that institutions and institutional change processes embody relations of power (Armstrong, 2005), institutional scholars underscore the need to concentrate on 'processes' and 'dynamics' of change that would include issues of power as well (Phillips, 2003; Westwood, & Clegg, 2003). Hoffman (2001, p. 175) points out that while 'new' institutional theory focuses on "institutional stability – targeting how institutions result in isomorphic behavior", 'old' institutional theory focuses on the "stability of political control and the institutionalized interests of powerful elites." These two perspectives, on their own, are not helpful in developing a comprehensive understanding of complex institutional realities confronting organisations and individuals.

Neo institutional theory offers some hope in this direction. As a more nuanced theory it includes elements from both old and new institutional theory - it recognises that "sometimes institutional forces stabilize, sometimes they create strong pressure for change; sometimes to buttress existing arrangements" (Phillips, 2003, p. 227). Neo institutional theory assists our understanding of the 'dynamics' of institutionalisation and institutional change, including power, and gives due significance to cultural-cognitive controls during those processes (Campbell, 2005; Scott, 2003). I discuss these issues in detail in the following sub-sections.

Thus, recognising the merits of, and differences between the above three strands of institutional theory, I draw mostly on neo-institutional theory. I, however, follow Hoffman's (2001) stance that old, new and neo-institutional theories are not mutually

exclusive, and that the key concepts from these three perspectives should be used advantageously to develop a more persuasive theoretical framework. I devote the next subsection to explain my conceptualisation of institutions.

3.2.2 Institutions

Institutions represent a “social order” and a “social pattern that reveals a particular reproduction process” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145). They reduce uncertainties in society by giving a structure to it. Institutions are socially constructed ‘rules of game’ that simultaneously empower, control and constrain human behaviours by defining what is, or what is not, socially acceptable for as human beings engage with ‘others’ – human or non-human beings; living or non-living entities (Connor, & Dovers, 2004; Jepperson, 1991; Pearce et al., 1993; Scott, 2001, 2003). They may be: (a) formal, like rules, laws, and constitutions; or (b) informal and less tangible, like social customs, norms, self-imposed codes of conduct and individual ethics. Institutions may also include “networks of roles, sanctions, and ideologies” (Galaskiewicz, 1991, p. 294). Friedland and Alford (1991, p. 243) urge that institutions be “reconceptualized as simultaneously material and ideal, systems of signs and symbols, rational and transrational. Institutions are supraorganizational patterns of human activity by which individuals and organizations produce and reproduce their material subsistence and organize time and space”. They are symbolic systems and ways of recognising, classifying and thus ordering reality, thereby rendering experience of time and space meaningful. Thus, the ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ decisions of individuals, groups, or organisations are influenced by the institutions.

Institutions are powerful sources of both stability and change in society (Jepperson, 1991). As smaller institutions are embedded and built within larger institutions, it is critical to recognise that those institutions exist and operate in relation to a larger environment, and within a historical context (Galaskiewicz, 1991). Regulative, normative and cultural-

cognitive are known as the three “institutional pillars” on which institutions are built (Scott, 2003). Together they are seen to constitute the whole institutional environment. Even though they exist simultaneously, they operate at different levels of analysis and offer different bases for legitimacy and compliance, logics, mechanisms, social structures, and culture, influencing human and organisational behaviour (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Hoffman, 2001; Scott, 2003).

‘Regulative’ pillars are the rules in society that govern human and organisational structure and systems. Regulative institutions include regulations, governance systems and mechanisms, contracts and membership guidelines that primarily exert ‘coercive’ influences on organisations, and pressure them to conform to those demands (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Mendel, 2002). In the event of not following those regulative institutions, organisations (and individuals) may face various threats, including punishments and sanctions.

The ‘normative’ pillar, on the other hand, is morally grounded. Normative institutions include norms, beliefs, values or social obligations professed or expected by influential members of a particular community. Such a community may include formal associations of organisations, professions and industries, and networks of individuals and firms. The norms profess ‘what ought to be’ done, and invite organisations to do the ‘right’ things and engage in ‘best practices’ that favour the community (Hoffman, & Ventresca, 2002). Communication and networking among members helps to diffuse norms, and contributes towards the stability and social order of that particular community (Bansal, & Penner, 2002). Failure to attend to normative requirements may result in social alienation, or punishment that may further threaten the future prospects and resource base of organisations.

The ‘cultural-cognitive’ pillar is based on the taken-for-granted beliefs and values of individuals that organisations need to conform to, as they respond to various environmental pressures (Troast, Hoffman, Riley, & Bazerman, 2002). This pillar recognises the influence of individuals on institutions. The cultural-cognitive institutions thus refer to “collective constructions of social reality via language, meaning systems, and other rules of classification embodied in public activity” (Troast et. al, 2002, p. 239). These exist in the form of meanings, values, ideologies, prejudices, myths, clichés or narratives (Benford, & Snow, 2000; Hoffman, 2001). Different individuals, based on their deeply held cultural²⁹ values and beliefs and other cognitive influences, may interact differently with various institutional processes (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Zucker, 1991). Their individual interpretations are powerfully pervasive in influencing organisational actions (Hoffman, 2001). Thus, cultural-cognitive processes are not confined to mental constructs of individuals, but also include symbolic systems and shared meanings (Scott, 2003).

So, while regulations and norms are consciously designed by human beings based on legal, and ethical or moral grounds, respectively, and “operate at the field and organizational level of analysis”, cognitive beliefs and values operate through the “individual level of analysis” (Bansal, & Penner, 2002, p. 314). They are more naturally and unconsciously developed, are culturally supported and may remain unchallenged in organisations (Hoffman, 2001). While the regulative and normative pillars of institutions are the “product of political dynamics”, cultural-cognitive institutions are “less defined” (Hoffman, 2001, p. 36). Cultural-cognitive institutions may be either ‘consistent’ with “politically volatile regulative or normative institutions”, leading to cultural stability, or ‘inconsistent’ with them, leading to “cultural tensions” (Hoffman, 2001, p. 38). Institutions thus represent a “common identity, language, or ‘story set’ within a particular field... [T]hey can be reflected subtly in the wording, phrasing, and framing to describe a particular issue, event, or belief. Capturing this subtlety

²⁹ Culture represents a society’s or group’s shared set of beliefs and understandings, mediated and constituted through language and symbols (Zald, 1996).

is central to capturing cultural institutions over time” (Hoffman, 2001, pp. 38-39). And as members share their interpretations around an issue, including their biases, those exchanges influence their perceptions around what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour (Bansal, & Penner, 2002).

In the next sub-section, I discuss institutionalisation.

3.2.3 Institutionalisation

‘Institutionalisation’ can be considered either as a sociological process that generates, or an outcome that represents a new social order. According to Bansal and Penner (2002, pp. 314-315), institutionalization “creates the routines by which issues are scripted and processed The collective interpretation of an issue determines the degree of cognitive institutionalization within the organizational field”. Institutionalisation may involve: (a) linking, combining, or recombining different groups, projects, principles or models together; (b) legitimising certain practices, policies, social thoughts and action; and/or (c) permitting the diffusion of certain thoughts and actions across the organisational population and individuals (Lounsbury, 2005; Meyer, & Rowan, 1991; Schneiberg, & Soule, 2005).

Thus, any process of institutionalisation involves different actors and is influenced by their different ideologies, experiences and learning. It is embedded with multiple realities, ambiguities, contradictions, conflicting interests and logics underlying the change. Institutionalisation should not be simply recognised as a “top-down phenomenon”; it is also a “bottom-up” process (Schneiberg, & Soule, 2005). It is also not a linear process; rather is one that involves back and forth exertion of institutional pressures (Jiménez, 1999). It is susceptible to politics. The new social order created through institutionalisation may not be achieved through full consensus. Moreover, institutionalisation should not be

considered as yielding a completely stable process or outcome. According to Hoffman (2001, p. 194),

When one [institutional level] predominates or when they all align, a stable paradigm can emerge. But when they are not in alignment or when no one level predominates, there is confusion, tension, and paradigmatic uncertainty. In resolving this uncertainty, individual actors can impose their own interests and try to direct institutional or paradigmatic processes in a direction that serves their interests.

Instead of focusing on actors, their characteristics, or interests, institutionalisation may be better understood if studies investigate “how action, interest, and agents themselves flow from accepted mythologies of order and organization” (Schneiberg, & Soule, 2005, p.125; see also Phillips, 2003). Thus, by investigating the relation between textual production and institutions, and understanding how decisions are made from a narrow set of legitimate options available, and meanings shared, one can generate deeper insights on institutionalisation and institutional change (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Hoffman, 2001; Phillips, 2003; Westwood, & Clegg, 2003).

I discuss the process of institutional change in the next sub-section.

3.2.4 Institutional change

Institutional-building is a “sociological phenomenon,” which requires the collective involvement of different actors and organisations in developing and implementing a more effective control on society so that a better social order is created (Galaskiewicz, 1991, p. 294). Hoffman (2001, pp. 193-194) underscores the complexity of institutional-building and institutional change, stating:

Old institutions do not simply collapse and disappear; they become the building blocks of future institutions. Just as existing institutions are the products of their

historical past, future institutions will be built on the remnants of those existing today. Social organization, as a result, is perpetually the product of history.

Institutional actors play a crucial role in any institutional change process. McAdam and Scott (2005, p. 15) explain that institutional actors, either as individuals or as a collective, “serve both as *agents*, who are capable of exercising power to affect and alter events and rule systems, and as *carriers*, who embody and reflect existing norms and beliefs”³⁰. For example, government, through its various governance structures composed of formal and informal, regulative and normative mechanisms, plays a vital role in institutional change. It can stabilise or significantly transform an organisational field, and the organisations within that field. It can stabilise the field by setting up the rules of game and mediating in ways that support interests of all organisations within that field. This way, government also provides for continuity. It can destabilise and alter the field by changing rules and manipulating actions of various organisations in it. Thus, institutional change may also take place because of changes in the field (especially if the field itself is in the process of disintegration, formation or a state of shock), or if new organisations enter an established field (Fligstein, 1991). Moreover, the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive institutions are interconnected, institutional change at one level of institution may bring about institutional change in the other two levels as well. Hoffman (2001) underscores this intricate connection among the three pillars and complexities involved in any institutional change process, noting:

each [institution] supports the other, and each is a critical component of the entire system. To tamper with one component, would result in an alteration of the system as a whole. Regulative and normative institutions form what might be considered as baseline on which cognitive institutions can crystallize and form. To remove or reduce this supporting baseline would destroy the cultural foundations on which cognitive institutions develop (p. 177).

³⁰ Organisations involved in institutional change process may not always simply respond and conform to regulatory pressures confronting them, and especially in cases where those conflict with their interests. Organisations, in such an instance, may sometimes act as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ by challenging those institutions. And sometimes in that process they may also succeed in altering institutional frameworks (Troast, et. al, 2002).

Institutional theory thus focuses on the roles of institutions and the sociology of institutionalisation and institutional change processes. The above conceptualisations, as critical elements of my theoretical framework, have been extensively employed in the forthcoming chapters of my dissertation³¹. I also carry forward this understanding to the next section, where I discuss social movements, and highlight how they act as institutional change agents and transform society.

3.3 Social movements and change

In this section, I present the second major component of my cross-fertilised theoretical framework - social movements theory. My aim is to highlight the characteristics of social movements and their role in transforming society. First, I give a background of social movements theory by elaborating upon the four different schools of thoughts that constitute the scholarship in this field. Second, I present my conceptualisation of social movements. These theoretical conceptualisations have been used in the forthcoming chapters of my dissertation to support my arguments and analysis related to the sustainability movement. Third, I highlight some of the challenges in doing research on social movements research, and also expose some gaps in the literature.

³¹ For example, in Chapters 4A and 4B, I discuss the global to local institutional landscape of the sustainability movement and underscore critical issues related to institutionalisation of sustainable development. I highlight the New Zealand context of sustainable development, including the regulatory institutional change that is promoting sustainable development of communities. In doing so, I highlight the emergence of a prominent regional sustainable communities' movement within the country. In Chapter 6, I highlight the potential of institutional theory in investigating collaborations at 'field' levels, and exposing the 'dynamics' involved in those 'processes.' Moreover, later in the analysis and discussion chapters I extensively draw on various concepts from institutional theory and use the important terms that I have highlighted in this section.

3.3.1 Background on social movements theory

In this sub-section, I discuss four distinct schools of thoughts and developments in social movements research since the 1960s. Social movements literature is very broad and is mostly developed around the contributions of Herbert Blumer, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (*collective behaviour perspective*), John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (*resource mobilisation theory*), Charles Tilly (*political process perspective*), Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci (*new social movements approach*) (Diani, 1992; see also della Porta, & Diani, 1999). The literature offers wide ranging definitions and understandings of the concept of social movements, most of which coalesce around social grievances, inequity and injustice³².

The collective behaviour approach recognises social movements as collective behaviours and expressions of people that challenge traditional institutional structures and processes, and help society evolve through cultural change. Social movements encourage emergence of new ideas among individuals and create new values and meaning systems in society (della Porta, & Diani, 1999). Social movement scholars belonging to other schools of thought have, however, criticised this approach. They point out that this perspective primarily focuses on ‘protests’ organised by social movement actors to construct new ideas, meanings and values. As its main attention is on actors’ behaviours, which they recognise as mostly volatile, reactive, irrational and incapable of strategic rationality, it disregards other important and strategic influences in social movements. Hence they note that this approach is limited in its reach and potential (della Porta, & Diani, 1999).

In contrast, the emphasis of resource mobilisation theory is on organisations and collective actions³³. It focuses on the processes by which resources are required to mobilise collective

³² The civil rights movement, the peace movement, the gay and lesbian movement, the feminist movement, the environmental movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the black movement, the non-violence movement, and the minority rights movement are some popular examples of social movements.

³³ It has been noted that while collective behaviour theory’s focus is on “actors without action,” the focus of the resource mobilisation theory is on “actions without actors” (Gusfield, 1994, p. 60).

action. Resources could be material (for example, money, work, concrete benefits, services, etc.), or non-material (for example, moral engagement, authority, friendship, faith, etc.) (della Porta, & Diani, 1992). The focus is also on the dynamics of resource mobilisation as social movement organisations emerge and evolve (Clemens, 1996; della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Diani, 1992). Resource mobilisation theory pays greater attention to the “rational and strategic components” of social movements which are considered as “seemingly irrational phenomena” (della Porta, & Diani, 1999, p. 4). It also gives due attention to the conditions that facilitate the development of social movement organisations (Diani, 1992). A social movement organisation is one that mobilises resources from the environment to pursue and take forward the goals of a particular social movement (della Porta, & Diani, 1999). Diani (1992, pp. 4-5) contends that:

social movement organisations are not isolated actors; rather, they tend to interact with other organisations, even when they are not able to develop any sort of regular coordination; moreover, social movement constituencies often overlap in a significant way.

And even though social movement organisations may frequently speak for, or make attempts to control movements and contribute towards the same goal, they are not coterminous with social movements. They do not mean the same thing. They reflect different organisational principles (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Diani, 1992). della Porta and Diani (1999) caution that one cannot treat a single organisation as a social movement, howsoever dominant its traits might be (see also Melucci, 1996). Thus, social movements and social movement organisations are analytically different³⁴. Moreover, social movement organisations are not just restricted to formal organisational structures like Amnesty International, World Vision, and movement schools and protest committees. They

³⁴ In this dissertation I have recognised the drive towards sustainability as a social movement and URRSO as a social movement organisation. URRSO developed within civil society and made attempts to contribute to the sustainability movement at a regional level in New Zealand.

encompass a range of mobilising structures, which may also include the “everyday life micromobilization [of] structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated: these include family units, friendship networks, voluntary associations, work units, and elements of the state structure itself” (McCarthy, 1996, p. 141). Thus informal structures, including community-based groups that address and promote sustainability, are also considered important for social movements. They serve as social sites that help to build solidarity, facilitate communication and stimulate development of formal and informal social ties among individuals and collectively take ahead the goals of a social movement (McCarthy, 1996).

Resource mobilisation theory, however, has been criticised for its prime emphasis on resources controlled by powerful groups, and the rationality of the actors and the processes. Adopting such a focus underestimates the self-organisation potential of ‘marginalised’ social groups, and the ‘emotionality’ of the actors and the processes involved in social movements (della Porta, & Diani, 1999). Political process theory is different from resource mobilisation theory in this regard. Instead of concentrating on organisational resources, this theory considers social movements as ‘political phenomena’ wherein actors demand access to certain interests, or inclusion of certain groups that have traditionally been excluded, or marginalised from the established polity (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Diani, 1992; Guigni, 1999). The focus is primarily on the relationship between institutional political actors and protests (della Porta, & Diani, 1999).

It recognises the critical role of social movements in democracy. Social movements create public spaces, outside various governing institutions and organisation, where public affairs can be openly and freely deliberated upon. At those political levels, social movements are

known to raise issues that may cover more than one policy domain³⁵, and may accordingly impact related policy outcomes (Kriesi, Koopmans, Dyvendak, & Guigni, 1995). A policy domain may acquire a high or a low profile depending upon the perception of social movements, and the nature and level of challenges that come with it for the established polity (Kriesi, et al., 1995). It may have a high profile status if a social movement: (a) involves large amount of resources; (b) if it challenges the power of the political authorities involved, or puts those at stake; (c) if it threatens the survival of the government; and/or (d) if it involves a policy domain that covers an issue of significant national interest, and extends and fit into other policy domains as well. The reverse is applicable in the case of low profile policy domains.

Thus, social movements contribute to democratisation (della Porta, & Diani, 1999) and “preservation and extension of democratic values and ideals within contemporary society” (Waters, 2003, p. 57). They create channels of access to policy makers and influence the development of new public policies (Burstein, 1998). And sometimes, social movements may also lead to transfer of power within the government arena (Tilly, 1994). Gamson and Meyer (1996, p. 283) define a social movement as a “sustained and self-conscious challenge to authorities or cultural codes by a field of actors (organizations and advocacy networks), some of whom employ extra-institutional means of influence”.

The political process approach, however, has been criticised for its political reductionism, and for undermining cultural considerations related to social movements (della Porta, & Diani, 1999). Diani (1992) sheds light on an important similarity between resource mobilisation theory and the political process approach. He notes that by focusing on the

³⁵ Policy domains are subsystems or components of a political system that are organised around substantive issues, for example health, energy, security, or environment, and which allow government to intervene in those arenas (Burstein, 1991). Sustainable development is one such policy domain. Understanding policy domains is useful to understanding the behaviour of political authorities as they confront social movements, and regard them as less or more threatening.

conditions that constrain or facilitate emergence of social conflicts both perspectives analyse the “hows” rather than the “whys” of social movements. The new social movements approach shows a ‘new’ direction to appreciating social movements. It argues that social movements cannot be understood simply with reference to political system, and their ability to transform political institutions and reform policies. It recognises that social movement experiences do not merely involve challenging power or economic goods; they also engulf ‘cultural’ spheres wherein socially shared meanings, definitions and interpretation of realities are often challenged (Diani, 1992). They challenge prevailing values and norms in society by producing an alternative or countervailing set of symbols and codes and influence cultural production (Waters, 2003).

Thus considering social movements as a combination of social struggle and a desire for cultural recognition, new social movements scholars recognise the importance of giving due attention to the “demands for cultural rights” during social movements (Touraine, 2001, p. 47). They relate social movements with large-scale structural as well as cultural changes in society (Waters, 2003). Social movements are considered as “rich, differentiated and multilayered phenomena that assume a plurality of forms and operate at different social, political and cultural levels” (Waters, 2003, p. 69)³⁶.

New social movements theory also brings in identity³⁷ issues to explain social movement phenomena. Social movement is a “combination of a principle of identity, a principle of opposition and a principle of totality” (Touraine, as cited in Diani, 1992, p. 6). Guigni (1999, p. xxiii) underscores that movements mobilisations “may result in strengthening of internal solidarity and identities, the creation of countercultures, shifts in public attitudes

³⁶ Movements based on freedom of expression and orientation, for example, of sexuality, religion or spirituality, like the gay and lesbian movement or the Hare Krishna movement, peace, ecology, etc. are examples of new social movements (Kriesi, et al., 1995).

³⁷ I discuss identity in Chapter 6.

towards a given issue, and so forth”. New social movements theory has also been successful in expanding the boundaries of social movements beyond instrumental rationalisation, and ‘visible’ political conflicts and public actions like campaigns and mobilisations (Diani, 1992). It recognises the ‘reflexive’ power of social movements as highly significant. Social movements give societal members opportunities to be aware of issues, think about and reflect upon those (Gusfield, 1994). With their ability to ‘speak to us all,’ social movements also serve the every day affective and communicative needs of individuals as they participate in those movements (Melucci, 1996).

In the next sub-section, I integrate and cross-synthesise concepts from these various schools of thoughts in social movements scholarship, and present my conceptual understanding of social movements.

3.3.2 Social movements

Recognising the potential and limitations of the four theoretical perspectives on social movements, I have cross-fertilised concepts from those different perspectives. In doing so, my aim has been to synthesise a broader and more comprehensive understanding of social movements which I then apply in my research³⁸.

Social movements are significantly powerful change agents that emerge from social dissatisfactions with existing institutions. They are often inspired by the utopian hopes of reforming prevalent age-old or contemporary ideologies and practices and emancipating the marginalised – the victims –from various forms of domination, exploitation and other social decays. Legitimation and motivation of collective action within a social movement involves two key elements: “the diagnostic element, or the definition of the problem and its

³⁸ I have followed Diani’s (1992, p. 13) stance where he converges concepts from those four schools and defines social movements as “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities.”

source; and the prognostic element, the identification of an appropriate strategy for redressing the social problem” (McCarthy, Smith, & Zald, 1996, p. 291).

Social movement participation is ideological³⁹. Utopian goals of social movements often have the power to appeal to different individuals and organisations, and frame their understanding and sensitivities on issues that would otherwise have been suppressed by the dominant social order (della Porta, & Diani, 1999, p. 72). This way, social movements foster emergence and expressions of new, and sometimes liberated, ideologies. Inspired by the goals of the movement, individuals and organisations may get involved in movement organisations and processes. They may accordingly mobilise their resources to further develop and promote those goals in society. They may strategically create or manipulate their individual or collective meanings and interpretations on social problems, identity of the social movement, and the possibilities for social change (Campbell, 2005). They may strategically justify the appropriateness of their cause and existence, and accordingly persuade external actors like bystanders, opponents and government authorities (who often have the power to directly constrain the use of, or delegitimise those mobilising structures and resources) on certain decisions (McCarthy, 1996; Zald, 1996). Such participation may also emerge ‘from below’ and involve, or be steered by, those individuals, groups or organisations traditionally excluded from political processes (Waters, 2003).

Thus, a social movement is embedded in an organisational field, and its relationship with other organisations in that field influences its functions, operations and outcomes (Clemens, & Minkoff, 2004). It has abilities to diffuse across organisational, sectoral, or political boundaries, and connect different actors, directly or in a mediated manner, in

³⁹ Snow (2004) expands conception of ideology from its pure consideration as a set of coherent and stable values, beliefs and goals, to a variable phenomenon, existing on a continuum that has a loosely coupled set of values positioned on one end, and a tight and rigid set on the other end (see also Benford, & Snow, 2000). Existing in a state of flux within such a continuum, different ideologies may constrain or facilitate collective understanding and action on the social movement.

formal or informal, and more or less meaningful relationships (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Diani, 1992; Guigni, 1999). As different participants coming from diverse backgrounds with different identities become involved in the movement, they may collectively explore problematic issues and movement priorities, beyond present moments and immediate boundaries. It would also be expected that they stand united, in spite of their diversity, and collectively take forward the goals of the movement. And as they ‘strategically’ plan and implement the actions contributing to the movement, those actors may also feel ‘passionately’ about their cause. They may emote with one another while pursuing the goals of the movement (Melucci, 1996). Passion may further boost the power, rigour and dynamism of the movement.

Thus, social movements are deeply embedded in and intricately connected with the various institutions - regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. They get their sense of purpose, identity, recognition and continuity only because of, and in relation to, various existing institutions, and their potential to challenge and ultimately transform some of them (see Tarrow, 1998). Depending upon its reform goals, a social movement may engage with one or more policy domains, either in an isolated or an integrated manner⁴⁰, and influence institutionalisation processes and institutional changes in society. Interactions with government actors may be complementary or opposing⁴¹, and produce short-term to long-term, fast or slow paced, tangible or intangible impacts and outcomes.

⁴⁰ For example, in case of sustainable development various institutions and issues related to society and culture, economy and the natural environment would be involved.

⁴¹ Even though studies have popularised the view that the social movement participants and government actors mostly play oppositional roles and are not fully complementary to each other, I take a somewhat liberal and optimistic stance. While considering institutional changes brought about by social movements I contend that one should not always consider government organisations and social movements as mutually exclusive. While sometimes government organisations may be in opposition of certain social movements, at other times, they may support emergence of other movements and facilitate their development by changing regulations. Metaphorically, I conceptualise the latter synergistic relationship between government and social movements like the one existing between the front and back wheels of a car – the two are integral and interconnected components needed to drive society from the present destination of social imperfection to a new destination. This new future destination may appear as a ‘promised land’ where imperfect institutions could be transformed to wipe out social decays.

In this dissertation I apply my above understanding of social movements. In the next subsection I expose some gaps and challenges in social movements research.

3.3.3 Challenges in social movements research

Incompatible views and differences among the four different schools of thought within social movements scholarship have made it difficult for the field to synthesise and adopt an overarching and fully agreed definition of social movement. Consequently, social movements scholars face various ontological, epistemological and methodological challenges in their attempts to understand social movements and their outcomes (Diani, 2003; Earl, 2000; Guigni, 1999). Diani (2003, p. 1) sheds light on some such complications in social movements research.

It is difficult to grasp the nature of social movements. They cannot be reduced to specific insurrections or revolts, but rather resemble strings of more or less connected events, scattered across time and space; they cannot be identified with any specific organization either, rather, they consist of groups and organizations, with various levels of formalization, linked in patterns of interaction which run from the fairly centralized to the totally decentralized, from the cooperative to the explicitly hostile. Persons promoting and/or supporting their actions do so not as atomized individuals, possibly with similar values or social traits, but as actors linked to each other through complex webs of exchanges, either direct or mediated. Social movements, are in other words, complex and highly heterogeneous network structures.

Thus, social movements are characterised by various forms of organisations and organising processes - formal, informal, diffused, centralised, decentralised, highly popular or masked. della Porta and Diani (1999, p. 17) highlight that “social movements do not have members, but participants.” People’s participation in social movements may not just be confined to “a single act of adhesion” (della Porta, & Diani, 1999, p. 18) like protests or specific organisational allegiances; it may also be connected with “a series of differentiated acts, which, taken together, reinforce the feeling of belonging and of identity” (p. 18). For example, public gatherings and working group meetings are also potential platforms for

social movements to emerge, gain momentum and continuity, and flourish (see also Gusfield 1994).

The inherent boundary-less character and ability of social movements to transcend local or national political boundaries and structures, possibly acquire a transnational character and interact with supranational institutions, needs due consideration as well (Tarrow, 1996).

Gusfield (1994) recognises social movements as either linear or fluid. Linear movements, for example the labour movement and individual labour unions, are those which operate in a direct fashion. They serve as “a means to an end” process seeking institutional or political change based on certain fixed goals, and accordingly organise actions in the public arena.

Fluid movements, on the other hand, are not so straightforward. According to Gusfield (1994, p. 64),

Fluid movements are much more difficult to specify. Since they imply changes in how values and realities are conceived, they occur outside or in addition to organized and directed action. They may involve contention with others and with alternative meanings and constructions. Yet, they are less likely to be drawn into such collective actions as strikes, boycotts, pickets, or demonstrations. They occur in the myriad actions of everyday life; in micro and less public acts. It is harder to identify success or failure.

della Porta and Diani (1999) underscore that social movements, by definition, are essentially fluid phenomena.

The field also suffers from certain methodological gaps. For example, it has been observed that the majority of social movements scholars have taken up a traditional ‘objective’ approach to understanding ‘the reality’ of a social movement. Accordingly, they foster the view that all participants committed to a movement are unified in their stance of understanding the movement and taking actions for it, and that reality is readily available for any researcher to capture and analyse (Melucci, 1996). Moreover, social movements built on contentious grounds featuring ‘disruptive tactics’ involving huge numbers of

people, and taking the form of protests, angry or silent demonstrations, hunger and other strikes, etc., have attracted the attention of most of scholars. On one hand, such an approach may be methodologically convenient for researchers to identify, track, measure and demonstrate progress of such overt acts using objective criteria (like causality, policy outcomes, success and failure of social movements). On the other hand, those reductionist tendencies guided by objective assessments and confined to contentious ‘dramatic acts’ of movements, including political provocations, changing power relations or crises, are problematic and contribute to serious limitations (Melucci, 1996; Waters, 2003). Such a research focus limits the exploration of, and reflection on more complex realities and impacts, including the dynamics of social change that emerge from, or influence social movements (Diani, 2003; Guigni, 1999; Lofland, 1996).

In considering the outcomes of social movements on institutions, one should appreciate that those outcomes may have short-term to long-term impacts and that they may be realised quickly or slowly, with visible or invisible effects and change society in dramatic or subtle ways. Tarrow (1998, p. 164) highlights three important kinds of long-term and indirect effects of movements: “their effect on the political socialization of the people and groups who have participated in them; the effects of their struggles on political institutions and practices; and their contribution to changes in political culture”. And, as Guigni (1999) notes, such long-term institutional outcomes may often yield more durable impacts than do policy outcomes, which are short-term and are not really capable of bringing about ‘fundamental’ change in existing structures and practices. It is thus important for social movements scholars to investigate social movement mechanisms that produce ‘long-term’ institutional changes through collective action (Guigni, 1999). Understanding the nature and dynamics of social movement and institutional change, by observing and analysing various ‘hidden and less dramatic’ everyday realities of organisations and individuals has tremendous research potential, and has been called for (Lounsbury, 2005). And while it has

been recognised that researchers studying such consequences may face methodological difficulties (because it is empirically difficult to study long-term impacts or cultural effects as compared to the more immediate political effects of social movement), such studies are not impossible and are very much required (Guigni, 1999).

Moreover, the strong expressive and communicative properties of social movements, and their role in transforming people's values and collective consciousness, and creating new vision and understanding of the world has been recognised (Waters, 2003). Social movement scholars are thus being encouraged to take a 'hermeneutic' and linguistic based approach to investigating social movements. In addition, the self-reflexivity of researchers is advised so that studies can reveal deeper insights on how a researcher's relationship with her/his field contributes to construction of a social movement (Melucci, 1996)⁴².

In the next section, I discuss the theoretical framework of my research that combines institutional theory and social movements theory.

3.4 Social movements and institutional change

In this section, based on the discussions in sections 3.1 and 3.2, I give an overview of the cross-fertilised theoretical framework of my dissertation. I underscore interlinkages between social movements and institutional changes and highlight the rationale behind my integration of institutional theory and social movements theory in my research.

⁴² Alberto Melluci (1996, p. 389) invites researchers to use a theoretical framework that helps develop "a capability for metacommunication on the relationship between the observer and the observed", wherein metacommunication implies, "the capacity to temporarily locate oneself at a level outside the relational field, enabling the possibility of subjecting that relation itself to discursive (sic) treatment" (p. 390).

As discussed earlier, social movements are usually embedded in, or emerge from some form of social dissatisfaction or conflict, and potentially challenge the dominant social orders with aims to bring about institutional changes in society (Diani, 1992; Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly, 1999; Tarrow, 1998; Touraine, 2000, 2001; Waters, 2003; Zald, 1996). Melucci (1996) calls social movements ‘prophets’, for they possess special powers to announce change - even before the direction or content of that change is clear. They emit signals that reflect the dynamics of those changes - deep and complex sometimes - that are taking place, or are about to take place in contemporary social processes (Melucci, 1996; Waters, 2003). Social movements derive their sense of purpose and identity only in relation to various institutions in society. Institutions and social movements mutually influence one another, more or less favourably, to transform society (Lounsbury, 2005). The institutional changes brought about by social movements occur not only at the political level and involve change in regulations and political structures. They also take place at social and cultural levels by redefining norms and social relationships that presuppose various social structures and the symbolic elements that justify them (Giugni, 1999; Zald, 1996). Social movements change individuals as well (Lounsbury, 2005).

Recognising the importance and influence of social movements in society, organisational scholars are increasingly seeking to understand how social movements influence organisations, and vice versa (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Scott, 2002). There have been increasing calls for research that cross-fertilise organisation theory (including institutional theory) and social movements theory. Through such integration it is hoped that organisational scholars will be able to draw on social movements theory in their research. It will enable organisational scholars to account for “contestation and the production of multiple, competing logics within organizations and fields” (Schneiberg, Smith, & King, 2005, p. 2). Such theoretical integration would also help to conceptualise institutionalisation as a ‘contested and multilevel process,’ and as a ‘cultural

expression,' where policies or structures adopted are a reflection of cognitive and normative institutions and meaning systems in a society (Schneiberg, & Soule, 2005). It would also enable scholars to develop a deeper appreciation of institutionalisation – wherein institutionalisation is not only considered a 'top-down' process wherein policies and structures developed by government become legitimised, and are adopted by society. It is also a 'bottom-up' phenomenon, wherein local actors play a crucial role in developing certain local solutions, which then, in due course, may gain substantial weight and legitimacy, and become the drivers for change in regulations, or become established as accepted norms. According to Schneiberg and Soule (2005), through this process new baselines will emerge, further creating conditions for legitimacy and putting pressures on organisations to adopt the changes.

Thus, inspired by the advantages and potential of integrating social movements theory with institutional theory, I have drawn on the two theories in my research. Such a cross-fertilised theoretical framework enables study of organisational phenomenon within the context of a social movement and an institutional change. It is potent in investigating and exposing the nature and dynamics of social change processes, and their impacts on organisations and organising (Lounsbury, 2005). With this cross-fertilised theoretical framework I have been able to theoretically understand social movements and institutional change. I have applied those conceptualisations in my analysis of how the sustainability movement and the institutional change, inspired by the philosophy of sustainable development, impact stakeholders and the organising of multi-stakeholder collaborations at local levels. The theoretical integration has also helped me to reveal how such collaborations can, in turn, further contribute to institutional change and the sustainability movement. Moreover, I have been able to appreciate and expose the mutual interdependence and linkages among social movements (sustainability movement in my research), institutional change (Local

Government Act 2002 in my research) and collaborative organising for sustainability (the three cases multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations in my research).

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on institutional theory and social movements theory to explain my understanding of the institutions, institutionalisation, institutional change and social movements. I have thus conceptually highlighted the interlinkages between social movements and institutional change by introducing social movements as important “vehicles” of social and political transformations in the society (della Porta, & Diani, 1999, p. 228). Social movements are developed around normative expectations of what ought to rightly exist or be done in a society. They have immense power to influence regulations and political structures and systems. Social movements are also culturally embedded, and influence the identities, interests, values and ideologies of the individuals, communities and organisations connected with them. I have underscored that they are embedded in, and coexist with the multiple and overlapping normative, regulative and cultural-cognitive institutions in society (Campbell, 2005; Diani, 1992; Snow, 2004; Touraine, 2001; Zald, 1996). All these theoretical conceptualisations give foundation to my arguments in this dissertation where I recognise the drive towards sustainability a new social movement of the 21st century.

I dedicate the next two chapters, 4A and 4B, to discuss in depth the context of sustainable development and the emergence and evolution of the sustainability movement from global level to local level in New Zealand.

Chapter 4A

The Sustainability Movement – Global

4A.1 Introduction

I devote this and the next chapter to sustainable development/sustainability, which is the overarching context of my research. As noted earlier, these chapters are separated only for ease of reading, so as not to present a single chapter which is overly long. Since the macro context influences any organising and the interactions among organisational members, it is important for me to explain the institutional context of sustainable development⁴³ in depth, and expose its influence on the three micro organisational processes of collaborations investigated in this dissertation⁴⁴ (see Hosking, & Fineman, 1990).

In this chapter, I give an account of the global institutional landscape of the sustainability movement. In section 4A.2, I present an historical account of an environmental movement at a global institutional level during the 1970s and that gradually evolved into the sustainability movement towards the end of the 20th century. In section 4A.3, I describe various elements that constitute the philosophy of sustainable development. I highlight some conceptual intricacies within the philosophy which, I argue, pose hurdles in its implementation. I also highlight some of the characteristics of the process of institutional change towards sustainability, and some of the broad expectations society has from

⁴³ The institutions influencing sustainability are not just confined to regulative levels but also extend to normative and cultural-cognitive levels. And instead of thinking of these three pillars as independent categories or alternative sources of pressure, I reflect upon the tensions that are generated as various institutions dynamically interact among themselves and influence stakeholders' collaborative attempts towards institutionalisation of sustainable development (Ehrenfeld, 2002).

⁴⁴ From Chapter 7 onwards, I empirically demonstrate that the three cases are so deeply embedded in the context of sustainable development that various elements constituting the philosophy of sustainable development sometimes, facilitated, and at other times, hindered those processes. In this chapter, I discuss some of the inherent conceptual characteristics of sustainable development.

government and corporate organisations towards the sustainability movement. I conclude the chapter in section 4A.4.

4A.2 Multilateral landscape

In this section, I present an overview of the multilateral institutions on sustainable development. I describe the landmark 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. I highlight the role of the World Commission on Environment and Development set up in 1983. I also discuss the contributions of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Millennium Declaration towards the sustainability movement. Together these institutions represent global governance mechanisms that involved different nations of the world, and over the years, stimulated multilateral dialogue and cooperation on sustainable development.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was organised in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. Also popularly known as the Stockholm Conference, it marked the beginning of a new political era of heightened global politics and public awareness on environmentalism. It brought together governments from different nations of the world to discuss international environmental issues. Often described as the watershed in the development of international environmental law (Elliott, 1998), it underscored the transboundary dimensions and the socio-economic consequences of environmental problems and stressed the need for multilateral initiatives to solve environmental problems (Stockholm Declaration, 1972). After the conference, environmental ministries and agencies were instituted in over 100 countries and there was an explosive growth of environmental non-government organisations (Elliott, 1998). In 1973, the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP) was established by the United Nations General Assembly⁴⁵.

Nearly a decade later, in 1983, the United Nations General Assembly resolved that a Special Commission, with half of its members from developing countries, be convened to guide the global community on ways in which they could collectively address environmental concerns, and propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainability by the year 2000 and beyond (United Nations General Assembly Resolution, 1983). Based on the resolution, a World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was convened, and chaired by Hon. Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then Prime Minister of Norway. In 1987, the Commission published a report, popularly known as the Brundtland Report, which defined sustainable development as “the development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). The three key concepts of environment, equity and futurity⁴⁶, and the principles of needs and limits are embedded in this definition of sustainable development⁴⁷. Inviting nations to adopt the philosophy of sustainable development, the Commission recommended that pursuit of sustainability requires:

- a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making,
- an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis,

⁴⁵ The United Nations General Assembly is one of the five principal deliberative organs of the United Nations. It involves all the United Nations member states, each having one vote. The Assembly’s mandate includes deliberation on issues of international law, peace and security, poverty eradication, environmental conservation and social advancement of all people (United Nations, 2007).

⁴⁶ The Commission recognised poverty as one of the major causes of environmental degradation. The report suggested sustainable growth - that is less material and energy intensive - as a solution to help overcome poverty and inequity, and accordingly reduce pollution. This fundamental emphasis of the WCED report on growth has, however, been received with a fair degree of criticism (Elliott, 1998).

⁴⁷ ‘Needs’, though not defined in the report, refer primarily to the needs of the world’s poor. Limits include the Earth’s limited capacity to meet the needs of the present and future generations, and the technological and organisational limitations imposed on the natural environment as economic growth strategies are pursued (Pearce, Markandaya, & Barbier, 1989).

- a social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development,
- a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development,
- a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions,
- an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance, and
- an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction (WCED, 1987, p. 65).

The WCED underscored that multilateralism was essential to address ecological problems and develop a future that is “prosperous, just, and secure” (WCED, 1987, p. 363; United Nations General Assembly Resolution, 1983). Central and regional government agencies in various nations were encouraged to plan and implement policies, programmes and budgets that supported and were consistent with the goals of sustainable development.

Following one of the recommendations of the Brundtland Commission, in 1992, over a hundred heads of government, representatives of non-government organisations and people from various walks of life came together in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to participate in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The timing of this conference coincided with the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Stockholm conference. Also known as the Earth Summit, the UNCED highlighted the relationship between environment and development, and successfully captured global attention on environment and development concerns threatening the survival of the Earth and various forms of life that inhabit it. Other significant outcomes of the conference included the Rio Declaration and the Agenda 21, the two foundational documents that set a strong institutional framework on sustainable development at an intergovernmental level, and a Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) that was instituted to monitor and review the progress of Agenda 21 implementation (Agenda 21, 1993).

The Rio Declaration, constituted of 27 principles, is a non-binding agreement that sought to achieve “a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of

cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people” (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992). The declaration called for reducing and eliminating unsustainable production and consumption of natural resources. It invited states to cooperate among themselves, with authorities at national and local levels, and with people to protect the Earth’s ecosystem, promote economic growth and sustainable development of all countries, and eradicate poverty (Rio Declaration, 1992). It also underscored the importance of information-sharing and the need to generate greater public awareness in order to achieve sustainability.

Agenda 21, the other major outcome of the UNCED, was developed as a ‘global action plan’ to implement principles of the Rio Declaration and achieve sustainability in the 21st century (Agenda 21, 1993). According to Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of the UNCED, Agenda 21 had been built on the premise that “sustainable development is not an option but an imperative” (UNCED, 1992). It also recognised the importance of ‘local action plans’ for sustainable development of local communities (Agenda 21, 1993). It invited relevant groups of people (including women, children, youth and indigenous communities) and organisations (including corporate and non-government) to participate in, and contribute towards the programme areas of Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992). It thus encouraged public participation and a bottom-up approach to sustainable development. It also called on institutions to transcend traditional sector-based boundaries and integrate environment and development approaches that would help create a sustainable world.

Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 specifically highlighted the importance and role of local government in successful implementation of Agenda 21. It underscored that local authorities, representing that level of governance which is closest to the people, have an important role to play in mobilising communities towards sustainability. Recognising that diversity of experience, knowledge, skills and background play a critical role in

implementing sustainable development, it was stressed that “Each local authority should enter into dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt a local community environmental and developmental action plan particularly suited to local problems, opportunities and values” (UNCED, 1992, p. 100).

Thus it was agreed during the UNCED that a Local Agenda 21 - a comprehensive action plan and guiding document on local sustainable development - be developed by each local authority. Local Agenda 21 gave a legitimate framework and new directions to local governance through which local authorities could begin to integrate environmental issues into the urban planning and management of their local cities and districts. Jeb Brugmann⁴⁸, who conceived the idea and coined the term Local Agenda 21, highlights the importance of local strategies in achieving Agenda 21 goals:

Local strategies for sustainable development are not viable without a supportive policy and fiscal framework at the sub-national and national levels. Likewise “higher” levels are both unwilling and incapable of implementing Agenda 21 without intensive engagement at local level (Hom, 2002, p. 255).

It was recognised that such participatory planning processes “support (and reinforce) ‘good local governance’ for environment and development” (McGranahan, Miranda, Satterthwaite, & Valesquez, 2004, p. 122). They were seen to contribute towards the long-term socio-cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of local communities because mostly they are “locally developed and driven, not developed or imposed from outside, and they generally rely more on locally generated resources than external resources” (McGranahan, Miranda, Satterthwaite, & Valesquez, 2004, p. 122; see also Stead, Stead, & Shemwell, 2002). However, as reiterated by McGranahan, et al. (2004, p. 124),

⁴⁸ He is also the Founder of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), an international association of local government organisations committed to sustainability.

Local Agenda 21s need regional and national frameworks to support the action needed to address regional and global environmental goals.... [If] Local Agenda 21s are to achieve an open and transparent character, it is important that regional, national and international (as well as local) interests are explicitly identified.

Ten years later, in 2002, the United Nations convened the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), an international conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. One of its major objectives was to carry out a ten-year review of Agenda 21. The then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi A. Annan, reported prior to the Summit that the global progress on sustainable development had been slower than anticipated. It was noted that the state of the natural environment, poverty, and north - south disparities of income had deteriorated (Elliott, 1998; Hens, & Nath, 2005). Lack of an integrated approach, incoherent policies on finance, trade, investment, technology and sustainable development, lack of robust technology transfer mechanisms, and insufficient financial resources were noted as critical deficiencies that contributed to ineffective implementation of Agenda 21 (Hens, & Nath, 2005). However, the Summit further reinforced the importance of Local Agenda 21. Various “type-II”⁴⁹ partnerships involving government, civil society and business in public-private agreements on specific programme areas of Agenda 21 emerged during the conference (DeSombre, 2006). Various governments also announced their funding and resource commitments to implement collaborative projects in key priority areas like energy, health, biodiversity, agriculture etc. The WSSD was, however, criticised for failing to provide a clear *modus operandi* of such partnerships, and directions as to how and to what extent such partnerships could help achieve sustainability in the 21st century (Hens, & Nath, 2005). Moreover, concerns were raised that by legitimising such partnerships, the WSSD had eased off significant pressure from governments as far as their responsibility to implement sustainable development was concerned (DeSombre, 2006).

⁴⁹ Type-II partnerships denote the voluntary initiatives that involve the business, government, non-government and civil society organisations for sustainable development. Type-I partnerships, in contrast, involve only member States.

Another significant milestone in the sustainability movement was the Millennium Summit which was organised in September 2000. During the Summit, the United Nations adopted a set of eight non-binding goals termed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals, recommended as strategic directions that should be pursued by nations to achieve sustainability in the 21st century, are: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development (UN Millennium Project, 2005).

The events highlighted in this section are historical milestones that represent the collective, global to local, drive for social change, inspired by the philosophy of sustainable development as a new social movement of the 21st century. In the next section, I discuss some conceptual elements that constitute the sustainable development philosophy.

4A.3 Sustainable development to achieve sustainability

In this section, I first explain the difference between sustainable development and sustainability. Second, I highlight the conceptual elements that constitute the philosophy of sustainable development, and discuss how those elements paradoxically act as hurdles in its effective implementation⁵⁰. Third, I highlight some of the characteristics of, and the complexities involved in institutional change towards sustainability.

4A.3.1 Sustainable development and sustainability

Even though the terms ‘sustainable development’ and ‘sustainability’ are often used synonymously, they do not necessarily always mean the same (Dovers, & Handmer, n.d.;

⁵⁰ I empirically uncover this paradox and justify my argument in the later chapters of this dissertation.

Hediger, 1997). In this sub-section I clarify a difference between the terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’. I have accordingly used them in my dissertation. The stakeholders in the case sites, however, often employed them without these distinctions. Even Agenda 21 has used the terms interchangeably (Dresner, 2002).

According to Hediger (1997, p. 107) sustainable development is “a process of change” aiming to achieve “harmony between social, economic and ecological objectives and system requirements in the short and long run.” It calls for a “transdisciplinary approach” – one that integrates social, ecological and economic concepts of sustainability, with concepts of needs and wants, as well as absolute and relative limits of the overall system (Hediger, 1997, p. 107). Sustainable development has been recognised as a “normative problem” that involves a “social choice about issues of intra- and intergenerational equity” (Hediger, 1997, p. 107). Noting that the world is a “total system” made of interrelated human and natural subsystems, Dovers and Handmer (1992, p. 275) underscore:

Sustainability is the ability of a human, natural and mixed system to withstand or adapt to endogenous or exogenous change indefinitely. Sustainable development is therefore a pathway of deliberate change and improvement which maintains or enhances this attribute of the system, while answering the needs of the present population.

Thus, sustainability is a “long-term and difficult goal of reaching an ecologically sustainable state” (Dovers, & Handmer, n.d., p. 1). It is a “system property” (Connor, & Dovers, 2004, p. 228). Sustainability “means quite simply the capacity for continuance into the long term” (Porritt, 2002, May 24), while sustainable development is “the journey we must take to arrive at the destination of sustainability”⁵¹.

⁵¹ The respective process and goal, or journey and destination rationalisations used to conceptually understand sustainable development and sustainability have been critiqued by several scholars. For example, Milne, Kearins, and Walton (2006) critique the ‘journey’ metaphor which pervades the business discourse on sustainability. According to them, businesses are increasingly employing this metaphor to demonstrate their engagement with, and commitment to sustainable development. In reality, however, they claim that it is difficult to find a corporate organisation that could be considered sustainable in any ecological sense.

Environmental economists have attempted to define sustainability in terms of substitutability of the total capital, which is comprised of man-made and natural capital⁵² (Dresner, 2002). There are two related notions of sustainability – ‘strong’ sustainability and ‘weak’ sustainability - that offer two divergent visions of what a sustainable world should look like⁵³. These notional differences arise from different values assigned to different capitals, and different objectives and priorities towards sustaining, or maintaining constant that capital (Hediger, 1999; Pearce, & Barbier, 2000). Strong sustainability is founded on an “environmental conservation principle” (Hediger, 1999, p. 1127) – it focuses on maintaining ecological capital constant over a period of time. Its emphasis is thus on the “need to look at the overall stock of capital *and* pay special attention to the environment” (Pearce et al., 1993, p. 17). The concept of weak sustainability is based on an “integrative value principle” (Hediger, 1999, p. 1127) – the focus is on economic development while aiming to maintain total value of the aggregate economic activity and environmental quality constant over time. Weak sustainability principle thus permits trade-offs between values of ecosystem capital and economic production capacity as long as the total capital is not decreased from one generation to the other (Hediger, 1999).

Thus, sustainability is that undefined but idealised end-state which not only offers the promise of economic, social and environmental prosperity to the current generation, it is also the one that offers the promise of longevity to the Earth by protecting the needs and wellbeing of future generations of human and non-human forms of life (Meadowcroft, 2000; Hediger, 1997; WCED, 1987). And sustainable development is that macro social process of organising – a journey – which if and when undertaken can help to bring society closer to that ideal state.

⁵² While man-made capital includes human capital as well as machines and infrastructure etc., natural capital is a stock of natural resources, biological diversity, natural habitat, clean air and water etc. These two capitals together comprise the aggregate capital stock of a nation (Pearce, et al., 1993).

⁵³ In later chapters, I demonstrate how these different world views of stakeholders on sustainability act as a source of conflict among stakeholders.

4A.3.2 Conceptual challenges

Even though it has been over two decades since the sustainability movement was launched (Barton, 2000a; Irwin, 2001; Taylor, 2000; WCED, 1987), and in spite of huge international efforts directed to plan and operationalise strategies for achieving goals set up at Rio, the progress towards sustainability has been slower than anticipated (Pillay, Rosswall, & Glaser, 2002). At one level, some of the challenges in implementing sustainable development paradoxically emerge from the conceptual foundations on which the philosophy of sustainable development has been constructed (Dresner, 2002). In this sub-section, I highlight some of those conceptual intricacies which, I argue, may pose practical hurdles in implementing sustainable development.

Sustainable development has been recognised as a highly ambitious, ambiguous, ideologically-based and politically contested philosophy (Berke, & Conroy, 2000; Dresner, 2002; Lafferty, 1996). It is highly ambitious in the sense that it calls on human beings to “reform human institutions” (Dresner, 2002, p. 168) in ways that drastically reduce the negative impacts of anthropogenic actions on others - the living and non-living beings not only in the present generations, but coming several generations (see also Dovers, & Handmer, n.d.; Hediger, 1999; Milne, 1996). With these principles of intergenerational and intragenerational equity embedded in its definitions, the philosophy of sustainable development has strong moral dimensions. Moreover, the ‘three E’ foundations - economy, environment and equity – on which it has been conceptually developed, calls for balancing economic, environmental and socio-cultural values during decision-making (Berke, & Conroy, 2000). With such a broad, transdisciplinary and long-term focus, sustainable development is prone to varying philosophical, ethical and disciplinary interpretations. It has also been conceptually approached with varying levels of understanding, and with competing interests that suit different ideologies and political agendas (Berke, & Conroy, 2000; Pearce et al., 1993). There is often great deal of confusion, disagreements and

controversies around how to define, interpret, and operationalise sustainable development (Hediger, 1997, 1999; Milne, 1996). According to Porritt (2002, May 24), sustainable development is a “dynamic, politically contested, often muddled set of ideas and processes with which we are painfully learning to engage for the very first time”. Dovers and Handmer (1992, p. 264) state that sustainable development has become a “vector for ideology” and a philosophy which is deeply laden with paradoxes, tensions and conflicts (Dovers, & Handmer, n.d.).

The central logic framing sustainable development philosophy (that the current generation should ensure leaving behind an inheritance of human-made and natural capital wealth for succeeding generations, which is at least equal to what they had inherited from their previous generations) has been considered problematic (Pearce, Markandaya, & Barbier, 1989). Thus with all the above characteristic features, sustainable development presents itself more as an idealistic “philosophy that has a lot in common with socialism” (Dresner, 2002, p. 135). No wonder it has not been able to successfully manifest itself in current modes of organising under capitalism (Welford, 1995; Hawken, 1993; Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 1999).

However, it exists successfully, to some extent, in the plethora of definitions, and the associated meanings and controversies. Some have labelled sustainable development a powerful ‘rhetoric’, if not the substance, of policy debate (Hempel, 1999) that offers a ‘reassurance’ of providing economic growth, social justice and environmental conservation not just for the moment but in perpetuity (Dryzek, 1997). Others have called it a popular slogan (Dresner, 2002), a “strand of the moral fibre” (Connor, & Dovers, 2004, p. 1), or a “dominant global discourse of ecological concern” (Dryzek, 1997, p. 123). I thus argue that sustainability is a social construction in this sense. I also contend that a realistic approach to operationalising sustainable development would be to acknowledge that it actually requires

various kinds of trade-offs and value judgements. Further, I note that it appears practically impossible to abide by all the foundational principles of sustainable development philosophy and achieve ideal transdisciplinary integration that is true to the spirit of the Brundtland Commission (Connor, & Dovers, 2004; Hediger, 1999; Hempel, 1999).

In the next sub-section, I discuss the process of institutional change towards sustainability, including the role of government and corporate organisations involved in implementing the desired changes.

4A.3.3 Institutional change towards sustainability

As discussed earlier, sustainable development should not be conceived of as a fixed state of harmony; it is rather a constantly evolving process of social transformation that involves extremely complex institutional fields (Ehrenfeld, 2002). In order to achieve sustainability, transformations at three levels - individuals, organisations and society – are required (Waddell, 2005). Institutions, social structures and relationships need to be changed in a manner that increasingly integrates environmental and socio-cultural considerations into economic planning and decision-making (Hoffman, 2001; Pearce, & Barbier, 2000; Pearce et al., 1993; UNCED, 1992). The Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987) recommended that clean and efficient technologies, and supportive financial instruments and investments, political and legal structures and systems, norms of society and organisations, and individual behaviours need to be developed and promoted to achieve sustainability.

National and local governments play a vital role in guiding the overall social transition towards sustainability (Pearce, & Barbier, 2000; WCED, 1987). By developing and enforcing legislation, governments create and legitimise institutional opportunities for, and reforms involving organisations and individuals, and make them act in ways that contribute towards sustainable development (Connor, & Dovers, 2004; Pearce et al., 1993). However,

government involvement in institutional change towards sustainability also presents a paradox. Government institutions, though the principal drivers in the sustainability movement who can enforce institutional reforms, have in fact been the ones who have posed barriers to positive change, and have been responsible for the lopsided growth and disharmonious development in the last century (Connor, & Dovers, 2004). Examples of institutional failures at government levels include: inefficient bureaucratic systems and procedures; definitional, sectoral and boundary-based disputes over institutional authority and lines of responsibilities; poor intra-governmental coordination; policy failures; and lack of participatory mechanisms and public accountability (Pearce, & Barbier, 2000; Velasquez, 2001). Facing criticisms on those fronts, government organisations are resorting to stakeholder engagement as a proactive strategy on sustainable development⁵⁴.

Business organisations are also major players in the sustainability movement. While on the one hand, corporations, including multinational corporations are largely responsible for natural resource depletions and environmental degradations; on the other hand, they are powerful actors who influence economic growth and can help alleviate poverty (Wilson, & Wilson, 2006). Their role in governance and negotiations on sustainable development is therefore of great significance (Elliott, 1998). Corporations are being increasingly challenged by multilateral institutions, governments and stakeholders to change and adopt new strategies that not only enhance firms' efficiency and profitability and contribute to the economy, but also improve their environmental performance and demonstrate their social commitment (Esty, & Winston, 2006).

And while "institutional change is a vital prerequisite for sustainable development" (Pearce et al., 1993, p. 187), a realistic expectation around sustainable development should be that it will not simply and easily happen. The transition towards sustainability can seem to be

⁵⁴ I discuss public participation and multi-stakeholder engagement for sustainability in Chapter 5.

inherently slow (Pearce et al., 1993), especially because the “required shift in values and institutional arrangements to integrate across social, economic and ecological concerns may itself be an intergenerational issue, and the necessary significant structural change in the economy and resource use will take decades” (Connor, & Dovers, 2004, pp. 221-222). Moreover, the changes are also predicted as not being linear, solid and straightforward; instead they will be highly intermeshed, fluid and unpredictable to make transformations practically challenging. It will most likely involve “shifts in the structure of power and interests” (Friedland, & Alford, 1991, p. 246) and is therefore likely to be intensely political (Connor, & Dovers, 2004). According to Hoffman (2001, p. 196),

For alternative conceptions of sustainable development to be institutionalized, events must cause the existing organizational field to accept the entrance of new institutional constituencies or to alter the power relationships among existing constituencies. This will allow the introduction of a new set of institutional rules, norms, and beliefs that include concerns for sustainable development. A stable new institutional paradigm will not be achieved until this happens. These new institutional arrangements will either take the form of an evolutionary alteration of the cognitive institutions through negotiated compromise, or they will take the form of a revolutionary alteration of the regulative and normative institutions through confrontation. This latter option will force one member of the field (industry) to accommodate the interests of other members of the field.

Thus, institutional changes towards sustainability will not be “easy or straightforward. Painful choices have to be made” in the process (WCED, 1987, p. 9). And as evolutionary changes take place in various institutions, actors involved in institutional change for sustainable development “must learn to experiment and adjust towards sustainability, shedding failure and misunderstanding and capitalising on success and support for well-intentioned trials” (Pearce et al., 1993, p. 185).

4A.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I gave an overview of the global institutional landscape on sustainable development. I presented an historical account of how the sustainability movement emerged and evolved over the years. I demonstrated how institutional pressures from the global quarters have increasingly prompted various governments to promote a sustainable development approach in their policy making and implementation at national and local levels. I explained the difference between sustainable development and sustainability. I showed how the philosophy of sustainable development is conceptually prone to different interpretations, and offers divergent world views on sustainability. Different understandings and expectations of sustainability, I contend, and in the later chapters demonstrate empirically, serve as potential breeding grounds for conflicts and disparities among stakeholders as they participate in collaborations for sustainability. I also elaborated on some of the characteristics of the process of institutional change that need due consideration while designing efforts to achieve sustainability. I highlighted how the movement has engulfed various social actors, including civil society, government and corporate organisations. However, despite the success of global institutions in raising awareness on environmental concerns and stimulating relevant dialogue, they have not always been effective in ensuring stringent implementation and enforcement of various proposed goals on sustainable development at national and local levels. There still exists a big gap in the implementation of sustainable development (Lafferty, 1996).

In the next chapter, I discuss the sustainability movement within the national context of my research. I discuss how New Zealand is responding to the global pressures on sustainable development, and has committed itself to achieve sustainability in the 21st century.

Chapter 4B

The Sustainability Movement – National, Regional and Local

4B.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give an overview of the national to local institutional landscape of the sustainability movement in New Zealand. In section 4B.2, I highlight the New Zealand government's efforts and commitment to create a more sustainable society. In section 4B.3, I describe in detail the three regional level multi-stakeholder collaborations investigated in this research. In section 4B.4, I conclude this chapter.

4B.2 New Zealand landscape

In this section, first, I give a brief overview of the people, government and economy of New Zealand. Second, I highlight New Zealand government's vision on sustainability. Third, I describe the Resource Management Act 1991. Fourth, I describe the Local Government Act 2002.

4B.2.1 New Zealand

New Zealand is a small island nation in the south-west Pacific. The North and the South Islands are the two main islands that comprise the nation. With a size of 270, 500 sq km, New Zealand has a diverse multicultural population of around 4.23 million people.

According to the 2006 census, 67.6% of New Zealand's population identifies with the European ethnic group. Indigenous Māori constitute 15% of the population, Pacific people 14.7%, and Asians 9.2% (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy with the British monarch, represented by the Governor-General, serving as the Head of State. The Government is run by a Prime Minister and Cabinet drawn from an elected Parliament. The country has a unicameral Parliament based on the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system⁵⁵. Since 1999, New Zealand has been led by Prime Minister Rt. Hon Helen Clark, who leads the centre-left Labour Party⁵⁶. The Labour-led government has an agreement with the left-wing Green Party of New Zealand, which is primarily focused on environmentalism.

With regard to local governance, the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 and the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 are the primary statutes governing local authorities. There are two main types of local authorities in New Zealand: (a) regional authorities; and (b) territorial authorities, which include the district councils and city councils. Regional authorities are responsible for managing their region's natural resources, including rivers, forests and reserves, hazardous wastes, public transport etc. Territorial authorities provide facilities and utility services that cater to community needs within their respective regions. There are 12 regional authorities, 16 city councils and 58 district councils.

New Zealand is one of the smallest advanced economies in the world with a total GDP of US\$94 billion (Ministry of Economic Development [MED] Statement of Intent, 2006). The country's economy is strongly based on agriculture, and export is crucial for New Zealand. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development, dairy products, meat and wood were the top three export sectors in 2005. The economy is also dependent upon a small manufacturing sector concentrated on low and medium technology sectors, and a large service sector. Tourism is another key sector for New Zealand. The country's

⁵⁵ Under the MMP system, political parties occupy a certain proportion of the seats in the Parliament based on the votes they have earned. The party or the coalition which has the maximum number of seats holds power.

⁵⁶ The Labour Party was established in 1916. It is the longest established centre-left political party in New Zealand.

temperate climate, wealth of natural resources and striking natural beauty make it a popular tourist destination.

Considering that agriculture and tourism are major sectors of the New Zealand economy, sustainable development holds special significance for the country. However, the New Zealand government is also aiming to increase its falling ranking among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations. This economic objective can prove significantly challenging as New Zealand is also making simultaneous attempts to achieve sustainability (Creating Our Future, 2002; NZIER, 2004)⁵⁷.

In the next sub-section, I elaborate on the New Zealand government's stance on sustainable development and the institutional changes designed in attempts to achieve sustainability.

4B.2.2 New Zealand's vision on sustainability

Two decades ago, New Zealand created its distinct identity in global politics by declaring itself a nuclear-free state and making a commitment to create a more peaceful world (New Zealand Government, 2007). In the 21st century, Prime Minister Clark envisions creating another unique identity for New Zealand – an identity based on sustainability. In her February 13, 2007 address to Parliament, she gave a bold call for sustainability - “My annual statement to Parliament this year is a call to action on sustainability. Complacency will not do: we have to act to secure our future” (Clark, 2007). She shared the following vision for New Zealand:

⁵⁷ In 1970 New Zealand ranked ninth, in terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita, of the OECD's member countries (NZIER, 2004). New Zealand's ranking has dropped significantly to the 21st position in income per capita at US\$ 23, 000 (Ministry of Economic Development, 2007). The decline has been attributed to New Zealand's small scale and geographical isolation, high initial incomes, low savings rate and high inflation rates (NZIER, 2004).

I believe New Zealand can aim to be the first nation to be truly sustainable – across the four pillars of the economy, society, the environment, and nationhood ...Sustainability ... can be central to our national identity and the way the world perceive us – and be to our overall benefit as a nation.

The Prime Minister's aspirations and call to develop the nation's identity based on sustainability, is significant, especially in lights of the criticisms charged against the central government's past inactions on sustainable development. New Zealand government committed to Agenda 21 as a part of its national undertaking at the UNCED in 1992, and government authorities have widely adopted the Brundtland Commission definition of sustainable development in their policies and implementation plans (Population and Sustainable Development, 2003; Sustainable Development for New Zealand, 2003; [City's] Strategic Plan 2002-2012). However, the government has been unable to successfully implement a sustainable development plan of action in coordinated and meaningful ways (Knight, 2000; Creating Our Future, 2002; [City's] Sustainability Indicators, 2002).

According to Dr. Williams, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment⁵⁸ (PCE), New Zealand's clean and green image is mostly because of its low population density rather than practices promoting sustainability at individual, organisational or societal level (Creating Our Future, 2002). The PCE recognises 'silo' thinking within government agencies, reactive policy processes, inadequate cooperation and communication across various sectors and organisations, and lack of coordinated leadership as some of the key barriers to sustainable development of New Zealand (see also Taylor, 2004). However, despite some of the failures of central government in promoting sustainability, the contributions of New Zealand local authorities over the past decade in creating awareness on sustainable development issues and implementing objectives of Agenda 21, including

⁵⁸ The PCE is an 'independent' officer of the New Zealand Parliament. The PCE's position being independent implies that the PCE reports to the Parliament and not to a government Minister, and his office is separate from the Ministry for the Environment. The PCE's role is to investigate and report on environmental concerns facing the nation. The PCE monitors and keeps the government accountable for its policies and actions on environmental sustainability (PCE, 2007).

the development of Local Agenda 21s, have been widely recognised (Creating Our Future, 2002; [City's] Sustainability Indicator, 2002).

The government is also actively promoting cross-sectoral dialogue, collaboration and public participation in policy processes, and innovation, and also aiming to transition into a knowledge-based market economy to achieve sustainability (Sustainable Development for New Zealand, 2003). According to the former Minister for the Environment Hon. Ms. Marian Hobbs, "We want to engage with others who have a stake in the issues, and work together to develop and implement the programme of action⁵⁹. We want to develop an innovative and productive New Zealand" (Sustainable Development for New Zealand, 2003, p. 5). The government has the following vision for New Zealand:

- A land where diversity is valued and reflected in our national identity.
- A great place to live, learn, work and do business.
- A birthplace of world-changing people and ideas.
- A place where people invest in the future (Sustainable Development for New Zealand, 2003, p. 9).

The government's decision to revise the Local Government Act 1974 in 2002 on the principles of sustainable development is promising for New Zealand.

In the next section, I discuss one of the important legislative frameworks that is promoting sustainable development of the nation.

4B.2.3 The Resource Management Act 1991

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is based on the principle of 'sustainable management' of natural and physical resources of New Zealand. It was introduced as a single legislative mechanism to manage air, water and land quality and it substituted 20

⁵⁹ The 'Programme of Action' focuses on four areas - sustainable cities, water quality and allocation of freshwater, energy, and child and youth development.

major statutes and 50 other laws affecting environment (Connor, & Dovers, 2004). It placed statutory bindings before local authorities to consider, develop and promote sustainable management of natural resources in their local planning and decision-making (RMA, 1991). Section 5(2) of the RMA clarifies that sustainable management means:

managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while – (a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and (b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air; water, soil, and ecosystems; and (c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment (RMA, 1991, p. 38).

Under the RMA, New Zealand local authorities have responsibilities to develop and implement Regional Policy Statements, Regional and District plans, and resource consent applications. Regional Policy Statements (RPS) highlight values of, and threats to natural resources in the region. RPS present statements of intent and policies as to how the regional authority would manage the regional environmental problems in an integrated manner (RMA, 1991). They also give details on implementation mechanisms that need to be enforced to manage resources and minimise environmental risks (Bellingham, 2004). Based on the key environmental issues and risks identified in RPS, Regional and District Plans are developed to give more detailed policies on the directive methods that need to be employed to address those issues and risks. Under the RMA, policies and methods in the District and the Regional plans must be consistent with the RPS. The RPS, in turn, must not be inconsistent with national policy statements⁶⁰.

Some critics have noted the RMA as one of the domestic barriers that prevented New Zealand from smoothly adopting the Local Agenda 21 and making good progress towards

⁶⁰ Consistency does not imply being identical; it means that it should not be contrary to the intentions and outcomes of the broader plan.

sustainability (see *Creating Our Future*, 2002). The Act primarily focuses on developing and maintaining resource consent procedures and conditions to minimise environmental degradation, as opposed to integrative planning and multi-sectoral problem solving (Knight, 2000). It has been pointed out that RMA was designed to promote sustainable management rather than sustainable development mostly because of the fear that the latter would promote regional and local community development at the cost of environmental preservation (Bellingham, 2004).

In the next sub-section, I give details of the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 and explain how it addresses some of the critical gaps created by the RMA (Harris, 2004).

4B.2.4 The Local Government Act 2002

Central government revised the LGA 1974 by bringing a sustainable development approach to the new LGA 2002. The LGA 1974 was limited in scope, as it restricted the power of local authorities to providing a narrow range of services like drains and roads. By incorporating various elements of Agenda 21, the LGA 2002 gives prominence to democratic governance of communities. Section 10 of the LGA 2002 states the purpose of local government:

- (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future (LGA, 2002, p. 29).

Thus, the revision of the Act has offered the local authorities solid institutional support to implement central government's policy directives on sustainability. It has resulted in expansion of the scope of local government powers. Local authorities now have the power to holistically develop communities according to quadruple bottom line principles of social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being (Harris, 2004; Taylor, 2004). Moreover, it

requires local authorities to develop and implement governance structures and processes that are effective, open and transparent (Harris, 2004). Section 14 lays down principles for local authorities to act in an “open, transparent and democratically accountable manner” while making themselves aware of and duly considering the “diversity” and “views of all... communities” (LGA, 2002, p. 31). Section 14(e) of the Act stresses that “a local authority should collaborate and co-operate with other local authorities and bodies as it considers appropriate to promote and achieve its priorities and desired outcomes, and make efficient use of resources” (LGA, 2002, p. 31).

The LGA 2002 also requires local authorities to develop a Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) - a strategic plan, covering ten consecutive financial years, on development and implementation of sustainable development policies at local level. Section 93 (6) of the LGA 2002 states the purpose of the LTCCP is to:

- (a) describe the activities of the local authority; and
- (b) describe the community outcomes of the local authority’s district or region; and
- (c) provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of the resources of the local authority; and
- (d) provide a long-term focus for the decisions and activities of the local authority; and
- (e) provide a basis for accountability of the local authority to the community; and
- (f) provide an opportunity for participation by the public in decision-making processes on activities to be undertaken by the local authority (LGA, 2002, pp. 73-74).

The LGA 2002 considers the processes of identification and monitoring of “community outcomes” – the things the community considers important for its current or future well-being - as central to the LTCCP. Local authorities are required to ‘identify’ desired community outcomes in consultation with the public and incorporate those outcomes in

the LTCCP⁶¹. All local authorities were expected to prepare their first LTCCP by July 1 2006.

Section 5 of the Act clarifies community outcomes in relation to a district or a region,

- (a) means the outcomes for that district or region that are identified as priorities for the time being through a process under S91; and
- (b) includes an additional outcomes subsequently identified through community consultation by the local authority as important to the current, or future social, economic, environmental or cultural well-being of the community (LGA, 2002, pp. 18-19)

Section 91 of the Act requires a local authority to identify such outcomes “not less than once every 6 years” for the immediate and long-term future of its district or region (LGA, 2002, p. 72). The purposes of identification of community outcomes, as stated in Section 91(2) of the Act are as follows:

- (a) to provide opportunities for communities to discuss their desired outcomes in terms of the present and future social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the community; and
- (b) to allow communities to discuss the relative importance and priorities of identified outcomes to the present and future social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the community; and
- (c) to provide scope to measure progress towards the achievement of community outcomes; and
- (d) to promote the better coordination and application of community resources; and
- (e) to inform and guide the setting of priorities in relation to the activities of the local authority and other organisations (LGA, 2002, p. 72).

But according to section 91(3)(a) of the Act, before deciding the process of identification of community outcomes a local authority must ensure:

⁶¹ METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II are examples of such a collaborative approach on community outcomes aspect of the LTCCP. While METROCOP-I is related to the collaborative ‘identification’ of regional community outcomes for the 2006 LTCCP, METROCOP-II is related to collaborative ‘monitoring’ of those identified outcomes.

- (i) to identify, so far as practicable, other organisations or groups capable of influencing either the identification or the promotion of community outcomes; and
- (ii) to secure, if practicable, the agreement of those organisations and groups to the process and to the relationship of the process to any existing and related plans (LGA, 2002, p. 72).

The Act encourages authorities to enter into agreements with other local organisations identified under section 91(3)(a) for monitoring and reporting outcomes as well – that is, once outcomes are identified, local authorities are obliged under the LGA 2002 to monitor them every three years and report progress made in achieving those outcomes. Moreover, it is expected that the LTCCP be notified to the public and reviewed subsequently, every three years, in consultation with the local community, to ensure it is operationally flexible and up-to-date. Harris (2004, p. 128) highlights some of the strategic implications of LTCCP on local authorities,

Lack of implementation of something set out in the 10 year plans is not enforceable by a court in itself, but a council cannot carry out any activity requiring expenditure or financial risk unless provided for in that document.

Through the discussion in this section, I have highlighted the New Zealand government's policy orientation towards sustainable development. By instituting the revised LGA 2002, and utilising the complementary RMA 1991, central government has created a strong regulatory framework on sustainable development, particularly at the local government level. Together, the two Acts provide critical support to the government and its aspiration to create a unique identity for New Zealand based on sustainability. The current legislative environment is also strongly encouraging local authorities in a region to develop greater spirits of partnership among themselves and other community stakeholders for sustainability.

In the following section I describe how such a collaborative focus was adopted by local authorities in two different regions for sustainable development of their respective communities.

4B.3 Research case sites

In this section I describe the three cases that I investigated in my research. They represent dialogic collaborations that involved different stakeholders for achieving regional sustainability. They emerged to meet some of the regulatory expectations imposed by the LGA 2002 on the local authorities and were centred on community outcomes and the 2006 LTCCP of their respective regions.

First, I describe the Urban-Rural Regional Sustainability Organisation (URRSO). Second, I present details on Metropolitan Regional Community Outcomes Process (METROCOP)-I and II. Third, I reflect on my data collection experience across the three case sites. I underscore that I have used fictitious names of the collaborations. The names used to identify the different stakeholders involved in those processes are also fictitious. I have also concealed the identities of the regions, territorial local authorities and regional councils by not naming them specifically. Doing so has helped me maintain anonymity of the organisations and confidentiality of stakeholders involved in the processes. However, in describing the collaborations, I have highlighted certain key socio-cultural, economic and environmental features of the two regions. These are important macro contextual information crucial to sustainability of those regions, and demand attention because they critically influence stakeholder interactions in these micro level processes.

4B.3.1 Case One: Urban-Rural Regional Sustainability Organisation (URRSO)

In July 2003, recognising various global, national and local forces that have been encouraging sustainability, a passionate resident and four influential organisations in this region - an academic institution, a local chapter of an international agency, a regional authority, and a territorial authority – collectively worked towards developing and officially launching URRSO. Seeds of this organisation were sown almost a year before in 2002, when the local chapter of an international agency organised a citizen's meeting to discuss the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. During this meeting, it was collectively agreed that there was a need to establish a multi-stakeholder organisation that would promote regional sustainability. A proposal recommending establishment of such an organisation was put before the local city council.

Recommending the setting up of a [Regional] forum/committee, a partnership between Government agencies and the sectors listed in Section D of Agenda 21:... Women; Children and youth; indigenous people and their communities; non-government organizations [NGOs]; farmers; Local Authorities; workers and their trade unions; education and training; scientific and technological, to promote necessary study and research, and the implementation of ... Triple Bottom Line, accounting procedure, thus promoting sustainable development (WSSD /Civic Forum Seminar Resolution, 2002).

The city council then played an active role in its development. It provided the initial resources, including staff and funding, to give life to the recommendation and bring various regional stakeholders together for the cause. With the collective efforts of the members of the Steering Committee, comprising individuals and organisations who were involved in the initial conceptualisation and development, URRSO was launched as a multi-stakeholder civil society organisation. A civil society organisation is a people's organisation - based on principles of democracy. Such an organisation is considered to exist in a free space between government and individual citizens (Gilchrist, 2000; Hadenius & Ugglä, 1996; Hanberger, 2001).

The Steering Committee aimed to promote URRSO as an organisation that would provide the regional stakeholders opportunities to freely and openly express their opinions on regional sustainability. Thus as a local instantiation of the broader sustainable communities movement in New Zealand and with its civil society character, URRSO began taking the shape of a social movement organisation. Various stakeholders representing the corporate, local government, not-for-profit, education, farming, and cultural sectors and interested individuals were invited to voluntarily join URRSO. In the call to participate in URRSO, community stakeholders were urged to seriously think about how the city and the region “should look when our children inherit it.” By stimulating stakeholders’ hopes for “good jobs, clean air and water, a first rate education, and a safe city to enjoy,” URRSO reminded stakeholders that the region’s future was in their hands and that the important question was what were they going to do about it. It was hoped that by “combining forces”, URRSO would contribute to regional sustainability (URRSO Invitation Brochure, 2003).

The region in which URRSO emerged greatly contributes to the nation’s export economy. It is famous for its rich fertile soil. The region’s economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, forestry and manufacturing. It is also one of the important mineral producing areas in New Zealand. This region also has a number of lakes, streams and beaches (Regional Annual Report, 2006). And the city where URRSO was launched took pride, and comments on its active role in being more forward thinking and proactive on sustainable development than other New Zealand cities (City’s Sustainability Indicators, 2002). Around 100 regional stakeholders including representatives from various organisations, residents from the local communities, and influential participants of the sustainability movement from national and regional quarters attended URRSO’s launch ceremony in July 2003. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, while delivering the keynote speech during this function, stated:

It is hoped that this Forum will stimulate and encourage a diverse group of individuals and organisations to join together in a more permanent group to be called the [URRSO]. The participants will be asked to consider the necessity of such a Forum, what value it might add to existing activities, its role and how it might function.

Around 30 stakeholders became involved in URRSO during its life of six months. Regular monthly and fortnightly meetings were held. While some meetings were open to all stakeholders, others were specific to certain stakeholders who came together as sub-groups, to brainstorm and collectively plan the vision, mission, structure, resources, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and fundraising activities for the organisation.

The Steering Committee members met regularly after the initial launch to collectively plan the development of this organisation. They were actively involved in the initial organising. They developed and officially communicated the following purpose of URRSO to the community:

To foster communication between organisations for increased integration of sustainable development practices and to find ways to work together to implement some of the outcomes of the WSSD (URRSO organisational document, 2003).

The Steering Committee was mostly constituted of local authority representatives in the region. However, the Committee wanted to ensure that URRSO should not be affiliated to any particular local authority in the region. They wanted it to be strategically positioned as an independent civil society organisation - one that belonged to the people in the region and appeared to the community as an independent organisation that would not be subject to political manipulations, especially by the local authorities. They ultimately wanted to pass over the ownership of this organisation to the stakeholders of this region. And thus, one of the local authorities, as a member of the Committee, hired an independent consultant who flew to the city to facilitate meetings, and stimulate open and frank dialogue among stakeholders for URRSO's future development.

An Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Sub-Committee evolved in November 2003. It was collectively decided that this group should involve a slightly different group of individuals than those who were members of the Steering Committee. It became apparent at this stage that some of the URRSO members wanted to preserve the civil society character of the organisation. They hence wanted to exclude certain local authority representatives from getting actively involved in the organising. While some members volunteered to be members of the MoU Sub-Committee, it seemed others had been selected according to some private agreement or plan.

Emergence of the MoU Sub-Committee also reflected some of the stakeholders' strong distrust and dissatisfaction with the local authorities and their officials. While the sub-committee offered relief to some, it came as a shock and surprise to others. In particular, it became a critical source of dissatisfaction and resentment among some of the Steering Committee members, especially some of the local authority representatives. After this development, they slowly and eventually backed out of URRSO, which I found surprising because initially they were the ones who had been emphasising that URRSO be developed as a civil society organisation and its ownership be given to the community. I further unmask and discuss this paradox through my empirical analysis in later chapters of this dissertation.

Moreover, I was also surprised when I observed that the MoU Sub-Committee members, who showed great enthusiasm and had actively volunteered to take charge of the organising of URRSO, failed to live up to their promises and commitments. Retrospectively viewed, the emergence of the MoU Sub-Committee and its takeover of URRSO was a final blow to the growth plans of the organisation. Since January 2004, URRSO remained dormant with no organisational meetings scheduled.

My involvement in the earlier meetings as an observer and the relationships I had established made it possible for me to continue to interview members during the period where the future of the organisation was uncertain, and afterwards. Some stakeholders, in their interview, expressed that the ‘planned’ takeover shattered this budding organisation, which was already struggling to find its foothold on the shaky ground upon which it had been built⁶². While some stakeholders were still hopeful and keen that the organisation be reinstituted, others were disillusioned, frustrated and had lost hope or enthusiasm to work with the same group. And there were some stakeholders who expected others to take the organising process forward.

In the next sub-section, I give an account of the METROCOP-I and II processes.

4B.3.2 Cases Two and Three: Metropolitan Regional Community Outcomes

Process (METROCOP) I and II

METROCOP-I and II were two collaborative processes developed by several local authorities in one of the metropolitan regions in New Zealand. Through these processes the local authorities in the metropolitan region aimed to collectively plan the ‘identification’ and ‘monitoring’ of the regional community outcomes that were going to be incorporated in their respective 2006 Long Term Council Community Plan on sustainable development. The metropolitan region is made up of various cities and districts. Each city/district is managed by a territorial authority. I have named the regional authority the ‘Metropolitan Regional Council’ and the territorial authorities in this region ‘metropolitan territorial authorities’. The region is home to significant proportion of New Zealand’s population and is ethnically diverse. It is witnessing high growth due to a huge population of new immigrants settling in this region and due to internal migration. It is endowed with parks,

⁶² From Chapter 7 onwards, I unmask various hurdles that stakeholders encountered as they made collective attempts to develop a vision for URRSO.

coasts and beaches, forests, bush and reserves, native flora and fauna, ranges, streams and rivers. It also has a unique cultural heritage with historic buildings and archaeological sites.

The metropolitan region is strategically significant for New Zealand's economy. It makes significant contributions towards the national GDP. Finance, insurance and business services together are a key sector of the regional economy. Education is another relatively important sector for the region. All the local authorities in this region face significant pressures to manage pressures on the natural environment, society and culture as a result of the region's fast-paced growth.

The Metropolitan Regional Council (MRC) is not only subject to the LGA 2002 and the RMA 1991, but also other legislation specific to this region. MRC faces significant challenge of catering to increasing public expectations and demands around: the provision of public transport; reduction of traffic congestion and resolution of air pollution problems; the provision of good and increasingly better quality of life, including a healthy natural and built environment with good access to recreational facilities; the availability of good employment opportunities in the region; and sustainable management of natural resources.

According to section 12(5) of the LGA 2002, "A regional council must exercise its powers under this section wholly or principally for the benefit of all or a significant part of its region, and not for the benefit of a single district" (p. 82). The 'local' mandates of individual territorial authorities must therefore be consistent with the collective 'regional' mandates. Recognising the interconnectedness of local and regional sustainability and the challenges that confront all local authorities in this region, in May 2004, the CEO Forum comprising of Chief Executive Officers (CEO) from the metropolitan territorial authorities and the MRC agreed to take a collaborative approach on sustainability. The CEO Forum

thus hoped that the collaboration would strategically help individual local authorities in their respective local/regional sustainability missions. It resolved that all the local authorities in the metropolitan region should undertake a joint approach and carry out a “coordinated consultation” with community stakeholders for three key and interlinked processes connected with regional sustainability⁶³ (Joint Consultation Progress Report, 2004, p.1). I describe these three processes in the following paragraph.

The first process was the METROCOP-I, which was connected with ‘identifying’ community outcomes (CO) across the region. The plan was to incorporate those identified outcomes into the 2006 LTCCP of the region and individual cities/districts. The second process related to the Metropolitan Regional Policy Statement/District Plans (MRPS/DP) sought public feedback for changing the MRPS and DP, as required by the Local Government (City) Amendment Act 2004. The third process related to the Metropolitan Regional Land Transport Strategy (MRLTS) sought public feedback to review the MRLTS, as required by the Local Government (City) Amendment Act 2004 and the Land Transport Management Act 2003⁶⁴. This project was called the Joint Consultation Project. It was decided that the joint consultation on these processes would be planned between June 2004 and July 2005. The following diagram is a pictorial representation of the project.

⁶³ The processes were ‘required’ to be organised in compliance with the Local Government Act 2002, the Local Government (City) Amendment Act 2004, The Land Transport Act as amended by the Land Transport Management Act 2003, and the Resource Management Act 1991.

⁶⁴ While the MRPS/DP and MRLTS are statutory documents, the CO is connected with the 2006 LTCCP. Changes in the MRPS/DP and MRLTS were required so that those planning documents would help to effectively implement the overarching Regional Growth Strategy of managing growth of the metropolitan region over the next 50 years, as well as provide an integrated, safe and effective transportation system in the region (Joint Consultation Project Fact Sheet, September 2004).

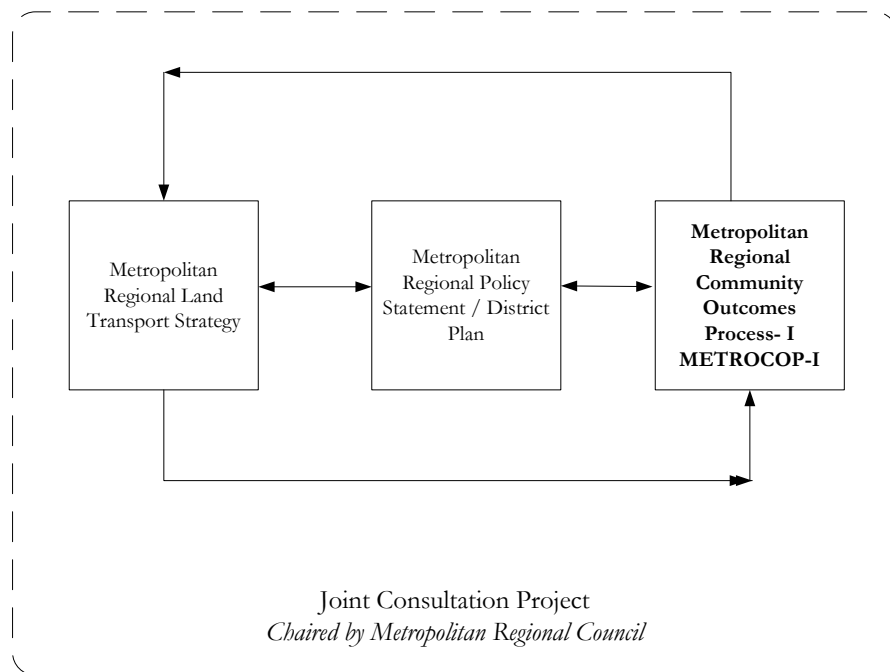


Figure 4a: Snapshot of the Joint Consultation Project

The Joint Consultation project involved inter-council collaborations across three levels. The first and the highest level of collaboration involved senior (Director level) officers from all the local authorities. They came together as a Steering Group to give overall direction to the project, oversee the progress of three processes under the project, and update their respective regional/territorial authority about any collective decisions made in this regard. The second level involved the Joint Working Group. This group comprised of senior officers from all the local authorities who oversaw the work of the third level Sub-Working Group and reported back to the Steering Group. The Sub-Working Group did the ground work to take the Joint Consultation Project ahead.

Right from the start of the project, the Joint Consultation Project members had acknowledged that implementing such a collaborative project would be challenging from a “legal, communications, and consultation perspective” and that it would not be easy to develop a “whole of region” approach (Joint Consultation Project Conference Paper Abstract, 2004). Different legal requirements for different processes, a short time frame of

only three months to collectively plan and organise the three processes, special Māori and ethnic communication and consultation procedures that needed to be planned and organised, were some of the challenges that were identified. Despite the complexities involved in taking a joint approach to the three processes, the local authorities decided to become involved in the Joint Consultation Project. They acknowledged that “parallel alignment of three processes” would result in greater efficiency and effectiveness for the local authorities as they individually developed and implemented local and regional policies on sustainable development. The following were the main goals of the project:

- Avoid several unlinked processes confusing the public and stakeholders;
- Avoid consulting many stakeholders a number of times – consultation burnout;
- Build on consultation already undertaken within the region;
- Promote efficiencies, effectiveness and consistency when working together;
- Coordinate the approach to stakeholders; and
- Achieve, from central government’s perspective, a coordinated process for Community Outcomes rather than eight unrelated processes (Joint Consultation Project Report, 2004, p. 1).

According to the Metropolitan Regional Council Joint Consultation – Community Outcomes, RPS/DP, RLTS Outline Plan (2004, June 29), “The CO consultation can provide an overall sustainable development context for communications for the three parallel regional consultation processes.” This approach was in line with the central government’s preference that local authorities should have “one coordinated Community Outcomes process” (Metropolitan Region Joint Consultation Community Outcomes, RPS/DP, RLTS Call Centre Brief, August 27, 2004).

However, with different councils at different stages of identifying their ‘community outcomes’ and adopting different processes to do so, it was acknowledged that such differences would make the joint consultation on community outcomes a challenging process. For example, while one city council had already completed its community outcomes for the 2006 LTCCP and “did not need to” consult on local community

outcomes, there were two other councils, who as early movers in the community outcomes and LTCCP process, needed only to “review” their community outcomes that had already been identified for their 2004 LTCCP (Metropolitan Regional Council Joint Consultation – Community Outcomes, RPS/DP, RLTS Outline Plan, 2004, June 29, p. 2). The local authorities thus pragmatically acknowledged that it would not be possible for them to implement a “perfect process, but [they would] aim to achieve best outcomes within the constraints” (Metropolitan Regional Council Joint Consultation – Community Outcomes, RPS/DP, RLTS Outline Plan, 2004, June 29, p. 3).

I was given permission to participate only in the Joint Working Group meetings. I therefore did not attend the Steering Group and the Sub-Working Group meetings. All the three processes related to Community Outcomes, the Regional Land Transport Strategy, and the Regional Policy Statement/District Plan were addressed in the Joint Working Group meetings. Even though each process had a different mandate, when they were discussed together I got a good overview of the critical challenges and issues that local authorities were confronting, individually and collectively, with respect to achieving sustainability of the metropolitan region, and that the issues needed to be strategically addressed in a collaborative platform like the Joint Consultation Project.

Discussions in the Joint Consultation Project focused on the environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being of the community. The process of identification of regional community outcomes was critical as it would help the local authorities to directly find out from the community stakeholders what they considered important for themselves, their families and the future of the region. The meetings also hosted deliberations around planning and delivering an effective transportation system that would support economic development, improve access and mobility, assure safety and personal security, protect and promote public health, and ensure environmental sustainability of the region. Discussions

on the effects of growth on region's natural and physical resources, the infrastructure development, and how to maximise the benefits of growth featured in the meetings.

However, as I attended the Joint Working Group meetings, my primary focus was on the process related to the 'identification' of the metropolitan regional community outcomes, which I have termed the METROCOP-I. The primary objective of METROCOP-I was "to share knowledge and experience of community outcomes processes and to co-ordinate consultation with joint stakeholders" (Metropolitan Regional Council Joint Consultation – Community Outcomes, RPS/DP, RLTS Outline Plan, 2004, June 29, p. 9).

As the first phase of the Joint Consultation Project came to an end by the end of October 2004, and as the METROCOP-I process culminated with its primary objectives and timelines met, its members continued their involvement in METROCOP-II. As mentioned earlier, I received approval to participate in the METROCOP-II as a participant observer and I became involved in it. While METROCOP-I was chaired by the Metropolitan Regional Council and aimed to jointly 'identify' the regional community outcomes, METROCOP-II was chaired by one of the territorial authorities and its aim was to 'monitor' the regional community outcomes identified by the METROCOP-I process. In fact, METROCOP-II had started a year back with its first meeting held on July 2003 and this collaboration continued till May 2004. METROCOP-II was then temporarily suspended because the local authorities collectively launched the Joint Consultation Project. It again resumed its function from November 2004. The following short term goals of METROCOP-II were highlighted in one of the reports (19 August, 2004) submitted to the CEO Forum:

- share our individual timelines for the identification of community outcomes;
- share our individual approaches and processes to develop some best practice guidelines;

- gather and share resources/sites to guide us to work regionally;
- gather information from regional stakeholders about their perceived issues in working with local authorities on identification and implementation of community outcomes;
- gather information on regional activities/programmes that may support us to progress this project.

The following were the long terms goals of METROCOP-II:

- a regional agreed position on a way forward for working with regional stakeholders on community outcomes;
- (building on) collaborative partnerships across the region with identified stakeholders; and
- a framework for community outcomes and other plans.

As the members progressed from METROCOP-I to METROCOP-II, the latter collaboration focused on collectively exploring, sharing experiences, and developing processes for ‘monitoring’ regional community outcomes. Most of the members participating in METROCOP-I were also involved in METROCOP-II, with the exception of a couple of councils that sent a different person as their representative. Moreover, because of the strategic importance of these processes for regional sustainability, METROCOP-I and II received active encouragement and support from the central government and was participated in by all the local authorities in the region. I decided to end the data collection on METROCOP-II in November 2005 when I realised that my analysis was not revealing any new insights and I had reached a stage of saturation. The process, however, still continued after I ended my data collection. The following diagram is a pictorial representation of the Joint Consultation project and how the METROCOP-I and II processes were interconnected. These two cases also help exemplify the fluid character of collaborations for sustainability⁶⁵ that I noted before in the Research Methodology and Methods chapter⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ I have used dotted lines in the rectangular boxes to indicate permeability of collaborative boundaries, which in this case involved those between the Joint Consultation Project and the METROCOP-II.

⁶⁶ I argue that a collaboration for sustainability may emerge from already existing processes, take certain organisational forms depending upon set goals, and once those goals are nearly accomplished, it may either

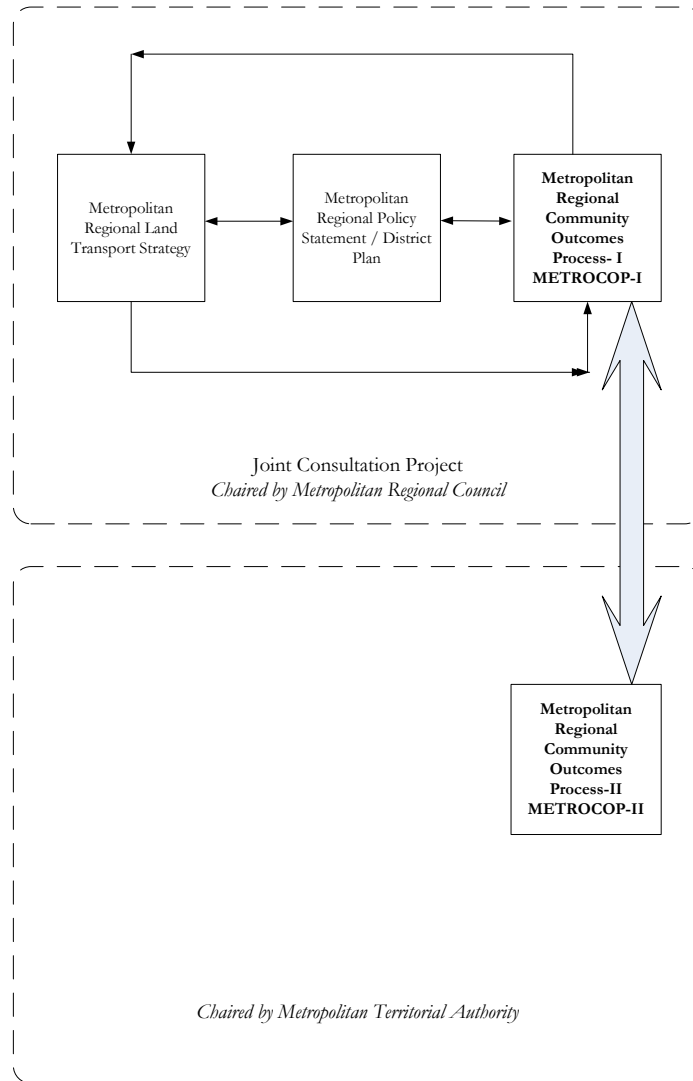


Figure 4b: Snapshot of METROCOPI and METROCOPII

4B.3.3 Reflections on data collection

As I reflected on my experience in the three collaborations as an observer and a researcher, I realised it was a unique experience for me. URRSO gave me an opportunity to witness the various stages of life cycle of an organisation – the birth, growth, and ultimate demise – especially that of a dialogic organisation, all within a short span of time. On the one hand, it stimulated me to think that probably studying organisations like URRSO, which are characterised by more dramatic developments (as opposed to subtle and less visible

end completely, or may further evolve or flow into some other subsequent or parallel process, involving the same or a completely different group of stakeholders, and addressing additional dimensions of sustainability.

outcomes), and whose entire life fits within a researcher's time line is relatively simple and straightforward. I developed such a notion mostly because I thought that maybe it was easier to track and account for such overt developments in organisations. On the other hand, the failure of the process also made me think more deeply about various organisational realities, and explore hidden complexities involved in multi-stakeholder dialogic engagement for sustainability.

Moreover, a comparison across the three cases helped me develop deeper understanding of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. Through cross-case analysis, I was able to unmask the similar and contrasting features and intricate complexities of stakeholder behaviour during these processes which existed at different levels of institutional hierarchy. By comparing my experiences of investigating the METROCOP-I and II processes with that of URRSO, I also had a contrasting realisation that it may not always be possible for a researcher to witness the full life cycle of an organisation or an organising process. I state so especially in reference to those cases which are investigated 'live' – that is, as they are happening in the current moments of time and space - as opposed to those that have already occurred in the past, and are being retrospectively investigated⁶⁷.

Through the following diagram I pictorially represent the institutionalisation of sustainable development through collaborations. It shows how the two processes (URRSO as an example of a bottom-up process; and METROCOP-I and II as examples of top-down processes), being situated at different levels of institutional hierarchy, are attempting to make their respective contributions to New Zealand's sustainable development.

⁶⁷ As clarified before, my research focus was on the process and not on the forms of multi-stakeholder collaborations. Therefore, investigating 'live' processes as they were happening during the time of my data collection, as opposed to those that had happened in the past, helped me capture the dynamic flow and ongoing evolution of the processes and stakeholder behaviour.

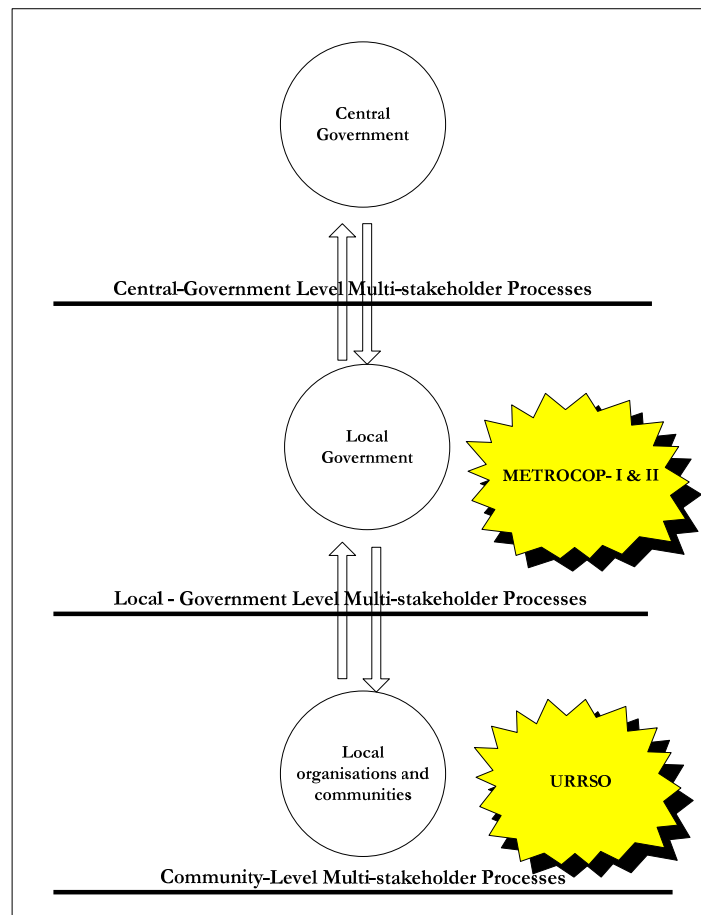


Figure 4c: Institutionalising sustainable development through collaboration: Bottom-up and top-down multi-stakeholder approaches designed at different levels and targeted at different stakeholders⁶⁸

4B.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I gave an overview of the New Zealand government’s policy and legislative thrust towards sustainability. I have highlighted how the New Zealand government has revised its Local Government Act (LGA) in 2002 based on the principles of sustainable development and Agenda 21. I have also presented details of the three cases, URRSO, and METROCOP – I and II, which I investigated in my research. They respectively represent bottom-up and top-down collaborative approaches that emerged under the new regulatory context. They were built on foundations of dialogue and were adopted to institutionalise

⁶⁸ As the METROCOP-I and II, and URRSO belong to two different regions, I have recognised this regional difference across the two case categories as one of the limitations and discuss it in the final chapter of my dissertation. However, as I have argued in previous section of this chapter, despite the differences they exemplify processes, at different levels of institutional hierarchy that are making their respective contributions towards institutionalising sustainable development at the national level.

sustainable development. In my dissertation, I contend that instead of considering such processes as discrete building blocks for sustainability, it may be worthwhile to recognise each of them as a small local link in the long chain of planning and implementation of sustainable development initiatives.

In the next chapter, I present my conceptualisation of a multi-stakeholder dialogic collaboration for sustainability.

Chapter 5

Idealising Multi-stakeholder Dialogic Collaborations for Sustainability

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my conceptual understanding of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. I do so because my research investigates three multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability, and my research questions are centred on organising of such processes for sustainability. I draw upon literatures on organising, dialogue, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement to conceptually highlight the various intentions, characteristics and perceptions of dialogue and collaborations. I then discuss the significance of these processes in the context of sustainable development.

In section 5.2, I elaborate on my conceptualisations of organisation and organising. I explain how communication in general, and dialogue in particular, constitutes organising. I discuss some of the ‘ideal’⁶⁹ characteristics and intentions of, and perceptions on dialogue, and collaboration. In section 5.3, I discuss why multi-stakeholder processes are considered as ideal governance mechanisms to institutionalise sustainable development and achieve sustainability. In section 5.4, I conclude the chapter.

⁶⁹ Even though at this stage I am highlighting only the theoretical ideals of dialogue and collaboration, I do recognise that these processes are practically challenging. In Chapter 6, I highlight various challenges that may be associated with dialogue and collaboration which make them not unproblematic solutions for sustainability.

5.2 Multi-stakeholder dialogic organising

In this section, I first give an overview of my conceptualisation of organisations and highlight that my research focus is on ‘organising’ as opposed to ‘organisations.’ Second, I underscore communication in general, and dialogue in particular, as an essential ingredient of any organisation that ‘constitutes’ organising. I discuss some of the characteristics and intentions of, and perceptions on dialogue that popularise it as an ‘ideal’ social process that nurtures human understanding and relationships. Third, I highlight collaboration as a dialogic action and discuss some of the intentions, and characteristics of, and perceptions on collaboration. In doing so, I present some of the theoretical ideals of collaboration.

5.2.1 Organisations and organising

In my dissertation, I have adopted an ‘open’ systems imagery of organisations. Consistent with the various scholars’ views, I theoretically consider organisations as structures made up of non-linear, dynamic, and continually evolving processes, noting that they represent stable and rational structures, only when viewed retrospectively (Cheney, & Christensen, 2001; Gabriel, Fineman, & Sims, 1992; Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Hosking, & Fineman, 1990; Mumby, & Stohl, 1996; Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997; Powell, & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2003; Starbuck, 2003; Stohl, & Cheney, 2001; Taylor, & Robichaud, 2004; Weick, 1979; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Organisations are open systems that are embedded in large and ‘dynamic’ technical, institutional and historical contexts. They involve tasks, technologies, people with multiple identities, interests and voices, and networks of relationships that develop and operate in response to a highly turbulent, fast changing and unpredictable internal and external environment (Clemens, 2005; Scott, 2003; Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001). When organisational members engage with one another, they socially construct multiple realities around them. As they work together,

rationally and emotionally, within formal and informal sets of interdependent relationships, they construct and reconstruct meanings, and create and recreate organisational systems and structures. And “what ‘emerges’ from [such social] interactions often is something different from the ‘inputs’ of each party”. As interactions create new descriptions, that is, new valuations, these feed back to contribute to ‘dynamic’ [emphasis added] qualities of relationships” (Hosking, & Fineman, 1990, p. 585).

Thus, organisations are often potential sites of contradictions, continually evolving tensions and struggles, paradoxes and dichotomies which arise due to several kinds of synergistic and oppositional forces existing and operating from within, or outside of it (Putnam, & Boys, 2006). According to Weick (1979, p. 3),

organizations are viewed as the inventions of people, inventions superimposed on flows of experience and momentarily imposing some order on these streams. Notice, however, that many portions of the streams of experience will remain unorganized, and those portions being temporarily organized by imposed ideologies will remain equivocal.

I also recognise that social, cognitive, emotional⁷⁰ and political processes are interconnected and constituent processes of any organisation (Hosking, & Fineman, 1990). With these conceptualisations of organisations, my research attention is directed on ‘processes’ than on structures, on ‘organising’ rather than on organisations (Clegg, & Hardy, 1996; Harrison, 1994; Hatch, & Yanow, 2003; Scott, 2003). According to Weick (1979, p. 3), “Organizing is first of all grounded in agreements concerning what is real and illusory.” It is a highly complex, deeply paradoxical and fluid collective phenomenon (Sproule, 1989; Weick, 1979).

Thus, in my aims to theorise on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability, I have attended to ‘processes’ of organising within, rather than ‘forms’ of those collaborations.

⁷⁰ Concerned that scholars often use terms ‘cognitive’ and ‘emotional’ as mutually exclusive, Hosking and Fineman (1990) note that the two are not so. However, they have pointed out those two separately just to stress that emotions are important constituents of any organising process and should not be ignored.

And while analysing the three cases, I have attempted to reveal various ‘emergent’ qualities of organising by unmasking the complex, rapidly evolving, and dynamic characteristics of human relationships that constitute those collaborations for sustainability. I have focused on the communicative, especially dialogue-based, aspect of organising, which I discuss next.

5.2.2 Communicating through dialogue in organising

With the notion that “communicating is organising” (Bordow, & More, 1991, p. 65), organisational communication is a process which ‘constitutes’ an organisation, rather than something which takes place ‘inside’ it (Eisenberg, 1984; Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001). As organisational members communicate with one another, they create as well as process raw data from their environment, and communicate them, which further guide their future individual and collective processes of sense-making and enactments in the organisation (Harrison, 1994). During this process, their behaviours are interlocked in a cyclic manner, which further constitutes the substance of organising. Thus, as communication is a core process of organising (Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001; Taylor, & Robichaud, 2004; Weick, 1979), taking a “communication perspective” in organisational research helps to acquire a ‘process-based’ approach in investigation of organisations and organisational behaviours (Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997, p. 131).

Inspired by the above scholars, I have adopted a ‘dialogic’ focus in my research. I have investigated dialogue that constituted organising of three multi-stakeholder collaborations⁷¹ for sustainability. Investigation of organisational dialogue can yield deeper and richer understanding of organisations and relationships during organising, and has therefore been recommended (Hosking, & Fineman, 1990; Smith, & Arnston, 1991; Taylor, & Robichaud, 2004).

⁷¹ I conceptualise collaboration as a ‘process’ as opposed to a form (Gray, 1989), and present related arguments later in sub-section 5.2.3.

The term dialogue originated from the Greek word *dialogos* - *dia* meaning ‘through’ and *logos* meaning ‘the word’. It thus implies meaning of the word, or flow of streams of meanings among people (Bohm, 1998). In an ‘ideal’ situation⁷², dialogue is a “relationship builder” for it has the ability to “cement” or “glue” people together as those shared meanings flow through them (Bohm, 1998; Ross, 1998, p. 1). It “offers an opening into the awareness of ourselves as relational beings from which it is possible to experience our differences as the absolute necessities for our wholeness” (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998, p. 278). Ross (1998, p. 5) notes that “dialogic communication is the language of relationship” and that “dialogue can be thought of as a practice field; a place of learning together and co-creating; a place of growing community; a place to practice loving each other and ourselves.”

Dialogue has also been recognised as an “existential⁷³ necessity” for human beings and which, in its ‘true’ form, involves critical thinking (Freire, 1972, p. 62). As a ‘co-creation process,’ dialogue allows people to surface, express, inquire and reflect upon their inner most feelings and thoughts, and old and deep-rooted assumptions and preset judgements (Ross, 1998). It is like a ‘living process’ wherein people can breathe in fresher perspectives on life and venture into new terrains to discover, and accept deeper and newer understandings of realities⁷⁴. In this process of dialogue they can probably suspend some of the old and rigid beliefs, and achieve ‘liberation’ from them (Ross, 1998).

Thus dialogue has transformational powers. Through dialogue people are offered a platform to share their own consciousness and collectively develop a ‘common

⁷² In this section, I highlight the theoretical ideals of dialogue that popularised it as a potent communication mechanism that has transformational powers. Later on in Chapter 6, I theoretically argue, and from Chapter 7 onwards, empirically reveal the various practical hurdles of depending upon dialogic collaborations, and therefore why these processes are not unproblematic solutions for addressing social problems.

⁷³ Existential implies human experience or existence in this world in all its forms (see Douglas, & Johnson, 1977).

⁷⁴ According to this view, and consistent with my ontological position in this dissertation, which I elaborate upon in Chapter 6, reality is not something static; instead it is a socially constructed process, a transformation that involves thinking, understanding and actions that are intricately connected (Freire, 1972; Gadamer, 1989; Habermas, 1984, 1987).

consciousness' (Bohm, 1998). This transformed consciousness further helps individuals develop deeper insights into complex inter-relationships, which is highly critical in solving complex problems and conflicts (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998). It helps people develop a clearer vision of the whole context and the complex, rapidly evolving multiple realities in which human lives are submerged and from which one needs to emerge in order to intervene and transform those realities (Bohm, 1996; Freire, 1972). According to Freire (1972, p. 96), "revolution is achieved with neither verbalism nor activism, but rather with praxis, that is, with reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed." He presents dialogue as 'praxis,' with reflection and action as its two critical constituents. And with its unique ability to powerfully and radically transform structures without designating "leaders as its *thinkers* and the oppressed as mere *doers*" (Freire, 1972, p. 96), dialogue becomes a "*continuing* aspect of liberating action" (p. 108). As human beings engage in dialogical encounters with others, they receive opportunities to act upon and transform their reality, and move continuously towards newer horizons wherein they can creatively open fuller and richer possibilities of life as an individual and as part of a collective (Bohm, 1996; Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998).

An ideal dialogical encounter does not involve a 'subject' who by virtue of one's strength or social status, imposes, convinces, manipulates or sloganises ideas on an 'object' (Benhabib, 1992; Freire, 1972; Harrington, 2001; Ross, 1998). Instead, it involves only subjects who collectively explore and share understanding on an issue (Freire, 1972; see also Bohm, 1996; Habermas, 1984). And so, as people engage in dialogue, Bohm (1998, p. 7) recommends that they may like to remind themselves that they are not playing a "game against each other but with each other" and that there are no winners or losers in this game⁷⁵. There is

⁷⁵ Dialogue is seen to be distinct from a debate or a discussion (Payne, & Calton, 2003; Ross, 1998). Bohm (1998) metaphorically explains that a discussion is like a ping-pong game wherein participants bat their ideas back and forth in order to win scores. While recognising this distinctness, it is highly unlikely that pure dialogue would take place during dialogic interactions (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998). It may be more realistic to expect that dialogue may practically exist along a continuum (Crane, & Livesey, 2003), with pure forms of dialogue and discussion occupying two opposite ends of that continuum.

supposedly no room for fear, domination, or coercion as everyone is encouraged to think collectively, intelligently and coherently during this exploratory process.

Dialogue thus embraces and celebrates peoples' diversity, in terms of their ideologies, perspectives and priorities. It encourages open and free expressions of everyone's realities, while recognising that those realities may be fragmented and narrow (Freire, 1972). And as those diverse perspectives are shared and meanings flow during dialogue, people can inquire into, and uncover polarity of issues being collectively explored, learn about their differences, expose their deep-seated values and beliefs, and vent out their emotions (Ross, 1998). Thus, in addition to creating synergy and coherence and providing participants opportunities to ultimately come to a consensus and develop a collective wisdom, dialogue also offers them a safe space to collectively explore conflicts, which if remained uncovered could lead to more serious future conflicts (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Ross, 1998).

Silence and listening are highly valued in dialogue (Ross, 1998), for without the ability to listen, it seems it may not be possible to develop fruitful and long-lasting relationships. "Dialogic listening" is thus a crucial ingredient of dialogue - it is that passive listening which has a "quieter", and more "attentive and loving" characteristic to it, wherein a speaker is able to stand in a "safe zone" and is given plenty of time to speak and express himself at his own pace (Ross, 1998, p. 21). It supposedly gives people an opportunity to explore and find out what is going on in their own minds, in the other person's mind, as well as in a group, and helps unfold emergent meanings. Ellinor and Gerard (1998, p. 99) raise some stimulating questions related to listening during dialogue, "Are we listening from our past history, from our prejudices⁷⁶ (prejudgements), from what we already know to be true and right, or from curiosity and a desire to expand our horizons, to see from new perspectives?"

⁷⁶ I discuss prejudices and its role in social relationships in Chapter 6.

I also appreciate the view that dialogue is not directly concerned with ‘truth’, but is concerned with ‘unfolding of meanings,’ which may help one to ‘arrive’ at truth (Bohm, 1998). Philosophers like Gadamer and Buber have recognised that dialogue is fundamental to the “process of understanding and the search for truth” (Halling, & Leifer, 1991, p. 3). The most potent outcome of any dialogue is its ability to unleash and surface deeper levels of understandings and insights (Ross, 1998).

In this sub-section, I have highlighted some of the ‘ideal’ characteristics of dialogue, the intentions of engaging in it, and its perceived outcomes. I recognise that dialogue, in an ideal situation, is a powerful medium through which human beings can creatively communicate as ‘subjects’ and develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with others. It gives them grounds on which they can collectively explore, unmask and further comprehend various aspects of life, individual and collective, and perhaps accordingly bring about desired changes in society. However, since it has an open-ended orientation, it may not be fruitful to exclusively depend on dialogue, especially if one is aiming to achieve a desired set of pre-determined outcomes, as often planned during an agenda-based meeting (Ross, 1998). I discuss some of the practical aspects of dialogue in Chapter 6.

In the next sub-section I discuss collaboration as a dialogic process.

5.2.3 Collaboration and stakeholder engagement as dialogic processes

Collaborations may be best considered as ‘processes’⁷⁷ based on relationships and interdependencies, wherein communication plays a critical role in constituting those relationships (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Deetz, 1995). Gray (1989, p. 5) defines collaboration as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible,” and generate a shared “richer, more comprehensive” understanding of the problematic issue.

According to Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant (2005, p. 58), collaboration is the “product of sets of conversations” among two or more stakeholders, who during their interaction create a collective identity, which in turn influences the collaboration. Crane and Livesey (2003, p. 51) stress the importance of investigating stakeholder communication in order to understand stakeholder relationships. They underscore that “stakeholder communication cannot be realistically considered in isolation from wider issues of organisational relationships, identity and meaning” (p. 51). They also caution that adopting a ‘symmetrical one-way model of communication’ may be problematic, and ultimately prove futile in understanding complexities of those relationships⁷⁸. Thus, instead of purely focusing on reified organisations, and primarily generating a unilateral, corporate-centric understanding of stakeholder management through managerial cognition and control, researchers have been advised to also concentrate on the fluid and dynamic characteristics of organising, and in the process, generate some ‘relational’ and ‘process-based’ dialogic theories on

⁷⁷ Gray and Wood (1991) clarify that while collaborations refer to processes, collaborative alliances are forms. Moreover, collaborative structures, including even more permanent forms like joint ventures, federations and international associations tend to be temporary and evolving. Such structures are said to require continuous readjustments, re-evaluation and improvement. As objectives of collaboration are met or changed over a period of time, those structures may accordingly transform during the process as well – they may end, change or become more susceptible to collapse (Roberts, & Bradley, 1991; Wood, & Gray, 1991). Thus, temporariness is an important characteristic of any collaboration (Roberts, & Bradley, 1991). Wood and Gray (1991) use the term ‘interactive process’ to underscore the inherent ‘change-oriented’ characteristics of stakeholder interactions during collaboration.

⁷⁸ Noting that stakeholder groups cannot be assumed as stable and homogenous entities, Crane and Livesey (2003) provide a ‘differentiated network model of stakeholder relationship’ comprising direct and indirect stakeholders. They explain that stakeholder relationships have a shifting, ambiguous and contested character, and communication plays a critical role in developing, managing and maintaining those fluid relationships.

stakeholder engagement (Andriof, & Waddock, 2002; Hart, & Sharma, 2004; Payne, & Calton, 2002)⁷⁹. A dialogic approach to this kind of research is well justified because stakeholder engagement “at its core [is] a relationship” (Lawrence, 2002, p. 196). A dialogic focus brings up various complexities of stakeholder engagement (Crane, & Livesey, 2003). It helps in understanding the cognitive and affective needs of stakeholders as they engage with each other and organisations on a problem domain. Such a focus also helps to expand and enrich stakeholder theory development from micro organisational levels to meso inter-organisational levels (Deetz, 1995; Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002; Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997).

The underlying principles of dialogue and collaboration are the same. According to Freire (1972, p. 136), collaboration is a “dialogical action” which “leads dialogical subjects to focus their attention on the reality which mediates them and which – posed as a problem – challenges them”. After critical analysis of the problematic reality, the dialogical subjects involved in collaboration can collectively act to transform it. Thus, in agreement with the views of various scholars, and inspired by the calls for research on collaborations and stakeholder engagement from a communication, particularly dialogic, perspective, I have taken a ‘dialogic view of communication’ and focused on multi-stakeholder dialogue during stakeholder engagement – an area that has widely remained under-examined and under-theorised in stakeholder literature (Crane, & Livesey, 2003).

Different collaborations may have different intended outcomes, ranging from information exchange and voluntary future engagement, to more formal and binding commitments like producing formal set of recommendations to an authorised implementing agency, or formal

⁷⁹ Stakeholder theories explaining organisation and stakeholder relationships have been mostly developed around a normative, or instrumental core, and are categorised as either normative, or instrumental theories, respectively (Payne, & Calton, 2002; Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004). Traditional normative stakeholder theory usually takes a prescriptive moral or ethics-based stance and justifications to explain organisation-stakeholder relationships, while an instrumental stakeholder theory focuses around legal and contractual based relationships (Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004). The third strand of stakeholder theory developed is in the descriptive domain (Russo, & Schultz, 2003), in which I place my research.

agreements among stakeholders to implement decisions made collaboratively (Gray, 1989). By collaborating, different parties may be able to devise more innovative solutions based on a comprehensive analysis of the problem situation. Moreover, as unilateral attempts to solve complex problems are likely to place huge demands on a single organisation's resources, and may therefore prove impractical in terms of costs, collaborations help to lower those costs as well. Collaborating with stakeholders thus appears as a 'logical' mechanism for organisations to build their capacities, seek opportunities to comprehensively understand, and collectively deal with turbulent forces in the environment, and devise solutions that may serve mutual interests of organisations and their stakeholders (Gray, 1989; Turcotte, 2000).

However, judging outcomes of collaborations on tangible and objective criteria like cost reduction, efficiency, productivity, development of innovative products or systems and profits takes a narrow and restricted view of the potential and significance of such processes and its consequences. Roberts and Bradley (1991) advise that collaboration should be duly recognised in its 'open-ended' character, as a 'reflexive self-evolving' social process, whose outcomes are not just limited to such things as innovative products, but also to 'social innovations'. For example, social capital⁸⁰ is an important outcome of any collaboration (Andrioff, & Waddock, 2002). Collaborations facilitate mutual learning and value creation for partnering organisations and stakeholders (Rondinelli, & London, 2002). They give organisations hopes of improving their relationships with stakeholders, and assurances to stakeholders that their interests would be duly considered and protected in the process. By facilitating and nurturing organisation-stakeholder relationships collaborations build social capital during the process that further helps to enhance

⁸⁰ Social capital is a sum of actual or virtual resource, including norms, values and good will, generated from social relationships that enhance communication and cohesion. It is thus a critical component of any organisation's foundation. This concept has not only been popularly applied in studies on democracy and governance, economic development and community issues, it is also gaining prominence among organisational theorists who have attempted to use this lens to understand complex organisations. Network theorists in sociology have also utilised this concept significantly (Adler, & Kwon, 2002).

collective problem-solving skills, and the scope and extent of responsibilities, ownership and stakeholder support for organisational decisions (Adler, & Kwon, 2002; Gray, 1989). Stakeholder engagement should therefore be viewed more holistically as a “process” that can help an organisation manage its “social risks” connected with stakeholders, and enhance its social capital (Andriof, & Waddock, 2002, p. 42).

In this section, I recognised the theoretical ‘ideals’ of dialogue and collaboration, demonstrated that collaboration and dialogue have similar underlying principles, and thus introduced collaboration as a dialogic process. In the next section, I discuss stakeholder engagement in the context of sustainable development.

5.3 Multi-stakeholder engagement for sustainable development

In this section, I focus on emerging literature on multi-stakeholder collaborations and dialogue for sustainability to justify why multi-stakeholder dialogic processes have gained legitimacy⁸¹ and have been increasingly popularised as ideal governance mechanisms that can help solve complex social problems and achieve sustainability⁸². First, I give a brief overview of why stakeholder engagement is being increasingly adopted as a mechanism in policy-making processes. Second, I explain the legitimacy and significance of multi-stakeholder dialogue, and why it has been promoted as an ideal governance mechanism to institutionalise sustainable development and achieve sustainability.

⁸¹ I have highlighted some of these aspects in Chapters 4A and 4B while discussing the global to local context of sustainable development, and the importance of public participation in attempts to achieve sustainability.

⁸² However, in Chapter 6, I portray multi-stakeholder engagement as potentially problematic processes for sustainability.

5.3.1 Stakeholder engagement in public policy

Contextual factors often act as powerful incentives for organisations to consider collaborations with other stakeholders, within and across sectors, and critically influence life of collaborations (Gray, 1989; Sharfman, Gray, & Yan, 1991). Sustainability has emerged as one such powerful context, and probably an unchallengeable and unavoidable one, that confronts individuals, organisations and society in the 21st century. As relationships in the ecosystems are highly interdependent and intricate, the current institutional environments operating on wide and open, local to global, platforms demand collaborative rather than unilateral approaches to problem-solving and decision-making (Gray, 1989; Sharma, & Starik, 2004; UNCED, 1992). As discussed in Chapters 4A and 4B, organisations are being increasingly pressurised to become socially responsible, and develop and implement systems and practices that contribute towards a more sustainable world (Andriof, & Waddock, 2002; Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004; Sharma, & Starik, 2004).

Public feedback and policy analysis studies reveal that because of the predominantly unilateral and top-down approaches to policy-making and implementation, stakeholders are increasingly dissatisfied with government organisations (Burgess, Harrison, & Filius, 1998; Roberts, & Bradley, 1991). They are becoming more and more aware, and vocal about the social problems, and their related grievances. They not only expect, but have also started demanding, effective and long-term solutions to complex social problems, and greater accountability and transparency in the functioning of the government authorities.

Confronting such pressures and inspired by the theoretical ideals of collaboration, some of which I highlighted in sub-section 5.2.3, policy-makers are proactively resorting to stakeholder engagement as a potential solution. There has been an increasing shift, especially over the last few years, towards “consultation and dialogue with stakeholders and the public” across organisational boundaries so that “policy integrations” and “openness

and transparency” (Buckingham-Hatfield & Walker, 2002, p. 239) can be achieved during policy formulation and implementation related to sustainability (Berke, & Conroy, 2000; Burgess, Harrison, & Filius, 1998; Lapintie, 1998). Thus, stakeholder engagement in various aspects of the development process offers the hope of bridging the policy gap between expert knowledge and local experience, which further helps to enhance understanding of the depth, interconnectedness and complexity of social problems (Lapintie, 1998; Freeman, Littlewood, & Whitney, 1996; UNCED, 1992). Such an approach is also in agreement with the democratic principles in Agenda 21, which calls for greater public participation in the policy process (UNCED, 1992). Through such non-hierarchical and democratic processes policy-makers can develop innovative public policies, and design and implement innovative systems, and solutions to address some complex social problems (Roberts, & Bradley, 1991). It is also seen to lend more legitimacy and credibility to the functioning of the planning authorities, especially in light of various criticisms and distrust they face from community stakeholders (Valesquez, 2001). Such governance mechanisms also give opportunities to stakeholders to work with, rather than against, each other (Pellow, 1999).

In the next sub-section, I explain why dialogue is considered significant for sustainable development.

5.3.2 Stakeholder dialogue in collaborations for sustainability

As organisations in the natural environment “co-exist” with stakeholders, it has been recommended that any organisation’s relationship with its stakeholders should be developed on foundations of “dialogue and understanding that is iterative” rather than those based on “managing” stakeholders⁸³ (Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004, p. 155; see

⁸³ Sama, Welcomer, and Gerde (2004, p. 158) stress that “relational models of organising based on dialogue” should be developed to understand organisation-stakeholder relationships. They normatively explain that organisations and stakeholders equally participate in a community of practice, and through dialogue, share their views, beliefs, and purpose to find common grounds to create a sustainable world. They propose a dialogic model of organisation-stakeholder relationship called the “ethic of care stakeholder model” (p. 155). Their model also stresses the importance of including the ‘natural environment’ as a key stakeholder, even though it may be a silent one, whose claims have been ignored in traditional anthropocentric organisation-stakeholder relationship models. Effective relationships with stakeholders can be developed and sustained if and once there are some basic understandings of the problematic issues confronting

also Hart, & Sharma, 2004). With its ideal reputation, which I elaborated upon in sub-section 5.2.2, dialogue has been recognised as a panacea for complex and intractable social problems, and is being increasingly considered as a powerful institutional mechanism to achieve sustainability (Buckingham-Hatfield, & Walker, 2002; Hund, Engel-Cox, Fowler, & Klee, 2003; Hoffman, 1998; Hom, 2002; Kaptein, & Van Tulder, 2003; Macnaghten, & Jacobs, 1997; Presas, 2001). Ross (1998, p. 47) reflects on the significance of dialogue for sustainability by stating that if one's "life goals are to think and act in ways leading to peace and harmony in a sustainable world", then dialogue, "has the soul to get us there".

As a "structured interactive and proactive process aimed at creating sustainable strategies" (Kaptein, & Van Tulder, 2003, p. 210), stakeholder dialogue offers platforms to explore joint projects, alliances, and partnerships. It thus provides opportunities to transform organisational relationship with stakeholders from one of confrontation and competition, to that of consultation and collaboration. It is seen to be helpful in generating stronger community feelings, further empowering stakeholders with an enhanced sense of safety, importance, and belonging, and a richer experience of being a part of a group-as-a-whole as they collectively develop strategies to create a sustainable world (Gray, 1989; Ross, 1998).

Meppem and Gill (1998) recommend that the sustainable development agenda within the policy circles should also be oriented towards 'learning' - a flexible and perpetually evolving process - rather than focusing mainly on fixed future outcomes. Recognising dialogue as a powerful "collective learning mechanism," Presas (2001, p. 204) rejects the "top-down imposition of a preordained model defined by the scientific or policy making communities" and underscores the importance of "fact-based structured dialogue" where all stakeholders can share their vision of a sustainable society and "recognise their individual roles, their

societies, and a greater recognition that others are important and very much needed for maintaining ecological integrity of the Earth. Dialogue has the potential to nurture such understandings and relationships (Gray, 1989).

interdependency, and their need of partnership, or at least identify a platform for common cause: putting sustainable development into practice” (see also Ross, 1998). It is believed that such a learning focus would help to recognise the subjective priorities and interests of different stakeholders, and explore real world complexities of environment and development during the planning process.

Moreover, with its transformational powers (Bohm, 1996; Freire, 1972), dialogue has been recognised as a “vital step in the continuum of institutional change and in the process of restructuring our social institutions” for sustainable development (Hoffman, 1998, p. 216; Lawrence, 2003; Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004). The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2007) recognises that stakeholder dialogue is the first step to build relationships with stakeholders in the community and is a powerful catalyst for change. Dialogue gives organisations and stakeholders opportunities to share information and promotes learning. It can help them enhance their sensitivity towards external environment, demonstrate a sense of social responsibility, create a greater “mutual buffer of trust, whereby possible problems can be dealt more effectively,” and probably win the trust and respect of stakeholders by showing that their views need to be listened to, and are valued (Kaptein, & Van Tulder, 2003, p. 214).

Peterson (1997) thus recommends that a multidisciplinary dialogue on sustainability, which not only recognises sustainable development as an intellectually significant concept but also highlights its immediate practical utility, needs to be promoted. Through stakeholder dialogue, organisations can explore, in an ongoing manner, various institutional pressures on sustainable development, and continually develop and enact various strategies in response (Sastry, Bernicke, & Hart, 2002). Dialogue can be employed as a potent tool to change normative and cultural-cognitive institutions, including people’s consciousness, in ways that relationships within the ecosystems are duly respected, and individual values

rightly aligned towards a collective and “transformed environmental [state of] consciousness” favouring sustainability (Peterson, 1997, p. 7).

Through the above literature review, I have explained why multi-stakeholder collaborations and dialogue have gained legitimacy as powerful governance mechanisms to institutionalise sustainable development and achieve sustainability.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my theoretical conceptualisations on multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. I highlighted the theoretical ideals of dialogue, and collaboration, by discussing the intentions, and characteristics of, and perceptions on such processes, and positioned collaboration as a ‘dialogical action’ (Freire, 1972). I further extended my discussions to, and included scholarship on, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable development to justify why multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration have gained legitimacy and prominence as potent institutional mechanisms for institutionalising sustainable development (Bohm, 1996, 1998; Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Freire, 1972; Gray, 1989; Hoffman, 1998; Ross, 1998). I contend that such views have been propagated based on the promises that theoretical ideals of dialogue and collaboration offer for sustainable development. By providing hopes that dialogue and collaborations with stakeholders will grant fair opportunities and equal grounds for public to articulate their opinions, express their grievance, these processes have the power to attract different people for collectively exploring and devising solutions for problems confronting society.

As noted earlier, the arguments that I have presented in this chapter are based on an idealistic view of dialogue and collaboration. However, I recognise that multi-stakeholder engagement is not an unproblematic solution for sustainability. An ideal theoretical

framework on dialogue and collaboration is useful for my research because I use it later as a reference framework (see Harrington, 2001) to compare and contrast, and problematise dialogic collaborations in practical settings for sustainability. I engage in detailed theoretical discussions around challenges and problematic issues related to stakeholder engagement in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Practicalities of Dialogic Collaborations for Sustainability

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the ontological elements of dialogic relationships and understanding as applicable to collaborative processes. I also discuss the ‘practicalities’ of organising multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability, including some of the challenges that organisations may face when they use these processes as mechanisms to achieve sustainability. These discussions are in sharp contrast to those in the previous chapter where I discussed the theoretical ideals of dialogue and collaboration, and applied them to the context of sustainable development⁸⁴.

In section 6.2, I give an overview of my ontological understanding of society and human relationships as seen through the lenses of Gadamer (1989) and Habermas (1984, 1987). In section 6.3, I highlight various practical issues and challenges that organisations and stakeholders may encounter while collaborating for sustainability. In section 6.4, I explain how I use institutional theory to understand and unmask the dynamics of stakeholder interactions in the three collaborations I investigated. In section 6.5, I conclude the chapter.

⁸⁴ Later in Chapters 10 and 11, I integrate my empirical analyses with the theoretical discussions presented in the dissertation to explain my understanding of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability, and demonstrate how such processes, despite their potential, are practically not unproblematic solutions for sustainability.

6.2 Communicative understanding and action

In this section, I highlight my ontological position, which is inspired by the ideas of Hans-George Gadamer (1989) and Jürgen Habermas (1984, 1987). Their work gives a philosophical foundation to my research and has influenced my observations, perceptions and understanding of stakeholder realities and relationships in the three collaborations I investigated. I underscore that while drawing on their work I have not attempted to merge the two philosophical perspectives. Instead, I attempted to constructively utilise the productive tension that comes from the similarities and differences⁸⁵ between the two philosophical approaches (see Alvesson, & Deetz, 2000).

First, I discuss the significance of ‘understanding’ in dialogic relationships, and the practical role language plays in generating understanding and nurturing social relationships. Second, I discuss historicity as a critical constituent of understanding and relationships. Third, I highlight the role of communicative rationality in generating communicative understanding and action in practice. Fourth, I present my conceptualisation of society as constituted of the two integrated worlds – a systems world and a lifeworld, which returns the discussion to a more philosophical level. This way, I discuss both practical and higher ontological elements of dialogic relationships and understanding. Fifth, I summarise the discussions.

6.2.1 Language, dialogue and understanding in social relationships

Gadamer and Habermas adopted a dialogic conception to understand and explain society and human relationships (Harrington, 2001). They disregarded the traditional ideals of

⁸⁵ There were several fronts on which these two theorists disagreed with each other. Their disagreements, popularly known as the Habermas - Gadamer debate, prominently featured during the 1960-1970 period in several publications and counter publications by the two thinkers. Their points of divergence include Gadamer’s position on historical tradition, prejudice, cultural authority, and finitude, and Habermas’s position on universal enlightenment, emancipation and ideology critique (Harrington, 2001). I discuss some of these concepts and some of their philosophical differences later in the chapter.

objectivity in human science. According to them, when human beings interact, they communicate with one another through language. And during those communicative interactions, an active dialogue and a dialogic relationship exists between the interpreter⁸⁶ and the 'subject' - whose life or actions are being interpreted. They underscore that an interpreter of a phenomenon should not suspend one's values and preconceptions during the act of interpretation. They recognise that reflexivity, traditionally considered as a "hindrance to objectivity", is very important for understanding (Harrington, 2001, p. 25).

Understanding for Gadamer and Habermas is thus essentially a 'hermeneutic experience'⁸⁷ wherein two or more subjects simultaneously interpret meanings as they engage with each other and express themselves to generate actions (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003; Habermas, 1984). Moreover, the mutual understanding developed during the process is mostly on a subject matter rather than on each other's perspective (Deetz, 1990; Gadamer, 1989). The actions generated as a result are not only oriented towards achieving success in instrumental goals, but are also directed towards achieving greater understanding (Habermas, 1984, 1987). And while on the one hand, the process of developing any understanding is dependent upon dialogue, including individuals' abilities and willingness to communicate with others, and the immediate context, on the other hand, a dialogue is not possible without a good level of understanding among subjects (Dascal, 1985; Parret, 1985). According to Parret (1985, p. 165), a "theory on dialogue is fully dependent on a theory of understanding". Any concept of dialogue should therefore be drawn from the concept of understanding.

⁸⁶ My use of terms 'interpretation,' 'hermeneutic experience,' 'interpreter,' and 'reflexivity' in this dissertation are not just confined to research, researchers and research methods; they are related to stakeholders as well. Gadamer and Habermas recognise that in every social interaction, individuals engage in acts of interpretations, which also involve reflexivity to a greater or lesser extent, making social interactions hermeneutic experiences in themselves.

⁸⁷ Gadamer's hermeneutics "does not aim to offer a methodology or technology, but an account of what understanding is, and how it involves our very being" (Grondin, p. 45).

I thus contend that understanding among stakeholders is not only a critical constituent of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. It is also a very important outcome, or at least one of those many outcomes which are probably aspired for, from such processes. So, while investigating dialogic collaborations for sustainability, I use ‘understanding’ among stakeholders as one of the important principles in my dissertation. I also contend that language, dialogue and understanding are mutually dependent and essential ingredients for nurturing any collaborative relationship (see also Gray, 1989).

My view on language is in accordance with that of Gadamer and Habermas – that is, it is not restricted to the way linguists view it. I recognise language as an “experience of the world” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 389). It “has its true being only in dialogue, in *coming to an understanding*” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 446). Gadamer (1989, p. 446) notes that human communities are linguistic communities. “They form language”, which is the “language of conversation,” and which “fully realizes itself only in the process of coming to an understanding”. He further clarifies:

That language and world are related in a fundamental way does not mean, then, that world becomes the object of language. Rather, the object of knowledge and statements is always already enclosed within the world horizon of language (Gadamer, 1989, p. 450).

Language is not a mere ‘means’ in the process of developing understanding.

Complementary to Gadamer’s view, in his linguistic focus Habermas also does not conceptualise language as a “syntactic and semantic system” (Gorner, 2000, p. 181).

Instead he attends to its role in social functions. For him, language is a kind of ‘metainstitution’ upon which all social institutions are dependent. His focus is on “language in use, language as *speech*” with its basic unit being the sentence-as-uttered – that is the ‘speech act’ (and not the sentence) (Gorner, 2000, p. 181). Therefore, in this view, every speech act performed during the course of any communication is aimed at reaching

understanding or consensus⁸⁸. Linguistic ‘utterances’ in a speech act come with different validity claims and are measured against criteria of “truth, rightness and sincerity” (Habermas, 1984, p. 100; see also Eriksen, & Weigard). As actors communicatively engage with one another, they judge various utterances on grounds such as, “what we say makes sense and is true”, “we have the right to say it”, and “we are sincere in saying it” (Outhwaite, 1998, p. 210; Habermas, 1979).

And depending upon how the speech acts are interpreted and evaluated against the three criteria, consensus is sought on those claims (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003). For example, if the receiver of the speech act accepts the claims of the sender, then they may come to an inter-subjective agreement, resulting in the possibility of generating an action guided by that common understanding of the issue. If the receiver does not accept the claim, then it may be rejected or criticised, and the sender of the speech act will have to use more convincing reasons to support his/her contentions in order to develop mutual understanding (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003). And, during an utterance, one claim may be more or less dominant than others. Moreover, consensus will not take place if the hearer accepts one of the validity claims, for example the ‘truth’ of an utterance, but is doubtful of the other claims, like the sincerity of the speaker or the normative rightness of that utterance (Habermas, 1987).

Such measurements form the “rational infrastructure of action oriented to reaching understanding” (Habermas, 1984, p. 106). Thus, speech acts help in generating understanding and action. They serve to establish and renew interpersonal relationships, or represent oneself, and existing states of affairs and events in the world (Habermas, 1984).

⁸⁸ This view sounds idealised – that is, as if it does not take into account conflict or argument. However, the act of arguing, for example, can still be said to be aimed at trying to reach understanding and consensus by convincing the other person to one’s point of view.

Through the above discussion, I have highlighted how language and speech acts are involved in, and contribute to the process of developing understanding among dialogical subjects. Next, I discuss the historicity of human existence and understanding.

6.2.2 Historicity and prejudices in understanding

It is important to recognise that humans are 'historical' beings and that any process of understanding is historically situated as well (Gadamer, 1989). According to Gadamer (1989, p. 177), our being is "a happening in and of history"; it is "governed by the dynamics of historicity". Further, "it is a language event" (p. 177). Our world "is not the world of a first day but one that is always already handed down to us" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 181). It is "communicatively experienced and constantly given over to us as an infinitely open task" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 181). Thus, our being, language and history are interrelated and interfused.

The historicity of understanding lies in its intrinsic temporality – that is, the world should be seen as operating simultaneously within the three temporal modes of past, present and future. The past, however, is not a pile of objective facts that one can stand outside of, and look upon objectively in order to develop consciousness around it. It should not be conceived of as something fixed and frozen that can be separated from the present and the future (Gadamer, 1985). Instead, the past is something in which we exist, move about and participate within, during every act of understanding. It influences our intentions, perceptions and preconceptions, and hence our present and future understanding (Gadamer, 1989; Palmer, 1969). A productive tension always exists between the past, present and the future, and this tension is a critical feature of the hermeneutic experience.

Historicity is one of the points of departure and fundamental differences between Habermas and Gadamer. Habermas does not recognise historicity. Instead he stresses the

importance of rationality. In his “three-worlds theory”, which I discuss in the next subsection, Habermas recognises that interpretations of meanings and realities are based on subjects’ rationality that spans across their three worlds – objective, social and subjective. Gadamer, in contrast, recognises the boundaries of human rationality, and considers that historicity and ‘tradition’ are more important than rationality⁸⁹. He introduces the concept of ‘finitude of human knowledge’, which I discuss next.

Finitude is an indication of that human limitation which prevents an inquirer from having complete autonomy and rational freedom to develop ‘full’ understanding and know everything. According to Gadamer, human understanding is ‘finite’. We cannot have complete access to any knowledge and know everything. We cannot exercise full control over our own cognitive abilities, and develop full understanding of all the conditions that influence any knowledge. Understanding is thus dependent upon certain conditions of knowledge that cannot be fully known to predict how those conditions would work in a particular situation (Wachterhauser, 2002). So, while as inquirers we do enjoy some autonomy and rational freedom, finitude introduces some degree of “ineluctable inarticulacy and inescapable opacity in all our knowing” (Wachterhauser, 2002, p. 58).

In connection with historicity, Gadamer recognises the role of ‘prejudices’ or prejudgements. Prejudices are ‘judgements’ with a positive or negative value, which play an influential role in understanding and interpretation. They are essential “conditions of human understanding” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 277) and should be recognised as a historical reality of one’s being. As we make attempts to come to any understanding, prejudices create a productive tension between one’s present and past, and thus impact the future course of any understanding (Gadamer, 1989; Palmer, 1969).

⁸⁹ Gadamer’s position on tradition, however, should not be viewed as an antithesis to reason, but as something that helps to understand one’s conceptions and perceptions (Palmer, 1969).

Moreover, Gadamer points out that human understanding does not remain the same over time. As time passes, humans get more or less engrossed in the subject matter and our understanding also evolves accordingly (Grondin, 2002). 'Experience' also plays an important role in evolving understanding. Experience is something wherein one's old notion of reality is loosened, contested and reconstituted (Taylor, 2002). It can lead us to become open to newer experiences, newer understandings, and tolerance to "plurality of possible interpretations, because no single one can really be exhaustive" (Grondin, 2002, p. 44). The basic hermeneutic experience is therefore one in which "our anticipations of understanding have been shattered" (Grondin, 2002, p. 44).

Gadamer (1989) also underscores that during the process of understanding others we should also identify and challenge our assumptions. By challenging and questioning ourselves as to what is different in our and other's lives, we will be able to see "our peculiarity for the first time, as a formulated fact about us, and not simply a taken-for-granted feature of the human condition as such" (Taylor, 2002, p. 132). We will also be able to observe the corresponding feature of others' lives in a similar light, and therefore probably in a less distorted form. And during this process of understanding others, and identifying, acknowledging and undoing various aspects of our own level and nature of understanding, we should not or can not totally give up our prejudices and accept others' realities, as they are (Gadamer, 1989). However, subjecting our prejudices to scrutiny will help to achieve a better understanding of other's claims to truth (Taylor, 2002), which will further improve our understanding of others, and contribution to evolution of the self. The enhanced level of understanding achieved during the course will still not be perfect. But, it will be a step closer to achieving a 'true' understanding.

I conclude the above discussion by underscoring that history is an essential element of our being. Historicity, including prejudices and experiences, influence the process of

developing understanding and relationships with others. Through Habermas's and Gadamer's 'applicative' model of understanding (Grondin, 2002), I have given some practical insights into how understanding occurs, and evolves through language and dialogue. In the next sub-section, I discuss Habermas's theory of communicative action.

6.2.3 Communicative action and communicative rationality

Habermas was concerned that our society's popular, technocratic culture of objectivism based on instrumental rationality, has increasingly contributed towards a one-sided appreciation of social realities (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003; Harrington, 2001). As a part of this culture, human beings have increasingly considered themselves as active, cognitive and 'monologic subjects' who can exercise their rationality and make others objects of use, control and manipulation. Relationships that might have been based on personal commitment and understanding are instead being increasingly prioritised using 'means to end' criteria, and developed on calculative grounds of maximising efficiency and profits, and succeeding in other material goals. With such an instrumental approach, Habermas believed that people in society have become socially alienated. Society is now characterised by the decline of legitimacy, degradation of social responsibilities and social disintegration. Such a culture is also mostly responsible for the grievous environmental and social destructions inflicted on the Earth over the last century.

Through his 'three-worlds theory' Habermas recognised that society is made up of: (a) an 'objective world', which he recognises "as the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible"; (b) a 'social world' recognised "as the totality of all legitimately regulated interpersonal relations"; and (c) a 'subjective world' "as the totality of the experiences of the speaker to which he has privileged access" (Habermas, 1984, p. 100).

Three different types of sociological actions – teleological, normatively-regulated, and

dramaturgical action - are respectively associated with those worlds. But he was dissatisfied that these three concepts of action were confined to only one or two of the three worlds.⁹⁰

Inspired by the belief that social sciences should be based on a comprehensive theory that incorporates all the three worlds, Habermas developed a new critical theory of society known as the Theory of Communicative Action. Through this theory he proposed a fourth kind of action known as 'communicative action' - an action that is not restricted to the objective, or subjective, or social world, but integrates all the three worlds together. Such actions are oriented towards reaching 'understanding', which further helps one to develop a more comprehensive appreciation of realities, and accordingly generate more meaningful actions⁹¹ (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003; Habermas, 1984). Communicative action provides "an alternative to money and power as a basis for societal integration" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 31). It is not only a "process of reaching understanding; in coming to an understanding about something in the world, actors are at the same time taking part in interactions through which they develop, confirm, and renew their memberships in social groups and their own identities" (Habermas, 1987, p. 139). Oriented by, and towards mutual agreement, in communicative action the pursuit of personal goals and attempts to achieve instrumental success becomes secondary as compared to higher goals of achieving inter-subjective understanding. Habermas (1984, p.14) states that "only those persons count as responsible [towards communicative action] who, as members of a communication community, can orient their actions to intersubjectively recognised validity claims".

⁹⁰ 'Teleological action', also known as purposive – rational action, refers to those calculative actions that yield end results of success, or offer maximum utilities. Teleological action belongs only to an objective world and is noted as a 'one-world concept' (Habermas, 1984, p. 88). 'Normatively regulated action' refers to those actions that are guided by the norms accepted by a social group. Actors engaged in normatively regulated action relate to both the objective and social worlds. 'Dramaturgical action' refers to action as a public encounter, wherein as social actors perform those actions, they express their subjectivity in ways that are viewed by the public. This action is thus not confined to just one actor, or to members of a particular social group, but becomes a public action. It is connected to the 'inner' subjective world of the actor, and the 'outer' world which has subjective and objective connections.

⁹¹ Habermas considers that teleological, normatively regulated and dramaturgical actions are "parasitic upon communicative action," and highlights that communicative action encompasses and goes much beyond each of those actions (Outhwaite, 1998, p. 210).

Communicative action also “always require[s] an interpretation that is rational in approach” (Habermas, 1984, p. 106). His critical theory of society is a defence of reason. For Habermas social relationships and actions are influenced by different kinds and levels of rationalities (Habermas, 1984). He recognises that reason is “intrinsically practical” (Gorner, 2000, p. 166) and underscores that purposive or instrumental rationality is not fully helpful in developing a comprehensive understanding of social complexities. Thus, he expanded the scope of human rationality by introducing a multidimensional communicative concept of rationality known as ‘communicative reason’ or ‘communicative rationality’. His theory assumes that reason is not a thing that lies outside ourselves to which we have to conform to; instead “we become rational by conforming to the true nature of *language*. The objectivity of reason is restored in the forms of *communicative* reason” (Gorner, 2000, p. 163). Simultaneously engulfing one’s objective, social and subjective worlds, communicative rationality is a critical component of communicative understanding and action, which together constitute various relationships in society.

In the next sub-section, drawing on Habermas’s philosophy, I explain how I broadly conceptualise ‘society’ and its various building blocks.

6.2.4 Lifeworld and systems world

Recognising the complexities of social realities and relationships, Habermas stressed the need to generate a more comprehensive understanding of society. In his Theory of Communicative Action, he introduced a “two-tiered concept of society as lifeworld and as system” (Habermas, 1992, p. 444) and “conceive[d] of society simultaneously as a system and a lifeworld” (Habermas, 1987, pp. 119-120). Lifeworld is a world of meanings, and rationalisation of society in this world is based on communicative reasoning. It is a communication arena where two or more actors, based on their language and culture, engage with one another to attain mutual understanding and develop relationships that

involve all the three worlds (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003). In contrast, the systems world is comprised of economic and state subsystems that are rationalised on the basis of instrumental rationality. While the systems perspective helps in understanding ‘material reproduction’ of today’s society, the communicatively integrated lifeworld thesis helps in understanding the ‘symbolic reproduction’ and the symbolic foundations on which social systems are built⁹² (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003). The lifeworld and systems world should, however, not be considered as exclusive concepts, but as ones that are intricately connected (Gorner, 2000). In order to understand the lifeworld, one also needs to recognise the influence of systems world on it. And in order to understand the systems world, one needs to understand the actions of individuals that create those systems.

Moreover, the lifeworld, with the relationships and meanings that constitute it, are continually subjected to critical examination and re-evaluation, and hence gradually change. This process is generally one of evolution, and not a sudden transformation where everything is changed at once. Moreover, the systems world, through the monetary and bureaucratic means belonging to the economic and the state sub-systems, may interfere with the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld and thus overpower it. Habermas (1987, p. 356) calls this conquest as the “colonization of the lifeworld”. Such a colonisation happens when the attitude motivated by purposive/instrumental rationality enters into the lifeworld and attempts to dominate relations within it (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003). Under such a colonisation, language becomes ideological, and the non-linguistic factors that serve domination and legitimise social inequalities and power relations influence the process (Gorner, 2000; Scheibler, 2000). As a result, communication no longer remains a value neutral process. It becomes deeply embedded in, and breeds political interests that may

⁹² ‘Cultural reproduction’, ‘social integration’, and ‘socialisation’ are the three linguistic processes that take place during communicative interactions and help to connect new situations of lifeworld with its existing conditions. These processes respectively correspond to, and predominantly reproduce the three structural components of lifeworld - culture, society, and person (Habermas, 1987). The success of the three processes is respectively dependent upon the rationality of the transmitted knowledge, strength of members’ solidarity, and responsibility level of the personalities involved. Habermas notes that any disturbance in culture, society, and personality may lead to failures in the respective reproduction processes.

facilitate or inhibit certain agendas and relationships. Communicative interactions, as Habermas notes, as a result are characterised by insincerity, deception and manipulation, and may result in ‘distorted’ understanding, and manipulated and imperfect relationships.

And even though Habermas recognises that one cannot expect pure dialogue to take place among individuals, he idealises a properly ordered society - an ‘ideal speech situation’⁹³ - as one which would be free from social constraints and distortions, which would have institutions in place that promote perfect communication, and offer the greatest scope for communicative reasoning (Gorner, 2000); a situation where all dialogue participants would get fair and equal opportunities to articulate their opinions and positions, and express their desires, feelings and wishes (Benhabib, 1992). Such a conceptualisation of an ideal speech situation serves as a good counterfactual reference framework that can help understand speech acts, and systematic distortions in practical settings. Habermas maintains that “the standard by which the communication of a group is to be judged to be distorted is not that of another ‘actual’ group but that of a counterfactual community in which communication is unlimited and free of force” (Harrington, 2001, p. 177)⁹⁴.

6.2.5 Summary

In this dissertation I recognise that societies, including ones that are avowedly seeking sustainability, are comprised of systems worlds and lifeworlds. These two worlds are integrated and not exclusive units. The government and business organisations, and citizen

⁹³ In an ideal speech situation, validity claims raised, if disputed, would be settled using ways that would give participants the right to put forth their arguments for and against those claims. A consensus would therefore be arrived at not on the basis of force and domination, but solely on the basis of strength of a better argument. Habermas’s ideal speech situation therefore serves as a very useful “regulative idea” for theorists (Harrington, 2001, p. 21).

⁹⁴ My discussion on the ideals of dialogue and collaboration in the previous chapter are reflective of such an ideal speech situation. In Chapters 10 and 11, drawing on my theoretical conceptualisations and empirical analyses, I compare and contrast the practicalities of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability against their theoretical ideals. In doing so, I portray various distortions in communicative relationships that make dialogic collaborations as not unproblematic solutions for sustainability.

groups and individuals living in these two worlds together build the socio-economic structures and relationships in the society. Moreover, any social interaction taking place, including collaboration for sustainability, is a communicative interaction. It involves at least two speaking and acting individuals who use a common language to communicate among themselves on an issue. People's rationality is communicative and engulfs their social, subjective and objective worlds. Based on their communicative rationality, they interpret meanings and try to understand each other and take actions driven by certain goals. Understanding and action are thus mutually dependent. Moreover, a person who acquires any understanding is not someone who possesses some specific knowledge, but is the one who possesses 'skills' to put that knowledge into practical application and generate action.

Communicative action not only leads one towards achieving success in instrumental goals, it also helps to develop and enhance mutual understanding, which would further lead to new actions. Communicative understanding and action in practical life are, however, not perfect. Social inequalities, power differentials, manipulations, and domination often characterise human interactions, and result in distorted communication and imperfect relationships in society. And during this process of developing understanding and action in the present or for the future, one's past and prejudices also play a key role. Understanding is also never finite. It continually evolves as people create new actions and gain experiences from those, and their other social interactions.

Recognising the mutual dependence of understanding and action, and their implications on human relationships, I have adopted communicatively generated human 'understanding' and 'action' as two focal points based on which I build a theory on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. In doing so, I have incorporated the communicative distortions analysed during the process of relationship building in the three collaborations

investigated in this research. In the next section I discuss some practical issues and challenges that stakeholders may encounter in collaborations for sustainability.

6.3 Practising collaborations for sustainability

In Chapter 5, I highlighted the ‘theoretical ideals’ of dialogue and collaboration. I referred to those ideals to underscore the enormous potential of such processes which can be utilised in practical attempts to achieve sustainability. However, in this section, I highlight some of the ‘practical’ issues that characterise collaborations and the ensuing challenges that organisations and stakeholders may face as they increasingly rely on collaborative approaches to achieve sustainability. First, I introduce multi-stakeholder collaborations as not unproblematic solutions for sustainability. Second, I briefly discuss the concept of paradox in a broad organisational context. Third, I highlight identity and identification as critical, but inherently problematic, constituents of collaboration. Fourth, I elaborate on how stakeholders’ motivation and commitment as individuals, and differences among them on these grounds may influence collaboration. Fifth, I highlight some aspects of the role of conveners in managing collaborations.

6.3.1 Collaborations as not unproblematic solutions for sustainability

While cross-sectoral dialogue and collaborations are helpful in “advancing shared visions” and “resolving conflicts” (Gray, 1989, p. 7) and are recognised as potent institutional mechanisms to achieve sustainability, such processes are not unproblematic solutions (Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002; Pillay, Rosswall, & Glaser, 2002). They are often imbued with several kinds and levels of impasses that may be technical, economic, conceptual, organisational or relational in nature. Collaborations, especially those based on dialogic designs, are often unpredictable and emerge as messy encounters in practical life (Gray, 1989).

Moreover, sustainable development is challenging. It is important that organisations and stakeholders look beyond the “need for consensus on the normative meaning of sustainable development” (Meppem, & Gill, 1998, p.124), and implement actions that operationalise it. Thus an ‘operational’ focus that translates key conceptual ideas of sustainable development to “organisational principles and processes” (Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004, p. 144) is highly needed. Social systems and relationships need to be continuously evaluated and improved upon in ways that lead to sustainability (Berke, & Conroy, 2000). And while on the one hand, societies and stakeholders are being urged to collaborate for sustainability (UNCED, 1992), on the other hand, what makes matters worse in the case of collaborations for sustainability is that, ironically and paradoxically, there is no definition of, and agreement on what a sustainable future would look like, and it is unlikely that we may have this knowledge in future (Connor, & Dovers, 2004). The critical concern in operationalising sustainable development is therefore “how we cooperate”, and “not if!” (Presas, 2001, p. 205).

Thus, instead of considering collaborations as “idealistic panacea” (Gray, 1989, p. 24), these processes should be seen more practically and holistically. Their potential in general, and including those for sustainability, should be recognised as “both promising and sobering” (Gray, 1989, p. 54). Scholars are being encouraged to investigate and generate understanding on what are the fundamental assumptions that underlie collaborations for sustainability; how do different people identify with the concept of sustainable development; and what relevance it has to their lived experience (Macnaghten, & Jacobs, 1997). They are advised to capture and reveal the practical ‘dynamics’ of social interactions as the collaborations unfold and evolve (Gray, 1989). Investigating processes like dialogue that facilitate “reflective insight and genuine sharing of ideas,” (Meppem, & Gill, 1998, p. 134) will help to generate understanding on important questions like these, and thus

advance knowledge on how to operationalise sustainable development (Berke, & Conroy, 2000; Hediger, 1999).

Inspired by the above calls for research, I have taken a relational approach to explain stakeholder engagement for sustainability. I contend that dialogic collaborations are ideal sites to carry out investigations on organising for sustainability. I recognise that such processes, because of their reflexive, exploratory and transformative power, are valuable for sustainability. But I also recognise that multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability are embedded with several practical challenges, including paradoxes that may emerge during their organising. In the next sub-section I therefore briefly discuss the concept of paradox in a broad organisational context.

6.3.2 Paradoxes

A paradox is a condition which is characterised by seemingly impossible but co-existence of two contradictory and inconsistent states at the same point in time, and which, as a result, generates tension and chaos in organisations (Clegg, 2002), and “trigger[s] a vicious (or sometimes, virtuous) cycle” (Stohl, & Cheney, 2001, p. 354). Paradoxes are ironical, surprising, unintended and often unsettling (Stohl, & Cheney, 2001). For example, a situation may be considered paradoxical when one while driven by certain objectives, does actions that are antithetical to those desired objectives. Ellinor, and Gerard (1998, p. 257) note that “To hold paradox requires a shift of mind from either/or to both/and thinking”.

Paradoxes are inherent aspects of any human engagement. It has been highlighted that paradoxes around individual/collective priorities and interests, and short-term/long-term effects often characterise participatory forms of organisations aiming to achieve ideals of democracy and solve complex social problems (Aram, 1989; Cunha, Clegg, & Cunha, 2002; Murphy, & Coleman, 2000; Turcotte, & Pasquero, 2001; Stohl, & Cheney, 2001). They

characterise and influence dialogue as well. According to Ellinor, and Gerard (1998, p. 258), dialogue is a “practice field that encourages” paradox. One therefore cannot ignore or undermine the emergence and influence of ‘paradoxes of interdependent relationships’ in collaborative practical settings (see also Aram, 1989). While on the one hand, a paradox can potentially distort understanding and disturb relationships; on the other hand, it also “becomes an opportunity for movement towards new alternatives rather than dilemma that immobilizes and separates us” (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998).

Uncovering paradoxes and explaining how they are produced, reproduced and managed, as the two contradictory states within each paradox interact, has been recommended for research. Such an approach helps to understand the complex and multifaceted realities of organising, and how paradoxes influence and transform organisational life in unique and complex ways (Couchman, & Fulop, 2002; Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Stohl, & Cheney, 2001). With deeper insights into paradoxes of interdependent relationships, one can also generate new and richer understanding on how to create and sustain collaborative partnerships (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; see also Aram, 1989), including those for sustainability (see Calton, & Payne, 2003). Thus, in this research, I have highlighted several paradoxes that underlie dialogic collaborations for sustainability.

Next, I discuss some issues around ‘identity’ and ‘identification’ that may emerge during collaborations for sustainability and prove inherently problematic.

6.3.3 Identification and identity of stakeholders, issues, and resources

I contend that issues around identity and identification have special relevance to multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. Stakeholders participating in collaborations in general, especially those at inter-organisational levels, are members not only of collaborative efforts. They also represent their respective organisations and professions to which they are

potentially more accountable (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005). They are subject to different social contexts and practices (that could be of economic, familial, religious, or technological nature) and multiple role expectations that come with those. They also have different kinds and levels of power, which further depends on their knowledge, skills, expertise, access to valuable resources, or connection with influential personalities and authorities in their organisation or community. They often go through various processes of categorising themselves as similar to or different from others, and feeling connected or disconnected to certain issues. Accordingly, different stakeholders have different world views and have different identities.

Identity is that ‘socially constructed’ frame of reference which helps us understand who we are, who others are, and whom or what do we identify ourselves, or others with (Bouchikhi, Fiol, Gioia, et al., 1998; Pratt, 2001). It is “what makes a person a person” and constitutes the “core” of our being (Gioia, 1998, p. 19). Identity is not a static object or a property of a social actor, nor is it purely a psychological mechanism. Instead, della Porta and Diani (1999) recommend that identity should be duly regarded as a social process – one which has powerful personal and political dimensions that enable individuals to recognise themselves and be recognised by others as a part of any social grouping (Brown, & Starkey, 2000; Gioia, 1998; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Scott, & Lane, 2000; Marquez, 2001)⁹⁵. It is dynamic, fluid and multilayered (Albert, 1998). It has been noted that identity can exist only as a problem, which makes any process of identification during organising inherently problematic as well (see Davis, 2000).

⁹⁵ Various organisational and social movement theorists have recognised identity as a powerful organising principle (Cheney, & Christensen, 2001; Diani, 1992; Deetz, 1995; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Guigni, 1999; Melucci, 1996). It is connected with understanding, and I contend that issues around identity are critical and inherently challenging issue for multi-stakeholder collaborations and sustainability. I therefore recognise identity as an important concept that cannot be totally ignored in my study. However, while using identity conceptions, I underscore that my research is not ‘focused’ on identity. Moreover, with the plethora of other important issues that need to be addressed in this dissertation, I suffer from space constraints as well. Because of all these considerations I have not been able to provide discussions on identity in greater depth than what is presented in this sub-section. While I recognise this as a limitation, in the final chapter, I also recommend identity-based research as one of the future directions from my research.

Identification is a ubiquitous and a critical ingredient of any social relationship. As human beings socially engage, they are constantly driven by needs for identifications. They seek self-enhancement and associations with individuals, groups, organisations and issues that give them some basic purpose in life, and connect them with society. Thus, identification is fundamentally a process of 'understanding' which enables individuals and groups to recognise, know, perceive, and judge themselves, others, and various issues based on their values, beliefs and needs (Marquez, 2001; Whetten, & Godfrey, 1998).

One can therefore expect that a multi-stakeholder collaboration will be characterised by different stakeholder identities. Moreover, the fundamental 'open', exploratory, and reflexive characteristics of dialogue in a multi-stakeholder collaboration may facilitate construction and reconstruction of those multiple identities. And during the collaborations as stakeholders' roles, needs and expectations would constantly evolve, so would their identities. Collaborations may therefore involve different kinds of identification processes (Logsdon, 1991), and may be characterised by identity fragmentations at several levels (Crane, & Livesey, 2003). For example, during collaborations identity conflicts may breed either: (a) internally - within stakeholders as they struggle to understand and connect with their own multiple identities connected with the various roles they perform, or are expected to perform; or (b) externally - in relation to others involved in the process. The emerging identity based conflicts may further contribute to inconsistency of belief and action, and various ambiguities during the process (Crane, & Livesey, 2003; Deetz, 1995).

Moreover, with various debates around the definitions and implementation of sustainable development, the philosophy has been recognised with varying degrees and levels of acceptance and expectations (Berke, & Conroy, 2000; Dovers, & Handmer, 1992; Hediger, 1999; Pearce, Markandaya, & Barbier, 1989). I thus recognise that the very identity of

sustainability movement⁹⁶ is questionable itself, and contend that identity related conflicts could well be more prominent in the case of collaborations organised for sustainability⁹⁷.

Identification processes in collaborations may include identification of stakeholders, issues and resources required. 'Stakeholder identification' is connected with 'stakeholder legitimacy.' Legitimate stakeholders are the ones who have the right to participate in, and the ability to contribute to the problem domain addressed by the collaboration (Logsdon, 1991). Stakeholder legitimacy is also dependent upon how legitimate their stakes are (Lawrence, 2002; Rondinelli, & London, 2002; Wood, & Gray, 1991). Legitimacy of stakes could be judged based upon: (a) the level of importance and urgency of attending to various issues in that domain; (b) how those issues can impact the organisation's stability, efficiency, or legitimacy in the society; and/or (c) the nature and extent of stakeholders' power to influence the organisation's processes, outcomes, or behaviours (Gray, 1989; Rahman, Waddock, Andriof, & Husted, 2003). The greater the legitimacy of their stakes, the more salient those stakeholders would be for an organisation.

Stakeholder identification, however, may not be an easy exercise. It may prove challenging because stakeholders are not static groups or individuals, but dynamic ones whose claims

⁹⁶ The collective search for 'identity' is a central aspect of any movement formation, and the collective behaviours that constitute it (Benford, & Snow, 2000; Johnston, Laraña, & Gusfield, 1994). New social movement scholars have connected identity issues to social movements and recognised social movement as a "combination of a principle of identity, a principle of opposition and a principle of totality" (Touraine, as cited in Diani, 1992, p. 6). As actors join a social movement they bring in their individual identities. Social movements enable actors to further develop the individual as well as collective experience of their realities. It also helps them find a connection with a larger social order, towards which they can make specific contributions (della Porta, & Diani, 1999). As social movements have the power to change people's biographies, values and ideals (Earl, 2004), identities of social movement actors may also change during the course of their participation (Johnston, Laraña, & Gusfield, 1994). Changes in identities may further influence the collective organising for the movement.

⁹⁷ 'Collective identity' in a social movement is that agreed sense of 'we' that helps actors develop collective definitions and understanding of issues, opportunities and constraints that confront them as a collective. It helps to define membership, boundaries, and activities for the group and helps to maintain the continuity and permanence of the movement over time (Melucci, 1996). And even though different individuals may participate and identify themselves with a particular social movement, it does not imply that they would have the same vision and share a systematic and coherent understanding of various realities confronting them. Thus, with multiple identities, there may emerge tensions around different individual and collective expectations and motivations around participating in a social movement (della Porta, & Diani, 1999).

on issues, as well as their attributes (like power, legitimacy, or sense of urgency) may evolve over time (Dentchev, & Heene, 2004; Hart, & Sharma, 2004). In some cases, it may also be practically impossible to identify 'a priori' and systematically organise all the stakeholders (Gray, 1989).

Moreover, in the context of sustainable development, stakeholder conceptions cannot be confined to just current generations of human stakeholders - they should also include past and future, human and non-human, including non-living stakeholders in the natural environment (Sama, Welcomer, & Gerde, 2004; Sharma, & Starik, 2004). It may therefore become challenging for an organisation to best predict which stakeholders, and which issues will or should be involved, to what extent, and how those may influence the organisation's response to sustainability pressures (see Hart, & Sharma, 2004). Also, different stakeholders may have different vested interests in, and idiosyncratic perceptions on a particular problem. Not only might they have different stakes attached to the different socio-cultural, economic, and environmental issues, grouped under the broad umbrella of sustainability, the levels of those stakes may also differ from one situation to another.

Further, by stating, "How do and to what extent do or should corporations interact with sustainability stakeholders?" Sharma and Starik (2004, p. 17) uncover additional challenges in stakeholder identification. I thus recognise that organisation-stakeholder relationships are fluid, shifting, ambiguous and unpredictable (Crane, & Livesey, 2003), and contend that developing 'relationships' with stakeholders for sustainability is likely to be challenging.

Issue identification is concerned with identifying issues related to both systems and lifeworld that can help define the problem. The degree of stakeholders' identification of an issue is dependent on the maturity of that issue, for example what stage is it in its life cycle (Gray, 1989). An issue that has matured and reached a state where it is recognised as nationally important, often attracts more public attention, motivates stakeholders and

galvanises collective action⁹⁸. Issue identification can, however, be a challenging phase in itself. As different stakeholders collectively try to understand the problem and find relevant solutions, the differences in their respective knowledge and understanding on the problem, and their skills, capabilities, and expertise to manage those problems may result in disagreements (Dentchev, & Heene, 2004). And as the stakeholders voice their individual or organisational concerns, they may compare their interests with those of others and judge how their interests are being served or opposed during the process (Gray, 1989). This phase can become problematic especially when interests of some parties would be excluded, or if stakeholders find out that their interests are incompatible with the long-term interests and time requirements of the collaboration (Gray, 1989)⁹⁹. And when dissatisfied, tensions and frustrations may emerge and stakeholders may potentially lose their interest in the process (Robbins, 2003).

'Identification of resources' is another important phase in any collaboration (Gray, 1989). Resources (e.g., human, time, money, or technology) need to be well-organised and secured in advance to ensure that stakeholders don't experience any hardship of those resources as they participate in collaboration. Technical complexities, scientific uncertainties, and ineffective and inefficient use of stakeholders' resources can adversely impact multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations (Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002). However, despite various differences and adversities, collaborations may successfully move forward if stakeholders remain motivated and committed to the processes. I discuss these issues in the following sub-section.

⁹⁸ Time plays a crucial role in maturation of an issue and its identification. Time also plays a crucial role in building and maintaining social relationships, including those during collaborations (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Blount, & Janicik, 2001; Bluedorn, 2002).

⁹⁹ In Chapter 9, I present my conceptual understanding of time and temporality in organisations. I also empirically reveal the temporal dynamics of stakeholder interactions as they participated in their respective collaboration on sustainability.

6.3.4 Motivation and commitment to collaborate

Motivation and commitment play a vital role in collaborations (Gray, 1989; Logsdon, 1991).

Different stakeholders may have different kinds of motivation and may accordingly use different judgement criteria to assess the scope and potential of any collaboration.

According to Logsdon (1991), an organisation's motivation to collaborate with its stakeholders, and vice versa, and remain committed to the process depends upon the level of their stakes attached, and the level of interdependence among partners to meet their respective goals. An organisation considering collaboration with others may find itself in one of the four possible situations: (a) Low stake and low interdependence; (b) Low stake and high interdependence; (c) High stake and low interdependence; and (d) High stake and high interdependence.

Collaboration appears as an appealing prospect to an organisation if it addresses a problematic issue in which considerable stakes of the organisation are attached. If people in an organisation perceive that it has low level of interdependence on other organisations or stakeholders, then they may not be motivated to collaborate with them. In a 'high stake and low interdependence' situation, people may believe that even though a particular problem critically influences the organisation's efficiency, stability or legitimacy, it is still well equipped to solve that problem on its own. Such an independent outlook may be because: (a) people in the organisation consider other stakeholders as ill-equipped or unprepared to address that issue, and therefore need not be relied upon; or (b) they do not want to share organisational power or resources with other parties, as often expected in collaborations¹⁰⁰; or (c) they do not trust the other parties. In a 'high stake and high interdependence' scenario, people in an organisation will be motivated to collaborate not only because the

¹⁰⁰ As discussed earlier, collaboration is also about power sharing - power to define a problem and power to propose solutions to solve that problem (Gray, 1989).

problem critically affects the organisation, but also because it cannot be unilaterally solved (Logsdon, 1991).

Moreover, differences in identification with the goals of the collaboration result in different levels of stakeholder commitment towards the collaboration. Commitment reflects a member's extent of instrumental, moral, and affective attachments towards the goals of the collaboration, and the extent to which one may decide to remain associated, or get further involved, or withdraw from the process (Hunt, & Benford, 2004). It is a relative and variable feature of any collaboration and is dependent upon: (a) level of stakeholder dissatisfaction with current status quo related to particular problem-solving, and the level of promise of getting positive outcomes from the collaboration; (b) perception on fairness of dealings and chances of coming to fair agreements during collaboration; (c) level of parity among stakeholders where they recognise themselves, or are recognised by others as equal players in the collaboration; (d) extent of other stakeholders' involvement in the collaboration; and/or (e) the promise of stakeholder empowerment¹⁰¹ (Gray, 1989; see also Lawrence, 2002).

Trust - a building block of any relationship - is a critical component of collaborations as well (Lawrence, 2002; Rondinelli, & London, 2002; Wood, & Gray, 1991). "Mistrust, fear of loss of control, and misunderstandings of the motivations and intent of each of the partners," have been recognised as three important psychological barriers to collaborations (Rondinelli, & London, 2002, p. 202). Building trust is not easy; it is time-consuming (Lawrence, 2002) and requires partners to be transparent and honest in their mutual dealings (Rondinelli, & London, 2002). It is also influenced by prejudices (see Gadamer, 1989). If stakeholders carry negative prejudices based on history of failed or unprecedented

¹⁰¹ For example, financial or technical assistance offered to stakeholders during the collaboration can help develop a stronger sense of parity, and draw greater commitment from stakeholders.

collaborations, then it may be more difficult for them to trust others, and commit themselves to the process (Gray, 1989).

I thus underscore that a multi-stakeholder collaboration may be characterised by multiple identities and identification processes, and different levels of stakeholder motivation and commitment to the process. Variance may result in discontent and potentially generate conflicts among stakeholders. While some views may be accepted, others will have to be suppressed or rejected (Cheney, 1991). In the following sub-section, I discuss issues related to managing collaborations and emerging conflicts during such processes.

6.3.5 Managing collaborations

Conflict and adversarial relationships are inescapable features of any democratic organising process (Harrison, 1994), including ones involving different stakeholders in collaborations for sustainability. As discussed earlier, stakeholders participating in collaborations have different identities. The level of their participation may differ depending upon their different motivation and commitment levels. The collaborations may also involve different processes of identification connected with stakeholders, resources and issues. Thus, such processes are often characterised by diversity. As different options and solutions will be explored, it is highly likely that disagreements would emerge during the process. I expect conflicts to be more frequent and prominent in multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability, especially because of the inherent ambiguous, ideological and conflict provoking elements within the sustainable development philosophy (Dovers, & Handmer, 1992; Dresner, 2002; Hediger, 1997, 1999; Milne, 1996). The differences, however, have to be collectively negotiated, and the emergent conflicts and relationships need to be 'managed' to move the collaboration forward (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005). If not effectively managed, collaborations could turn into messy and problematic encounters.

A convener (or convening organisation) plays a crucial role in managing the collaboration and the various challenges that come with it (Gray, 1989). The success of any collaboration depends a lot on the legitimacy, power, skills and forbearance of the person or organisation performing this role. A convener not only spreads the seeds of collaboration by often proposing the idea, and communicating the vision, but also leads stakeholders constructively through the process. The person's role in identifying and inviting legitimate stakeholders to the collaboration is also very critical.

However, the legitimacy of the convener is required to convince stakeholders to participate in the collaboration. A convener may be able to establish his/her legitimacy before stakeholders if she/he has the mandate to address the problem domain, or has certain powers. The convener's power could depend upon: (a) formal position and expertise; (b) access to formal authorities; (c) access to, and control over resources required to address the problem; (d) unbiased understanding on that issue; and/or (e) convener's image as a trustworthy or reputable figure. If a convener appears trustworthy then stakeholders may feel more confident about the collaboration. With such a person's involvement, they may feel more assured that the collaboration has been founded on fair and equitable grounds, and that fairness would be maintained during the entire process (Gray, 1989).

Moreover, during the collaboration, a convener should make stakeholders aware and convince them that they may not get everything they individually expected from the collaboration; success may be partial and the progress "incremental" as collective efforts are made to meet the desired and complete set of goals (Lawrence, 2002, p. 195). Some trade offs could be made – for example, only one or few solutions that widely and most optimally address the problem could be selected from the multiple options available (Gray, 1989). Stakeholders may demand greater transparency and accountability, and clarifications on the rationale behind the trade-offs. Once convinced about the fairness of the process,

they may extend their support to those decisions (Gray, 1989). However, during this course the process may become charged with different kinds of emotions¹⁰² which may further delay the decision-making (Dentchev, & Heene, 2004). A convener may also be required to exercise coercive influence over stakeholders to ensure that they continue their participation in, and maintain normal relationships within the process (Wood, & Gray, 1991). But if the convener is suspected of bias then stakeholders may refuse to collaborate, or may even destabilise the entire process (Gray, 1989; Wood, & Gray, 1991).

I thus recognise that multi-stakeholder collaborations are not unproblematic solutions for sustainability. In this research in order to gain deeper insights into the distortions and conflicts within such processes I have focused on the ‘dynamics’ of stakeholder interactions, for example: (a) who has access to information and opportunities and who has the willingness to act upon those and share it with others; (b) who initiates, ends and sets agenda for what is being collectively addressed; and (c) how divergent interests and perspectives of different stakeholders are considered and ultimately incorporated during different phases of the collaboration, (Eisenberg, & Witten, 1987; Payne, & Calton, 2002). And to investigate the dynamics of stakeholder engagement in such micro collaborations for sustainability, I have used institutional theory¹⁰³. In the following section, I discuss the relevance and application of an institutional theory lens in studying collaborations.

¹⁰² In Chapter 8, I explain my conceptualisation of emotions and emotionality of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. I also present my empirical analysis to expose how various kinds of emotions influenced the three processes investigated in this research.

¹⁰³ Thus, I use institutional theory in this dissertation not only to study the macro context of sustainable development, I also use it to investigate the dynamics of stakeholder engagement during the three micro processes of collaborations organised to achieve sustainability.

6.4 Institutional theory perspective on collaboration

In this section, I first highlight the relevance of institutional theory in studying collaborations. I then explain the concept of ‘organisational field’, and how I use it in my research. Second, I expose some gaps in the institutional literature and position my research with respect to institutional theory.

6.4.1 Institutional approach on collaborations

Stakeholders’ participation in collaborations is dependent on the institutionalised arenas in which they are set up and the power of various existing institutions like regulations, structures, norms, beliefs, and values (Gray, 1989; Wood, & Gray, 1991). In the following paragraph, I underscore the relevance of institutional theory in research on collaborations.

Institutional theory is founded on the open systems perspective (Powell, & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2003). It recognises that organisations and the environment are “highly interpenetrated” (Jepperson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 205). It helps in understanding “how [any] organization’s social choices towards environment are shaped, mediated, and channeled” and illustrating the complex channels through which such a change may take place (Hoffman, 2001, p. 31; see also DiMaggio, & Powell, 1991). Institutional theory also considers that organisations, subject to various environmental forces, not only seek objective goals of profit maximisation and efficiency, but also pursue subjective goals of survival, legitimacy and accountability in that environment (Lounsbury, 2003; McAdam, & Scott, 2005; Orrù, Biggart, & Scott, 2003). Moreover, being a ‘process oriented’ theory, it recognises that interactions among actors, including those in inter-organisational collaborations, are inter-subjective, dynamic and non-linear (Jennings, & Greenwood, 2003; Gray, & Wood, 1991; Lounsbury, 2003). It is a very useful starting point to understand any

organisational process that contributes to social change and ‘long-term’ evolution of social structures and networks.

Institutional theory also recognises an ‘organisational field’ as a realm of relational linkages - vertical and horizontal, local and distant, direct and indirect, competitive and collaborative, formal and personal – involving similar and dissimilar organisations that are interdependent and which co-evolve (DiMaggio, 1991; Fligstein, 1991; Scott, 2003) ¹⁰⁴. Actors in a field may include key suppliers, consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organisations producing similar goods and services. Together, as an aggregate, they create the field as a “recognised area of institutional life” where various relationships exist and multiple processes operate (DiMaggio, & Powell, 1991a, pp. 64-65; Scott, & Meyer, 1991).

A field conception has special relevance to organisational research. An organisational field serves as an “important intermediate unit connecting the study of individual organizational structure and performance with broader social structures and processes” (Scott, 2003, p. 132). Researchers employ this conception to focus on broader social context that influences actions of organisations situated similarly in a field (Lounsbury, 2003). It also helps them to explain differences in organisational behaviours as different organisations respond to their institutional environment (Bansal, & Penner, 2002). According to DiMaggio (1991, p. 267),

Field boundaries, as they are perceived by participants, affect how organizations select models for emulation, where they focus information-gathering energy, which organizations they compare themselves with, and where they recruit personnel.

104 I recognise that a field level conception may also prove empirically problematic and challenging. Even though one may be able to theoretically specify which organisations may exist in a given field at a given point of time, but at an empirical level such a specification may not be complete because organisational fields are not static entities - they constantly undergo change resulting in complex patterns of influence (Fligstein, 1991). Moreover, a firm’s institutional environment is not ‘monolithic’ – organisations exist within multiple fields, which may or may not be aligned to one another, and may be subjected to different institutional pressures. Thus, organisations need to respond to different fields using different strategies and functions (Hoffman, 2001; Levy, & Rothenberg, 2002).

I therefore consider institutional theory is very useful for my research. I employ it to examine the various institutional realities and relationships of stakeholders, and how those may influence their interdependence on others during collaboration (see Gray, 1989; Russo, & Schultz, 2003; Sharfman, Gray, & Yan, 1991; Westwood, & Clegg, 2003), including ones organised for sustainability at the field level. I have acknowledged the three collaborations investigated in this research as ‘field-level’ processes organised in the institutional context of sustainable development. Moreover, I have used the associated concept of ‘institutional logic’ in my research especially while referring to institutional logics behind organising, and participating in multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability.

Institutional logic is that central logic on which the institutional order of an organisation, organisational field, or society is dependent upon (Brint, & Karabel, 1991; McAdam, & Scott, 2005). It implies “a set of material practices and symbolic constructions-which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate” upon (Friedland, & Alford, 1991, p. 248). Institutional logics are, however, not static or unified entities. They may be multiple, competing or conflicting within a field and may contribute towards contention within a field (Lounsbury, 2005). Depending upon the institutional logics, distinctive interests and agendas may be pursued in organisations, organisational fields, or society.

In the next sub-section, I highlight some gaps in institutional literature and criticisms of institutional theory, and position my research with respect to those gaps.

6.4.2 Gaps in institutionalism

Institutional theory has been criticised for being “oversocialized” (Troast, et. al, 2002, p. 240). This oversocialisation is mostly because a majority of institutional scholars have primarily focused on the ‘macro’ dimensions of institutionalisation and not given due

attention to the ‘micro’ foundations of institutionalism. Studies have mostly been conducted at organisational and field levels, rather than at the levels of individuals (Bansal, & Penner, 2002). Research considering organisational fields have mostly focused on the role of norms that constitute the fields. The power and contributions of individual actors in constructing the field has been largely undermined (Fligstein, 1991). There has been a call for research to explore dependency of actors at field levels, and “establish to what degree reciprocal relations exist in organizational fields and how that affects actors’ abilities to frame and direct action” (Fligstein, 1991, p. 335).

It has also been stressed that individuals’ roles in any institutionalisation process should be duly investigated. Focus on individuals is especially important because institutions “provide individuals with vocabularies of motives and with a sense of self” (Friedland, & Alford, 1991, p. 250). Individuals’ interpretations on institutions influence their actions, which in turn influences organisation’s responses to broader and macro institutional contexts (Bansal, & Penner, 2002). It has therefore been recommended that institutional theorists should also focus on individual–level analysis and investigate “micro-order made up of preferences, capacities and expectations of individuals” (Galaskiewicz, 1991, p. 294). Such an approach will help to explain the “macrolevel outcomes by understanding microlevel processes” (Bansal, & Penner, 2002, p. 312), and expand the application of institutional theory.

Institutional theory has also been popularly used in undertaking longitudinal studies involving large populations of mostly ‘for-profit’ organisations within a particular industry to explain an institutional change phenomenon (see DiMaggio, 1991; Fligstein, 1991; Hoffman, 2001). Institutional scholars have, however, started recognising the importance of studying institutionalisation processes within shorter time frames and involving one or

few organisations (see Bansal, & Penner, 2002) for gaining deeper understanding of the processes of institutionalisation (Phillips, 2003).

Thus, recognising the potential of institutional theory and some of the gaps in the institutional theory literature, I have employed an institutional theoretical framework in my investigation of the three multi-stakeholder processes. Using this framework, I have been able to: (1) recognise the three collaborations as field level processes, and explain the behaviour of various stakeholders in their respective fields; (2) adopt a ‘process’ focus while studying collaborations and stakeholder engagement, and attend to ‘dynamics’ of those micro processes; and (3) focus on the macro institutional context of sustainable development, and the institutional change inspired by, and contributing towards the sustainability movement. Institutional theory thus helps me understand and explain the dynamics of human engagement in such micro collaborations that are often employed as institutional mechanisms to achieve sustainability at macro levels.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I highlighted my ontological understanding of social realities and relationships, as inspired by the philosophies of Gadamer and Habermas. Through Habermas’s and Gadamer’s ‘applicative’ model of understanding (Grondin, 2002) I have given some practical insights into how understanding occurs, and evolves through language and dialogue. I reviewed the literature to expose various practical challenges which dialogic collaborations in general, and those organised for sustainability in particular, may encounter. I also explained the relevance and application of institutional theory in my research.

Dialogue, collaboration, and sustainable development do offer hope and appear to be ideal processes. The three processes I investigated were based on idealistic concepts. However, the fundamental ideals of dialogue, collaboration and sustainable development when brought together on practical grounds of communicatively governed human interactions may dynamically interact and produce expected and unexpected, favourable and adverse consequences on individuals and their collective engagements with others for sustainability. By investigating the systematic distortions during dialogue and explaining how those emerge during the collaborations, my research portrays the dynamics of stakeholder engagement during collaborations for sustainability. It gives insights into why multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations may not work as effectively as might often be hoped (Gray, 1989; Gerner, 2000).

From next chapter onwards, I present my empirical analysis on the three collaborations I investigated in this dissertation. I dedicate the next chapter to exposing the dynamics of understandings and misunderstandings within the collaborations as stakeholders dialogically engaged with each other during their respective process.

Part II

Empirical Analysis

and

Contributions

Chapter 7

Dynamics of (Mis)Understandings

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I conceptually discussed understanding and its relevance to dialogue and human relationships. In this chapter, I present an analysis of the different kinds and levels of understandings and misunderstandings that developed among stakeholders as they dialogically engaged with each other during their respective collaborations. I employ the term ‘(mis)understandings’ in this dissertation to depict that understandings and misunderstandings existed and operated simultaneously during those processes, and that there was a dynamic interplay between the two.

Analysis of the data across the three cases revealed that the stakeholders agreed and/or disagreed among themselves on four main fronts. The agreements and disagreements, respectively generated understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders, and positively or negatively influenced the processes. I have identified and labelled those four fronts as four sub-themes, which are: (a) (Mis)Understanding sustainability; (b) (Mis)Understanding institutions for sustainability; (c) (Mis)Understanding collaborations for sustainability; and (d) Understanding institutional change towards sustainability¹⁰⁵, and grouped them under the broad theme of (mis)understandings.

In section 7.2, I present my analysis of the theme of (mis)understandings through the four emergent sub-themes that I have analysed in sub-sections. In section 7.3, I integrate my

¹⁰⁵ I have not used the term ‘(mis)understanding’ in this sub-theme because my analysis demonstrates that there was a reasonable level of agreement among stakeholders in their understanding of the process of institutional change towards sustainability, and their expectations of how these multi-stakeholder processes were contributing towards that change.

analyses on those sub-themes, and discuss the dynamics of understandings and misunderstandings among the stakeholders during the three collaborations. In section 7.4, I conclude the chapter.

7.2 (Mis)understandings

The dialogic interactions among stakeholders during the three collaborations gave them communicative opportunities to collectively explore and ‘understand’ the complexities of the process in which they were engaged - either when it was ongoing or when it ended. As I analysed the meeting and interview transcripts and field notes, I recognised various complementary and contradictory behavioural patterns in stakeholders, either within themselves or in relation to others, during those communicative interactions. Those patterns helped me unmask various kinds and levels of (mis)understandings within the three processes, which I have grouped under the four sub-themes: (a) (Mis)Understanding sustainability; (b) (Mis)Understanding institutions for sustainability; (c) (Mis)Understanding collaborations for sustainability; and (d) Understanding institutional change towards sustainability. The following comparative table summarises the four emergent sub-themes across all the three collaborations.

| Theme | URRSO | METROCOP – I & II | Sub-theme |
|---------------------|-------|----------------------|---|
| (Mis)Understandings | • | • | (Mis)Understanding sustainability |
| | • | • | (Mis)Understanding institutions for sustainability |
| | • | • | (Mis)Understanding collaborations for sustainability |
| | • | • | Understanding institutional change towards sustainability |

Table 7.1 Multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability: Field-level (mis)understandings

7.2.1 (Mis)Understanding sustainability

Through my analysis of the sub-theme of (mis)understanding sustainability I demonstrate how different stakeholders understood the concept of sustainable development / sustainability, and how their different understandings of it contributed to some misunderstandings among themselves, and influenced the collaborations. In doing so, I uncover various characteristics of the philosophy of sustainable development which posed hurdles for stakeholders to come to a conceptual agreement on it, and reveal how those hurdles influenced the stakeholders and the three organising processes. Paradoxically, I thus reveal that how, in the process of trying to achieve a greater degree of individual and collective understanding on sustainable development / sustainability, there were some misunderstandings generated during the three collaborations.

Across all three cases, different stakeholders demonstrated different levels of conceptual understanding of sustainability. Coming from diverse backgrounds and cultures, they had different stances towards sustainability, and different levels of acceptance of, and preparedness for it. Their position was influenced by their organisational or individual philosophy on sustainability. While some stakeholders took a strong environmental focus in their consideration of sustainability, others were more concerned about achieving it from either a socio-cultural or an economic perspective. They frequently argued about the need to define and clarify what they collectively understood by sustainability.

I still think our council really focuses on the people aspect of it and so, although on the environmental side of it, there are some issues around our performance in the city and as a region in relation to our environment. And the council views that as important. But it is less important than the people, because of our culture, our internal culture. Our [focus around social sustainability] is very strong! Very strong! Not that there is no focus on environmental sustainability. But it's not the priority. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Sustainability is such a huge spectrum that (laughs)....people had such different expectations. [URRSO stakeholder]

Some stakeholders stressed the need to have a basic agreement on sustainability before engaging any further in the organisational activities. They therefore wanted to engage more deeply in dialogue on sustainability, before exploring and finalising the details of the organising process.

It was not about the outcomes process, so much. And, in fact, there was really very little discussion about sustainability. It was more about process – not outcomes! Perhaps, if we had started talking about sustainability, and outcomes and getting some shared understanding of what we could achieve out of this and what sort of outcomes could be developed....that could have been much more helpful upfront, but we rarely talked about outcomes. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Stakeholders sometimes recognised, and I also observed across all the three processes, that they were often using different “terminologies” to express their understanding of, or expectations related to sustainability, that further caused ambiguity and created “burdles” in development of a collective understanding of sustainability during these processes.

The other thing is that in terms of dialogue, central and local government are dreadful for using acronyms and their own language! And, I mean, I did it myself the other day....I think we get caught up in our own terminologies, our own internal dialogues that we create a language that absolutely nobody else understands or cares about! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Others were vehemently opposed to having focused discussions on sustainability. Instead, they wanted to focus on the organisational process, either right from the beginning or without engaging in any further dialogue on sustainability as they made progress.

One gentleman stressed that there was a need to define and create more awareness on what sustainable development is and he said, “if we tell a common man that it is [an organisation for regional sustainability], no one would understand what we do - what is sustainability”! This made Claire very upset and she said that they should not try to “reinvent the wheel” as there are “volumes and volumes written on sustainable development” and that URRSO should not devote time and effort to agree on a definition. “Instead, we should use the government accepted definition of sustainable development. Everyone knows about sustainable development! she said. There was a mixed reaction across the group - while some agreed with Claire, others disagreed.[URRSO Fieldnotes, August 2003]

Concerned that their respective collaboration should ensure that various facets of regional sustainability be fairly covered, stakeholders often expressed their concerns around “*fairness of representation*” of issues. They often expressed their expectations that these collaborations should encourage dialogue and seek inputs across the different dimensions on which the sustainable development philosophy has been founded. In all the three cases, they thus often sought clarity on which issue - environmental, economic or socio-cultural – should be prioritised and how right balance could be found.

I have a concern that the discussions [related to vision of URRSO] are totally environmental, and we have some social sustainability issues which need to be addressed. [URRSO stakeholder]

I felt the questions were very based around MRC’s environmental [focus]. It didn’t really cover the things that we might have wanted to know. It was quite closed! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Stakeholders also expressed their concerns about fairness of stakeholder representation, and how the views of general public could be comprehensively incorporated during these dialogic collaborations.

I guess, that was always one of the points of discussions in the earlier meetings of URRSO, the whole representative side of things....I mean, they always struggled, I think, with the group saying, “Well, are we representative of the dynamics and the organisations in the city?” And I think that was a valid point. [URRSO stakeholder]

The [survey] questionnaire could have been useful, but it didn’t ask for the sort of things we wanted!... It just felt that it did not have a lot of validity....So, it was very much balanced towards middle-aged, older, white, middle-class, sort of person who would make submissions to the Annual Plan, but not probably the person in the street.... It wasn’t particularly representative of our community [METROCOP stakeholder]

Thus, all the three processes were characterised by a lack of general clarity among stakeholders as to ‘how’ the process could achieve fairness of issue and stakeholder representation. No one seemed to have a simple and straightforward answer that would convince everyone else, which presented another hurdle in achieving understanding during these processes. Stakeholders also often questioned one another and debated as to whether it was practically possible to achieve such fairness, as they collaborated.

And I guess that was always seen as how to get that recognition that we as a group are going to be contented with and we have got a very good representation across all sectors. It's a big, big thing to achieve! [URRSO stakeholder]

There was lot of compromise, in everybody trying to agree. But maybe it was too big an ask! [METROCOP stakeholder]

During their dialogue, stakeholders across the three cases often shared their expectations of regional sustainability and how they wanted to see their community develop accordingly.

And in the process, they often raised questions that did not have simple and straightforward answers.

[URRSO] is an invitation for people across the community to come together, to talk about how we are treating the land, how we are treating our economic infrastructure, how we are treating our citizens, cultures, institutions with a view to asking what do we need to do now to prevent these resources being exploited or depleted or lost! [URRSO Stakeholder]

Now thinking specifically about transport. We know our cities will continue to grow in the future, and that we are aiming for more densely populated areas – not sprawl. We need to plan now, how we will get around our region. [Joint Consultation Project Survey]

They often acknowledged complexities that were associated with the inherent and intricate connection between local and regional sustainable development.

For us, as a part of the region, we cannot be sustainable separate from the region, in terms of economic sustainability, in terms of social sustainability – those sides of things. We are so linked to the region that we cannot separate ourselves from it! So, what happens in the region is incredibly important to us! It goes both ways, I think. We are dependent on, let's say the city part of the region for a lot of economic and social sustainability, but the city part of the region is very dependent on us for recreational and some environmental sustainability and social. So, there is a very direct link and I don't think... yeah, it cannot be separate. It's very greatly interdependent. And I think, sometimes we forget that. [METROCOP stakeholder]

They recognised that there were a lot of ambiguities around issues connected with the local and regional sustainability.

One of the problems we had and we still have is that there is still no agreement about what's local and what's regional! I still don't have a picture of really what the Metropolitan Regional Council is trying to achieve? I am not sure if they do, either (She laughs briefly expressing her frustration)! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Consequently, one of the major bones of contention, across the three cases, was the issue surrounding geographical boundaries with respect to local versus regional sustainability. Misunderstandings therefore often arose among stakeholders across the three cases as they made attempts during dialogue to communicatively rationalise such issues.

I am not quite sure what boundary we ended up with on this....some of the adjoining territorial authorities...but I think, really, URRSO has got more of [this city] focus, which is, you know, a significant part of our region, but by no means, the majority of it! And that's another sort of issue.....we have got to look at the whole region, not just, not just [this city]! [URRSO stakeholder]

And there tended to be an overriding view that the regional community outcomes were no more than the sum of local outcomes. And that at the regional council, when we started thinking about that, we saw different dimensions. We saw the perspective of taking a "regional" approach as opposed to a "sum of the local" approaches. I think that particular aspect has been a challenge – probably the biggest challenge all the way through. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Thus, all of the stakeholders in the three processes recognised that sustainable development / sustainability is a complex concept. Most of them wanted to understand it further and learn more about 'how to implement sustainable development'. They sometimes accepted, and at other times, challenged or reminded one another of the enormity and complexity involved in achieving sustainability.

Out of [my main responsibilities in this TLA] Community Outcomes has taken the most time! (She breathes a long sigh). Probably, more time than we probably thought it would, which is probably common for other TAs. It is sort of like one of those projects - the "more" you get into, the "bigger" it gets! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Here we are trying to cover, what we call the four well-beings in the Act...the economic, the social, environmental and cultural and it's a huge ask! [URRSO stakeholder]

Arguments and disagreements on sustainability were more prominent in URRSO, fired great misunderstandings among stakeholders and fuelled the process with further ambiguity, ultimately proving to be one of the dysfunctional factors in URRSO's growth. Such conflicts were probably because URRSO stakeholders were depending on dialogue not only to explore and develop a common and collective understanding on sustainable

development / sustainability, they were also simultaneously using it as a medium to explore and develop a vision and structure for the organisation. Moreover, being a bottom-up organisation, they had yet to develop a frame of reference and receive strong institutional support that would guide their process and help them gain some clarity.

From the point of view of “how can we do what needs to be done”, there has to be a legal entity, there has to be a structure. That’s fraught with difficulties...the structure needs to be put in place in a manner that allows those individuals with the proper passions to be involved, as well as individuals who will be representing various sectors. And now that’s quite a challenge in itself and there is no perfect model! [URRSO stakeholder]

In contrast, as METROCOP-I and II were initiated under the framework of the LGA 2002 and the RMA 1991, the METROCOP stakeholders used the LGA 2002 as the frame of reference to develop their collaboration. They had some clarity, and some broad agreements on what they collectively understood sustainable development / sustainability. They also had institutional support from their respective local authorities, the CEO Forum, and the central government which helped them devise and agree on a broad structure for the processes. Together, those factors helped to develop sound foundations for METROCOP stakeholders to start the two processes on a reasonably satisfactory note.

Thus, I conclude that understandings and misunderstandings on sustainability played a critical role in the development of the three collaborations investigated in this dissertation. Stakeholders came to these organising processes with varying nature and levels of current conceptual understanding on sustainable development / sustainability, and with different intentions connected with sustainability. Those intentions were sometimes complementary, and other times competing with those of others. As they communicatively interacted to rationalise and further understand the concept, they agreed or disagreed with each other. Their agreements or disagreements were influenced by their individual or organisational understanding of sustainable development, and the interests and priorities they had towards achieving sustainability.

7.2.2 (Mis)Understanding institutions for sustainability

Through my analysis of the sub-theme of (mis)understanding institutions for sustainability I demonstrate how stakeholders across the three collaborations communicatively rationalised their institutional realities connected with sustainability. I unmask various related institutional pressures at normative and regulative levels of society, and some of the understandings and misunderstandings stakeholders had with respect to those realities. Later, in sub-section 7.2.3, I reveal how those realities and pressures influenced stakeholders' intentions to participate in such multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability.

'Normative' institutional pressures played a key role in influencing stakeholders to collaborate with others in the region. Stakeholders across the three cases often expressed that their organisations were under increasing pressure from others - either community groups, other sectors, or organisations from within their own sector – to perform and show their commitment towards sustainable development, or certain aspects of it.

We have had, as I've said, a number of organisations, really considering sustainability, quite thoroughly, but tending to do that in isolation of any other organisation. And this is little ironic, when you think about what sustainability is about! And there are other organisations like ours, which still need to get off to the "starting blocks". [URRSO stakeholder]

Community stakeholder feedbacks from the survey revealed that residents of the region were concerned about "lack of planning and integration at local government" and that "local governments work in isolation" and suggested that the region required "leadership by council" and a "shared vision". [Formal presentation on Joint Consultation Research, May 2005]

Now, obviously, we have to get things right in the region as well! But our big focus is on our people, here! And there is a bit of concern that we are being distracted by more and more regional stuff, that central government is trying to drive us to being involved in, rather than our local business. So, obviously, that makes it more difficult to engage... [METROCOP stakeholder]

Local authority stakeholders of both the regions seemed under considerable pressure from the residents and organisations of the local city, district or region. They often appeared

stressed. They confessed that they were under constant public scrutiny and were expected to demonstrate greater efficiency, transparency and accountability to the ratepayers¹⁰⁶.

What seems to be happening is despite best efforts of consultation, there are institutions developing strategic plans and indicators, then they are measuring their own and then they are reporting the results. So that, personally to me, isn't robust enough... and that's really why, over the last ten years, the civil society units have been set up. Uh, it's keeping the Governors honest, in the sense. [URRSO stakeholder]

So, I have just actually responded to an Annual Plan submission which said, [communities] actually wanted the boundaries shifted or moved over the local council, so that we could actually get our act together, regionally. You know, so that there was coordinated regional planning of things like the Pacific Events Centre and other things like that. So, clearly that's not going to happen, but there is an expectation, at least, that we will be working together to try and make things effective and efficient, both in terms of delivery and cost. So, yes, I think they would certainly be expecting us to be talking together and to be doing integrated planning and service delivery, where we can. [METROCOP stakeholder]

And I suppose we need to be seen as credible to our stakeholders. And part of that is we have got to talk to each other and work together – to have that credibility.... So, it's critical that we have got credibility with our stakeholders and we expect to have it as well! So, to try and kind of develop a way that we can work together – that we kind of build that credibility. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Even when collaborating with other local authorities for regional sustainability, the local government stakeholders across the three processes often seemed seriously concerned that their collaborative efforts should at least appear credible to the community.

...community people think is this [collaboration] a good use of our rate-payers' money or not?! [METROCOP stakeholder]

You know, the community stakeholders don't want to know the detail. They just want to know what difference is [such a collaboration] going to make? What does it look like? What is the cost? What difference is it going to make, when are you looking at things for me?...And if we have not shown anything much upfront, well, then I think there are some dangers there, in terms of how the communities view that. [METROCOP stakeholder]

In the case of URRSO, as discussed in Chapter 4B, the local authority stakeholders ultimately wanted to pass the ownership of the organisation to community stakeholders. They expected that with such a move they would gain some credibility in the community as

¹⁰⁶ Rates are local authority taxes levied on property owners based often on the value of the occupied land and improvements.

institutional actors who encouraged public participation for regional sustainability.

Moreover, the local authority stakeholders across the three cases also had reciprocal expectations from the community stakeholders. They expressed that they needed help and support from the community residents and organisations to develop and implement policies and actions for local and regional sustainable development.

Now, as a [local authority], we can only do so much! So, our interest in URRSO was working with some of the other organisations to get to know them...taking on board those, buying into those same principles, so that we have got all these partners working together to create a sustainable city. [URRSO stakeholder]

And again, it's something probably, because of the nature of the outcomes it is not something that we can do completely on our own! We are going to need other people and working with them on that I think will have financial implications. It will save us a lot of money and resource by working with them. So, I am hoping those will have very good benefits for us. [METROCOP stakeholder]

And as a result, local authorities in both the regions were exerting pressure on the individual and organisational stakeholders in those communities to contribute towards sustainability.

Kevin informed that his organisation's Community Outcomes publication would be launched in December. They had co-branded this document with 15 other significant organisations in the city that are important stakeholders to it. This, according to Kevin, has given the document a "strong community feel" to it, as it shows that it has been endorsed by the stakeholders in the high priority areas for the city. He said that this is one of the products that demonstrate his organisation's commitment towards building collaborations with stakeholders and taking a collective as opposed to individual approach to problem solving. He stressed that they wanted to build an ongoing and strong relationships and links with important stakeholders. Such relationships will form "building blocks" for future actions, which will make it easier for his organisation to take complex projects on sustainable development off the ground based on these relationships, said Kevin. [METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, November 2005]

However, they also seemed aware that they should not place huge pressure on community stakeholders as they sought the latter's contributions. They were seeking opportunities that would enable them to consult with community stakeholders on local and regional sustainability in ways that did not put great demands on community's time and other resources. They thus regarded their respective collaborations as one of the strategic

mechanisms that could help them avoid or minimise “consultation burnout” with community stakeholders.

A joint approach would avoid much of the duplication of effort and over-consultation that would otherwise occur. [Joint Consultation Project Conference Abstract, September 2004]

Even though the 3 processes are following their own paths, there is merit in keeping them linked together, where possible, in the public arena. This is particularly important as next year there will be a lot of consultation around the RPS, DPs, RLTS, TA water services, annual plans, amendments to LTCCPs and community outcomes for 2006. [Joint Working Group Minutes, October 2004]

That “consultation fatigue” that we were talking about - the idea of networking into the URRSO was that the consultation could be done in one, and have all the people at the same time. [URRSO stakeholder]

Moreover, they also recognised the complexities related to involving community in their sustainability mission.

One of those things is the complexity of it all!....people don't differentiate between what council does and what the whole of the city does. And there is certainly, from some elements of the community, a resistance for councils to do anything that they see as Central Government work. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Colleen also shared her experience from their Community Outcomes project by stating “Council has struggled to engage with this as it so big and complex!” She highlighted that another challenge of engaging people from the community was that as people think they belong to a community in terms of the locality or the neighbourhood where they live and do not have the same sense of belonging to the city where they live. People react and say, “I am from [neighbourhood A] and not [neighbourhood B]!” She pointed out that “making people understand is a big challenge!” [Joint Consultation Working Group Meeting Fieldnotes, September 2004]

In addition, local authority stakeholders expressed their expectations of other local authorities in the region. They either sought help from, or were increasingly exerting pressure on one another to collaborate so that they could meet their respective local and regional sustainability objectives.

And there was and has always been an extreme anxiety about duplication of the stakeholders! – A duplication of consultation of stakeholders. The efforts to try and rationalise those has always been difficult! In 2003, when [TLA B] undertook the first phase of their community outcomes process and engaged around 80 stakeholders in the [metropolitan] region and about 20 of those,

may be less, were government and government agencies and crown entities. And they invited the other TLAs to go along with them. And they kind of felt that was the only engagement we were to have to prevent the duplication. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Ah, one, because we know that we have to be involved in some of the regional stuff. We cannot be insular and just going around in our little districts. The specific expectation for me was that I am hoping that when it comes to the achievement of community outcomes and when it comes to reporting and monitoring of these outcomes, then I am going to get a lot of benefit there working with the other councils... And I am expecting to get some good stuff on that! [METROCOP stakeholder]

At the ‘regulative’ institutional level, the new regulatory environment around the LGA 2002, and the expectations and ambiguities that came with it intensified pressures on local government stakeholders across all the three cases to collaborate among themselves, as well as with community stakeholders in their respective local/regional sustainability mission.

The Local Government Act says that MRC must have regional outcome. They must identify the stakeholders that will support them to do that. Clearly, other TLAs, they will be some of the key stakeholders.... And the smaller councils have too few resources to do that sort of work. So, that I think [our collaboration] has been driven, I think, by that Local Government Act, at a regional level. [METROCOP stakeholder]

And the [TLA] did not see there was another [regional] perspective! I think following the [metropolitan] Amendment Act to the Local Government Act that understanding has broadened a little bit. I think, the local authorities including their staff, now understand that the Regional Council is now going to have a leadership role, in some form, and so they might not relish that, but they acknowledge that we need relationships too. [METROCOP stakeholder]

That is, you know, after the Local Government Act has been passed, I think there has been a growing realisation that we do have more of a responsibility and more of a mandate to enter into some of these spheres. At least to be considering it...to be considering those facets [of sustainable development]. [URRSO stakeholder]

Confronting the new regulatory environment, METROCOP stakeholders discussed that “*the understanding of the requirements to do a community outcomes process was very low*” [METROCOP stakeholder]. They acknowledged that they were themselves on a learning curve.

According to Petra, another complexity related to monitoring community outcomes was that the LGA is too broad. It does not give specific recommendations on what its requirements are for monitoring. As a result, the Act is subject to varying levels of interpretations, with some TLAs looking at it broadly, while others looking at it more narrowly. [METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, November 2005]

I often observed that the METROCOP stakeholders would offer their interpretation and understanding of the new Local Government Act, correct each other and give feedback on other's community outcomes process. They often acknowledged that, on their own, neither the MRC nor the TLAs could deliver on all community aspirations that would govern the LTCCP. And as they were attempting to take the collaboration ahead, they were dealing with different kinds of challenges, of a technical and/or political nature, some of which they had not encountered before.

Petra pointed out that there were lot of “ambiguities among central government agencies about what is the priority for the region”. She informed everyone about the Strategic Directors’ decision in a recent meeting that all the TLAs in the metropolitan region should have a workshop together to discuss the community outcomes (CO) and identify the areas where TLAs can work collectively to address those COs and also identify related areas of gaps. She noted that there seems to be lot of ambiguities around the scope of the CO and that it needs to be sorted out in the workshop. “There seems to be lot of tension among the central government agencies about who is leading this stuff,” said Colleen. Petra proposed that the agenda might be around (1) looking at CO and how each council would respond to those, and identify collective action involving all TLAs and areas of gap; (2) present a report to various central government agencies in Wellington detailing a regional picture and clearly articulating to them what central government should be addressing or looking for in terms of prioritising issues for regional sustainable development. [METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, August 2005]

Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, the sustainable development of the metropolitan region was a strategic priority in the central government's policy agenda, and that the METROCOP-I and II processes were strongly connected to the region's LTCCP. The community outcomes that were being identified and monitored during these processes were supposed to have long-term policy implications on the sustainability of the metropolitan region. Thus, the central government recognised the significance of these processes and had an active interest in them. Consequently, METROCOP stakeholders faced significant pressures to achieve at least some basic objectives of the collaboration, and demonstrate to and convince the central government that they could work together for regional sustainability. Thus, despite all challenges and political differences, they increasingly started recognising the need and importance of such collaborations.

I think so that the Joint Consultation was a way of getting some “runs on the board”- showing that we could do some things together, in a tight time frame, and come out with a worthwhile outcomes. [METROCOP Stakeholder]

I think things have to be really bad for us to say O.K. we are just going to withdraw from it. (She becomes calmer now and starts reflecting deeply). We want to work with other TAs in the region. We also need to know....central government is kind of taking a much more regionally focussed approach to engagement. So, we have got to try and make it work as well. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Central government involvement and pressure was, however, missing in URRSO. Being a bottom-up multi-stakeholder civil society initiative, URRSO was a very new organisation, in its formative stages and had not proven itself. Thus the issue of URRSO acquiring a high-profile status at this stage and succeeding in getting central government’s active interest and attention to its development did not really arise (even though the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment was involved in the launch). And with no central government pressure on, and regulatory expectations of URRSO, local authorities involved in it were more relaxed and less committed towards the process. They seemed less patient and not so tolerant towards the emergence of different ideologies and the antithetical stance of stakeholders within URRSO. And as URRSO started taking a form that could be potentially threatening to the image of the local authorities, these stakeholder representatives eventually backed out from the collaboration.

Because that “watch dog” role came from mostly non-government representatives (Speaks very carefully), and I think, at that point, those of us in big organisations, like representing health and local government, started to feel a bit cautious about our involvement. Like we want to be involved, but we do not want to be involved to open ourselves, to be like publicly slandered (assertively)! [URRSO stakeholder]

We have other mechanisms of trying to achieve that overall vision. I mean, we have invested our time and our resources because it is an opportunity. If it works, it will really help us. If it does not work, we are in the same position, as we are now. It’s just as a chance really, yeah (Thoughtful). We have not lost anything. [URRSO stakeholder]

I thus conclude that different stakeholders, across the three cases, confronted different institutional realities that influenced their involvement in the process. They confronted normative pressures from other groups and organisations who believed in the philosophy

of sustainable development, and expected them to make contributions towards the sustainability movement. With the revision of the Local Government Act 1974, some stakeholders, especially those representing the local government, also confronted strong coercive pressures at regulatory level to collaborate for sustainability. And despite some ideological differences among stakeholders, METROCOP-I and II succeeded because of the central government involvement in these processes. In contrast, such an involvement was missing in URRSO, because of which the local authorities could easily exit the collaboration, especially when they saw that it was taking a direction that could threaten their organisation's credibility.

7.2.3 (Mis)Understanding collaborations for sustainability

In this section, I present my analysis on the sub-theme of (mis)understanding collaborations for sustainability. I showcase various characteristics of collaborations which stimulated stakeholders' interests and motivated them to get involved in these multi-stakeholder processes for sustainability. I also reveal how different stakeholders across the three cases had different understandings of, and expectations from collaborations for sustainability, and how those differences resulted in deeper understandings and/or misunderstandings among them, and influenced the organising of the three collaborations.

Stakeholders across the three cases seemed aware of their social obligations and responsibilities, either as common public of the region or as committed professionals, towards creating a sustainable society. They recognised that collective action was required to achieve sustainability.

Recognise that creating sustainable development will require action not only by central and local government and their agencies, but by all sections of the community and civil society generally.
[URRSO Memorandum of Understanding, December 2003]

Establish a regional agreed position on a way forward for working with regional stakeholders on community outcomes; Establish/ build on collaborative relationships across the region with

identified stakeholders; Establish a framework for community outcomes and other plans.
[METROCOP-II minutes, August 2003]

They seemed to recognise that by participating in such multi-stakeholder processes they were getting an important opportunity to contribute towards social change in their region, driven by goals of sustainable development.

The other motivator was that if you are not there, then you can't influence what happens! (She laughs briefly). So, it was an opportunity to shape what came out of that! [METROCOP stakeholder]

I also felt that it was really important that there were people coming in as individuals, not as part of organisation (says with lot of passion, and there is kind of a desperation in her voice to indicate how important she felt this to be). Umm, I felt that maybe there was some way from the practices, that I have, you know, that I can share those, and you know, ways can be found to help other individuals (she says with lot of genuine care and concern), and work in a way towards a more sustainable society. And well also as individuals [we] have an influence on businesses and the governments. [URRSO stakeholder]

And with various normative and regulative pressures being exerted on them, stakeholders across the three cases were also increasingly conscious of their strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges they would face as they contributed towards sustainability. They were greatly motivated by the idea of collectively exploring solutions to complex social problems which they were encountering as representatives and residents of the respective regions.

We the undersigned come together to establish a framework for collaborative action for sustainability, for the common good and wellbeing of [region's] people and their communities. In doing so, we recognise and respect the roles and responsibilities of the signatory partners, their statutory, constitutional, and individual functions, their strengths and their contributions. [Intent, URRSO Memorandum of Understanding, December 2003]

They recognised their collaboration as a potential learning platform on sustainability.

It is an opinion shaper! It is an educator! [URRSO stakeholder]

Colleen pointed out that the community outcomes stuff was all about "change management". "We are all grappling with how to do things! Getting speakers from the industry relevant to issues to speak in these meetings would be very helpful and useful in getting us educated," she urged.
[METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, August 2005]

Some were confident that participating in the multi-stakeholder process was helping them understand the depth and complexity of the concept of sustainable development. They expressed that through dialogue during the collaborations, they were able to collectively explore and understand the complex breadth and depth of the connectivity between local and regional sustainable development. Others expressed their hope that they may eventually achieve such higher levels of understanding as they engaged in further dialogue with others during the collaboration.

... to change that consciousness so that all people had an understanding of what really sustainability was (passionately)! To use URRSO as a vehicle for an understanding for all people within our community to gain a real, and true understanding of what sustainability is about (passionately)! [URRSO stakeholder]

I think that we would get a clearer understanding of what regional outcomes are, what local outcomes are and how we interface with central government. And that might come – one day! So, I think that is a critical part of my expectation. [METROCOP stakeholder]

So, as they engaged in dialogue, some stakeholders exchanged knowledge and information about their individual or organisational practices oriented towards sustainability. There was also a reasonable level of expectation that everyone involved during their respective collaboration would reciprocate in the process of information and resource ‘sharing’ to collectively create a sustainable society.

Oh, I think they are very useful, because they give us an opportunity to get opinions and feedback from other sectors! I mean, we are familiar with agriculture and what agriculture problems are. Somehow, those things interact with other sectors, so going along to these sustainability meetings is very good, in that there were people from right across the whole region, all kinds of industries, organisations...so, I think it was really good! [URRSO Stakeholder]

...but this is an NGO which is a coordination NGO, in other words, supplying mutual information and mutual support for an idea which cannot really be the property of just one agency without reference to the whole of it. In other words, it is again one of those attempts at institutionalising this philosophy of holism - that nothing can really be developed without considering the whole from which it has been removed, you see, intellectually and conceptually. Eventually, you will get to a certain level of development just for that part and then it stagnates because it has neglected the rest. So we are trying really in the whole world to do it. [URRSO stakeholder]

Share our individual approaches/processes to develop a sense of 'best' practice; Search and share useful resources/sites for guidance on approaches; Regional Stocktake – Conduct an ongoing stocktake on what's happening regionally. [METROCOP-II minutes, August 2003]

Some stakeholders also recognised their respective processes as potential platforms to assess the level of community interest and involvement in sustainable development issues.

I was going there to listen and to see what was going on, you know, how many people....how much support there was in this community for this idea....Umm, you know, and in what way that could happen. I guess, I went there to see, to listen, to find out.... uh, what might be involved. [URRSO stakeholder]

The local authorities, in particular considered that their collaboration was an appropriate platform where they could engage with community stakeholders, and seek their contributions for regional/local sustainability mission.

One of the principle outcomes of the METROCOP-I was the community stakeholder survey that was collaboratively developed and conducted under the Joint Consultation Project. Stakeholders in the meeting acknowledged that by involving people in the region to participate in the survey, they were able to educate and stimulate community's thinking on sustainability. It was highlighted during the meeting that the respondents gave mixed comments on sustainability that encompassed local, regional and even global issues. Petra shared that she was very happy and satisfied to see that "responses given had more regional perspective rather than a local 'my background' response." She pointed out that during the analysis, transport emerged as a regional priority and while responses on socio-cultural issues were mostly local based, some respondents also gave a regional perspective to it. Richard said he was "pleasantly surprised to see how people's thinking has changed!", and that they could now start seeing things from a regional perspective. Petra said with content and great enthusiasm "we have been successful in educating people!" They also acknowledged the usefulness of the results of this survey in its potential as a powerful learning tool for various levels of management in the local authorities. Reports on survey analysis were presented to the Councillors and CEOs to give them a snapshot of the regional sustainability scenario and community expectations from local authorities in terms of how the community wanted to see the region develop sustainably in the future. [Joint Consultation Working Group Meeting Fieldnotes, October 2004]

Because the way it is now, we all have our little visions, like each of the government organisations have sustainability as a little part...But some of the ways we can go about achieving those objectives can be at loggerheads with others....there are just different ways. So, I guess, what I saw is that [URRSO] would make us all have a consistent approach....we would be communicating and we would be working together, as opposed to working against each other, in some areas....(pensive, thoughtful). [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, most of the stakeholders across the three cases considered that by communicatively engaging with others through their respective collaboration they could develop individual,

organisational and collective coping mechanisms. They hoped those mechanisms would help them overcome threats, exploit opportunities, and deal with the various institutional pressures that confronted them with regard to their contributions towards sustainability.

There are a number of important transitional issues that we as a region will need to attend to. These include:

- *agreeing on the partnership models we will use as a region*
- *developing tools and mechanisms to implement this way of working together*
- *prioritising the work programme and addressing additional work proposals as they arise*
- *identifying where the capacity currently exists, and where the capacity gaps are across the region for any identified pieces of regional work*
- *addressing the timing, transitional and management of changes issues around the regional work programme*
- *providing a programme management overview*

[Response from a TLA to MRC's proposal on Joint Consultation Project, March 2004]

If it succeeds, it could do a lot in terms of strengthening communication. It could do a lot in terms of getting some consistent monitoring, so that we as a whole community will have a holistic picture of what is happening in our city. And also, it will do a great deal in terms of getting everyone working together! [URRSO stakeholder]

They generally believed that developing good relationships with other stakeholders was a critical requirement for creating a more sustainable society, and which would also be fruitful for their sustainability mission. They appeared to recognise the value of their respective collaborations, in terms of getting a good opportunity to know, understand and “help” others and develop “relationships” with them. They considered that through good relationships with others they could mobilise (their) resources to help and support one another, either now or in the future.

[URRSO] is about partnerships, and it's about the “whole being more than the sum of the parts”.... And so, it's about sharing knowledge and experience, it's about helping one another and it's about cooperative action. [URRSO stakeholder]

The scope of this job is around bringing relationships together that need to promote sustainability. So, it's that collaboration, and that working together! It's about partnerships! [METROCOP stakeholder]

The thing with collaborative dialogue is what you are establishing is relationships. Even not necessarily between the councils, but at least, if you have got relationships between the officers

involved, then you have got mechanisms for tapping into those organisations, in just getting results or finding answers or it's just a way in, and it makes it much easy to engage with that organisation. So, they are certainly very beneficial. [METROCOP stakeholder]

From the failures or successes of the collaboration they were party to, stakeholders shared both positive and negative experiences, and the learning they acquired in the process from those experiences.

Yeah! I think there were some learnings. I think it's been good that there have been some very honest discussions about what some of those learnings were. But the learnings, seems to me, should be put into practice then (she seems bit angry)! Yeah. Some of them probably have and some of them, probably, have not! [METROCOP stakeholder]

It did prove that the collaborative working model, by respecting the sovereign decision making of each council, could be done! You know, we planned collaboratively and then put processes in place that even in short time frames, the councils could go through their own decision-making process. [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think it's also a challenge to find the right people within organisations as well. You have to find people...people who attend have to be people who can influence some sort of change within their organisation. I, personally, think the solution is developing the relationships with them first. And I think, someone like Claire, is in a good position to be able to do that, because she is fairly independent of any specific organisation. When she takes this [proposal] to the different organisations, she can sell it to them in an appropriate way, where maybe they don't feel threatened. They will feel that they are actually going to get something out of it, and pinpoint the right people to be involved, the right people to come along. Because often when we go to Waste Forums or Biodiversity Forums, we attend as staff and there is only so much change that we can make as staff. But if it was like politicians who attended, then things would happen lot quicker! And I guess, that might be the same with the URRSO. The challenge is getting the right people there who can influence change and getting them wanting to do something for the "greater good". [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, in retrospect, they reflected upon their individual and collective strengths and weaknesses as they participated in the collaboration. While all these processes were characterised by a great deal of confusion, which I further describe in my analysis in the next two chapters, the METROCOP stakeholders recognised that as the two processes evolved, some of those initial confusions gradually unfolded to generate a clearer picture of their respective understandings and expectations from one another and the processes.

What else could I have done differently? Maybe try to achieve some clarity. Try to achieve a bit more clarity for those who wanted it at the beginning. Yeah! Clarity was achieved as a result of having worked together! [METROCOP stakeholder]

The METROCOP stakeholders exhibited greater confidence in their understanding of such collaborations as a result of that learning. In spite of some of their ideological differences and ensuing clashes, they seemed to have adopted a more seasoned, pragmatic and reasonable stance, as compared to the URRSO stakeholders, in their expectations from such collaborations, and from others involved in the process.

And Petra has managed to move things forward, so that we have actually progressed, and we are taking a more collaborative approach to... not necessarily to developing the MRC regional outcomes process, but we have had an input into it! We have had a bit of an opportunity to shape – but in the end, the MRC is taking it the way they want to take it! And that's quite understandable. We would (she laughs briefly)! [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think, in the beginning the hardest thing was talking to all different councils, talking about outcomes. We were not quite understanding why people were not getting some things, why people were doing some things, until I understood that actually we weren't essentially talking about the same thing! (She sounds frustrated). When I was talking about the regional community outcomes, I meant something quite different, or local outcome or goal, or, you know! And eventually, we got to the point where we, after talking these things through and finally getting that clicked, we were bit clear, in the end, about the language we were using. And, then, we had discussions about outcomes or whatever. We could actually make some sense and clicked! Before that, we were talking past each other, because we were actually not talking the same language (she laughs briefly)! Yeah....so that's really difficult! [METROCOP stakeholder]

They increasingly demonstrated a greater sense of trying to understand positive and negative aspects of their relationships with other stakeholders, handling and seeing their successes and failures in a broader, longer term context.

Sue pointed out that the executives put in a lot of their time and energy in contributing towards relationship building at the Strategic Director's level. By interacting with other local authority representatives in such processes, they shared experiences, knowledge and learning, and they offered this learning as a resource to the Strategic Directors etc. to ensure that they further develop this relationship at the next higher level of management and take it further ahead from there. [METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, November 2005]

They also seemed to have developed, over a period of time, greater affinity and understanding towards each other and seemed to me to be moving in a direction of

developing closer professional relationships with one another. They were becoming more open, frank and honest with one another, to the point and extent that they were able to confess some of their weaknesses and inadequacies, without so much fear of being (mis)judged by others on those weak grounds.

I think there have been some good relationships built over that though. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Sue pointed out that it would have been useful if the team had developed a Terms of Reference (TOR), as “some of us have different purpose and focus” which would have been very useful to bring the members back to the original purpose, mission and vision for which the group was set up. Sue felt that a TOR could have helped everyone to understand and remember “Why were we involved? What are we here for? How are we going to do certain things?” Everyone in the group agreed to Sue’s idea and liked the idea of having a TOR. Petra confessed to the team, “Well, to be honest, I didn’t know why we were there for the first time, when I got involved.” (Everyone laughs) [Joint Consultation Working Group Meeting Fieldnotes, September 2004]

Others, especially those involved in URRSO, having experienced the collapse of the dialogue process, appeared to have become more negative in their outlook and exhibited bitterness and resentment towards collaboration with others in general, and for sustainability in particular. I observed right from the start that URRSO was struggling to find and project its collective identity. This difficulty occurred not only because different stakeholders came with varying ideas and levels of expectations from URRSO. My analysis presented in the forthcoming chapters also reveals that some of their expectations appeared to be over-optimistic. There seemed to be an ongoing and irresolvable tension among stakeholders whenever they engaged in dialogue focussed around the purpose and future direction of the organisation. Divergent identity-related expectations of URRSO served as breeding grounds for ideological clashes among stakeholders.

...you have got the people who are “hands on” and want to do the stuff and you’ve got the people who are strategic and political. And, uh, I felt that a lot of people who were really “hands on” people had come to [URRSO] with, what I consider, to be the wrong kind of expectation, which [URRSO] was setting out to achieve. And we didn’t, I think, convince them that the purpose of [URRSO] was truly, strategic and political, and that there were lots of other organisations that they could participate in to do with things that they were saying they wanted to do. And, I might be wrong! I mean, maybe there is more of a “doing role” for [URRSO] than I see, and maybe it’s

just a case of priority. Maybe, you know, I see that we have to establish that “high-level” interest in sustainability first, before we can actually achieve anything on the ground. [URRSO stakeholder]

I just want to say that everything I have heard is about monitoring what other people are going to do, what they have done, the progress that other people have done...The emphasis is not on the individuals, there is no emphasis on leadership and I think that's where that needs to be. I don't want to be part of this [organisation], unless URRSO is providing a leadership role....displaying what can be done! What we have done as individuals! I don't want to talk about what I managed to convince the rest of the people in this community to do, until we show what we can do. We have got lots of good words that are being used here but the focus needs to be, I believe, on individuals. There are people representing their companies, and they can speak about what their companies can do and what they have done, as an example, to what other companies can do. But it's the individual, who it comes right down to, who can convince the company to do and that is what I suggest. [URRSO meeting, September 2003]

In spite of their efforts to solve basic misunderstandings, they failed to convince one another as to what should be prioritised and how could everyone achieve a fair degree of unity in their diversity, and collectively proceed from some common point.

...everybody has a very strong commitment to move forward on the sustainability issues in the [region]. But we are having some difficulties, coming together on exactly, on what vision statement would be, uh, basically forming more of consensus on how would we move forward. And what we are proposing is that maybe we need some time walking, before we start trying to run. And part of that would be to start off behaving exactly, like a “forum” in the dictionary definition of the term of forum - you would get together and share information about certain topics and issues that, as we propose, we would weed out from our conversations today, so that we can start to feel around how we would want to move forward. Because in essence, each issue is going to drive how the group would move forward. So, we were envisioning that after an exercise where we are identifying issues that were important to individuals and organisations represented here, we would then decide the action that would come out of that. So, we are starting out at a point where we are just talking and getting to know other groups and other organisations to get a better in-depth understanding on what everybody is doing about those issues. And then we would move on to the action point from that point. Basically, this is what we were proposing. [URRSO meeting, November 5, 2003]

During interviews, URRSO stakeholders, in retrospect, attempted to rationalise the failure of the process and recognised several challenges that acted as major hurdles towards their dialogue and collaboration. While some stakeholders recognised communication as a challenge in itself during collaboration, others blamed the structure, or personalities involved in URRSO, or their marginal status as compared to others, as factors that contributed to the failure of the collaboration.

The basic purpose of URRSO was not well communicated, because I am not sure that we defined it ourselves. [URRSO stakeholder]

...but for various reasons it fell apart, more so, in the last meeting, and partly one of the reasons, I guess, is that the group is too big and too diverse. [URRSO Steering Committee Meeting, October 2003]

I think, you know, the success of this thing probably comes down to personalities at the end of the day. Just need the right mix, the right drive to do it and the right model! Not really convinced that we have got all those factors right, still, at this stage. [URRSO stakeholder]

...as an individual, I think it's very hard to ... to participate, actually, in this type of thing (She says this as if she has accepted this reality, and seems to have come to terms with this reality). [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, I conclude that stakeholders across the three processes regarded multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability as potential platforms where they could collectively work towards positively transforming the society. They considered that by sharing their knowledge and resources with other stakeholders through such processes, they could develop deeper relationships with them and contribute towards the sustainability movement. Acknowledging their individual strengths and weaknesses, they regarded those collaborations as potential opportunities which could empower them to overcome some of the foreseeable threats confronting them, either as an individual or as an organisation, in the future. However, they recognised that their collaboration for sustainability was not easy and that they were facing several hurdles. Some, for example those involved in METROCOP, optimistically considered the challenges involved as opportunities to reflect upon their individual and collective weaknesses and failures to come together as a group, and learn from those experiences to move ahead in future towards developing deeper relationships for sustainable development. However, others, mostly in the case of URRSO, left such collaborations with greater resentment and bitterness because of their negative experiences, and outcomes not being what they had hoped for.

7.2.4 Understanding institutional change towards sustainability

In this section, I present my analysis on the sub-theme of understanding institutional change towards sustainability. I reveal how stakeholders understood the process of institutional change towards sustainability. I also show how their collaborations gave stakeholders opportunities to deeply reflect upon the implications of multi-stakeholder processes for sustainability, and how those reflections influenced their perceptions on the outcomes of their process. I thus reveal how they saw the interconnections between their micro collaborations and the macro process of institutionalisation of sustainable development. My analysis demonstrates that there was a reasonable level of agreement among stakeholders in their understanding of the ‘process of institutional change’ towards sustainability and their expectations of how these collaborations were contributing towards that change. I have therefore not used the term ‘(mis)understanding’ in this sub-theme.

As stakeholders shared their views, most of them, especially in the two METROCOP cases and less so in the URRSO case, seemed to reflect deeply upon their and others’ roles and contributions to such processes, and take a long-term perspective.

We also learnt some lessons from that about how we might do, how we might progress on that and do it better next time....And I, seriously, in the [metropolitan] region, don't expect to see any big changes, this round. (She says it very thoughtfully and very pragmatically). I think we are learning that process right now. And I think, we have to have a process whereby people see that it is not the "end-of-the-world." Let's talk to each other and plan for some of these bigger things together.
[METROCOP stakeholder]

[Effects of such collaborations]... are hard to measure in terms of specific outcomes. But, what you could measure, would be how much of those things were being attempted? You could quantify with number of brochures, talks, seminars, number of forums, number of contacts, business and so on. So, that would be quantifiable! The effect of those things would be harder to quantify. I suppose, only a historian in 20 years time, would look back and say "while [this city] appears to have been more "joined up" thinking, or more careful about its environment, or people and poverty are being taken more seriously, a culture of common values is more apparent". You would only be able to look at that, from a historical perspective, I suspect, much further down the track. [URRSO stakeholder]

Most of the METROCOP stakeholders recognised that collaborations, in general, were challenging, and that those processes would be even more challenging when it came to collaborating to bring about (institutional) change towards sustainability.

But it's really long and it's iterative, so you also have to be really flexible and be prepared to change all the time, the way you are operating, the way you are doing things, the way you are thinking about things. And it has to be negotiated really. It does have to be an agreed outcome, I mean, you trying to drive your own agenda through. That ways it's not going to work either. It's hard work! (She sighs and laughs). [METROCOP stakeholder]

...Cause the biggest thing that I keep on hearing all the time is that a lot of people made comments about "Oh, nothing's being done". But I think, we have to overcome this communication problem, because each organisation has a huge portfolio of projects that are aiming towards sustainability in some way! And other people, like in the community or other groups or even some of the grass network groups could just know what some of these projects were? I mean, to me, that's the first stage! We have got to communicate everything that we are doing, cause a lot of things that got put up on the board are actions or projects. A lot of them I saw, are being done by different groups, already! We need to get everyone to the same platform, I guess, and that could take a year or two years. [URRSO Steering Committee Meeting, October 10, 2003]

They underscored that such multi-stakeholder collaborations were vital for sustainability because when carried out over a longer period of time, such processes gave them opportunities to learn and build relationships. And as some of them recognised that they were going through a process of learning and relationship building, which was “*iterative*” and “*time-consuming*”, they also acknowledged that they did not expect these micro collaborations to deliver direct, immediate and dramatic impact and bring about radical positive changes in the region. They, however, appreciated the value of small contributions that such multi-stakeholder collaborations could make during the process of institutional change towards sustainability.

I expected at the beginning, that [regional community outcomes] would change radically how decisions be made and priorities might be set in the MRC. I think now I expect that change to be incremental and probably minimal, this time round! I think the system and the council are learning. They need to see some value in the process, really, to invest more in it. [METROCOP stakeholder]

It's early days – community outcomes presents lots of challenges - working with central government and working regionally, locally. It's going to take a long time to unravel. It's better to be realistic

about what can be achieved in the first time around. It's kind of "give and take" and "live and learn"...yeah! [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think, I had the expectation that, a cross-section of the community would have a way of promoting these ideas in [the city] and that it would make a difference in the long-run to the way people think about society, community, business, religion education and so on. [URRSO stakeholder]

I never thought this would be any other than a long-term project to change the thinking type in people's head. It won't happen overnight. [URRSO Steering Committee Meeting, October 10, 2003]

Thus, as they experienced their collaboration, some of them seemed to be developing fairly pragmatic and low-level expectations from such collaborations as well as from others involved in the process.

But yeah, relationships are critical to making things happen....I mean, it makes it that much easier for doing the business. Um...one of our local government agencies rung me the other day and the guy I know quite well and he said "I am struggling with your council at the moment because of this, in this area and in this area and in this area. I don't know what to do and whom to talk to? Can you meet with them? Can you help me? Can you help me?" So, that's fine – maybe that's easy, I could do that for him. He was just looking at this big organisation, having no idea how to move forward into concerns, without upsetting people. So, that's where those relationships, yeah, we actually know, it really makes a difference! So, although we might not necessarily see long-term measurable results, those sorts of things are really critical to getting an efficient and effective system. [METROCOP stakeholder]

URRSO is a paradigm-shifter! [URRSO stakeholder]

The expectations were that each one of us was a driver in a different way but with a similar goal to change society, to get back to where it was responsible, it was caring, and in a way just, to try and halt the political bouncers from disenfranchising society, because I think a lot of them, it doesn't matter what party has been in, they have all done something which has actually changed the face of they way we are, of who we are. [URRSO stakeholder]

However, there were others, and more so in URRSO, who wanted to see immediate positive outcomes from the collaboration. Not being able to see any immediate and dramatic positive results from URRSO, those stakeholders got very frustrated and decided not to become any further involved in it, as I illustrate in the following three chapters.

I thus conclude that majority of stakeholders across the three processes recognised the complexities involved in bringing about institutional change towards sustainability. They

also acknowledged that such collaborations played a very important role in institutionalising sustainable development. However, most of them also realised that it may not be possible for their process to generate any radical, immediate and dramatic impacts on sustainability. They acknowledged that such collaborations influence change subtly by providing opportunities to exchange knowledge, promote learning and develop relationships with other stakeholders, and thus they have long-term impacts. However, there were some stakeholders, and mostly in case of URRSO, who did not appreciate the value of subtle effects. They demanded quick actions and immediate results from their collaboration.

7.3 Discussion

In this section I integrate and summarise the analyses on the four sub-themes I presented in the previous pages. I highlight the dynamic interplay of the different understandings and misunderstandings that emerged and influenced the collaboration, and thus expose the ensuing tension among stakeholders during their dialogic interactions. I also reveal how stakeholders conceived of such processes as avenues to enhance various aspects of their understanding related to collaborations and sustainability.

The three collaborations for sustainability were characterised by different kinds of understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders that operated simultaneously, to a lesser or a greater extent, in complex and predictable or unpredictable ways.

(Mis)Understandings emerged in such processes because of stakeholders' respective institutional realities, and their sometimes divergent and other times, convergent expectations of sustainability, the collaboration, and of others involved in the process.

Some of the (mis)understandings that operated in the processes were results of prejudices which some stakeholders brought to those collaborations. The preconceptions were related to sustainability, institutional forces promoting sustainable development, collaboration, and

others involved in the collaboration. Other prejudices emerged and further evolved, in positive or negative ways, to influence the collaborations.

Differences of opinions emerged primarily because of: (a) their divergent sector-based expectations of sustainability, other stakeholders, and collaboration; (b) different and ambiguous use of concepts and terminologies related to sustainable development; and (c) lack of clarity around geographical boundaries and issues related to local and regional sustainable development. While those differences promoted some dialogue, they also proved highly detrimental to collaboration. They contributed to misunderstandings in the process and created rifts among stakeholders during these collaborations.

Therefore, on a negative note, the trans-disciplinary approach of the sustainable development philosophy proved inherently problematic. It offered opportunities for different visions to emerge and different priorities of stakeholders to be expressed. Those different disciplinary identity fragments encapsulated within one philosophy (for example, environment, economy, society and culture) ignited negative prejudices and the pre-existing ideological differences among the stakeholders who had come from diverse individual and/or organisational backgrounds and cultures. It appears that the three processes did not spend adequate time shortlisting and defining various terms and concepts that they would use as a collective. Ambiguities around local and regional sustainability could perhaps have been solved at the outset. Moreover, the processes might have been more effective had the stakeholders clearly communicated their expectations of the collaboration, and of others involved in it. With ambiguities and lack of clear direction, especially in the case of the URRSO, disagreements among stakeholders proved highly detrimental to the spirit of dialogue and collaboration. The harm was so severe that while some stakeholders backed out of the URRSO process, there were others who decided not to engage further in any multi-stakeholder collaboration for sustainability. Stakeholders in the METROCOP cases

however survived their political differences, probably because of the close influence of the central government on those processes. Moreover, METROCOP stakeholders belonged to the same sector, that is local government, and thus there were fewer differences of opinions as compared to URRSO which involved stakeholders from different sectors.

On a positive note, stakeholders regarded such dialogic collaborations for sustainability as valuable learning platforms wherein they could engage with others to learn about the concept of sustainable development and gain a better understanding of how to practically implement it. They were subject to rapidly changing regulatory and normative institutional environments strongly promoting sustainability in New Zealand. They felt challenged by the complexity, enormity and ambiguity around understanding and implementing the philosophy of sustainable development, including planning and implementing activities for local and regional sustainability. Stakeholders were therefore hopeful that by mutually sharing knowledge, information, experience and expertise on sustainable development through such collaborations, they could enhance their individual and collective capacity to respond to the various and enormous institutional pressures confronting them. They used opportunities through such processes to compare and contrast their respective understandings with that of the others. They further used the collaboration to reflect upon and evolve their current understanding of sustainability / sustainable development¹⁰⁷.

They also regarded such collaborations as potential opportunities where they could develop relationships with significant others, who could further help them in their individual and/or organisational mission on sustainability. Moreover, stakeholders acknowledged that the relationships developed during such processes were not only confined to their level of interaction, they also contributed towards building new relationships at higher organisational levels, or networking with new organisations and individuals. Thus, by

¹⁰⁷ I further uncover such reflective dimensions of their dialogic interaction in the following three empirical chapters.

offering promise of building stakeholders' capacities, in direct or indirect ways, to understand and implement sustainable development, these processes bonded stakeholders together, to some extent, which further facilitated such dialogic collaborations. Stakeholders appreciated that by participating in such processes they were getting an opportunity to contribute towards social change. Some acknowledged that even though the results of those processes may not be immediate and positively dramatic and radical, yet these collaborations were extremely vital to bring about incremental but long-term institutional changes towards sustainability. Thus such processes helped to expand the web of social relationships that are vital to bring about positive social transformations.

Some stakeholders also recognised that by participating in such processes, they had opportunities to reflect upon their successes and failures, and their strengths and weaknesses, which helped assess their individual and collective capacities and preparedness towards their sustainability mission. As they shared their expectations or experiences with others during the meeting or with me during the interviews, they often communicatively rationalised the understandings and misunderstandings that were generated during the process. They shared their perspectives on various factors, which in their opinion, had contributed to those understandings and misunderstandings. Thus by participating in such collaborations, some stakeholders developed deeper insights on the enormity and complexities involved in institutionalising sustainable development. They were also gradually becoming more aware and fairly pragmatic in their expectations of others and of their own roles – in their individual or organisational capacity – as social change agents.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained how the three multi-stakeholder processes for sustainability were characterised by different kinds of understandings and misunderstandings that

emerged among stakeholders because of their respective institutional realities, and their sometimes divergent and other times, convergent expectations of sustainability, the collaboration, and of others involved in the process. I revealed how stakeholders conceived of such processes as avenues to enhance various aspects of their understanding related to collaborations and sustainable development / sustainability. I exposed the ensuing tension among stakeholders as those different understandings and misunderstandings operated simultaneously, to a lesser or a greater extent, in complex, and predictable or unpredictable ways. I highlighted the dynamic influence of the different and emerging understandings and misunderstandings on the overall process.

I carry forward the knowledge I have generated from my analysis in this chapter to the next two chapters, which are dedicated to the dynamics of emotions as stakeholders collectively engaged in those collaborations for sustainability. I reveal how emotionality of such processes is inherently connected with (mis)understandings among stakeholders, and highlight the dynamics between stakeholders' (mis)understandings and emotions during collaborations for sustainability.

Chapter 8A

Dynamics of Emotions - Emotions for Sustainability

8A.1 Introduction

During my analysis, emotions emerged as a theme across all the three cases. Therefore, in this and the next chapter, I expose the dynamics of emotions during the three collaborations. I reveal how various emotions felt and expressed by stakeholders as they dialogically engaged with others influenced their collective engagement for sustainability. I expose how understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders, which I discussed in the previous chapter, influenced their emotions, and how those different emotions further contributed to understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders.

While this chapter is dedicated to the theme of ‘emotions around sustainability’ which prominently emerged only in URRSO, the next chapter 8B features the theme of ‘emotions for others and the process’¹⁰⁸, which emerged across all the three collaborations. Moreover, the structure of this chapter and Chapter 9 (focussing on time) is slightly different from the previous chapter on (mis)understandings. As these themes on emotions and time emerged from my data analysis, I needed to retrospectively explore further relevant literature and present my theoretical conceptualisation of the two topics. Therefore, in these two chapters, I respectively explain my conceptualisations on emotions and time, and highlight their significance in multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Emotions felt for the process’ were very closely linked to the ‘emotions felt for others’. As my later analysis reveals that there was an interconnection and mutual dependence between the two kinds of emotions, and because of the emergent nature of the analysis, and certain methodological limitations which I highlight in the next section, I have grouped these two categories of emotions together.

In section 8A.2 of this chapter, I explain how I conceptualise emotions and highlight the role of emotions and emotionality in organising and sustainability. In section 8A.3, I briefly cover some important methodological considerations for conducting research on emotions¹⁰⁹. In section 8A.4, I reflect on some of my emotional moments during the interview and participant observation phase of my data collection period. In section 8A.5 I present my analysis of the several emergent sub-themes that I have grouped under the theme of emotions around sustainability. In section 8A.6 I integrate my analysis on the various sub-themes and discuss the dynamics of those emotions and their influence on the organising of URRSO.

8A.2 Emotionality of organising for sustainability

In this section, I explain my conceptualisation of emotions. I draw on organisation studies literature to highlight the influence of emotions on organising. I further extend and integrate this discussion with the aspirational discourse of sustainability espoused in the Brundtland Report. In doing so, I aim to establish a connection between human interactions, emotions and sustainability and hence underscore the importance of studying emotionality in multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.

Twentieth century organisational research has underestimated the influence of emotions in organisations and focussed mostly on a world comprised of rational organisations and members (Albrow, 1992; Fineman, 2003; Mumby, & Putnam, 1992; Putnam, & Mumby, 1993; Williams, & Bendelow, 1996). To understand organising processes in general and particularly those involved in the construction of a contested concept like sustainability, I argue, it is also important to recognise the role of emotions alongside more rational features

¹⁰⁹ As these methodological issues were specific to research on emotions, I did not cover these issues previously in the methodology and methods chapter. I follow the similar style in Chapter 9 where I highlight some methodological issues specific to temporal research.

of organisational forms, structures, relationships and processes (Fineman, 1993b, 2000a, 2000b; Mumby, & Putnam, 1992).

Emotions are communicative expressions that arise “between people” during social interactions and are simply “not something contained inside a single person” (Burkitt, 1997, p. 40; see also Mumby, & Putnam, 1992). Emotions are complexes (Burkitt, 1997; see also Sturdy, 2003; Williams, & Bendelow, 1996), having corporeal, embodied and socio-cultural components structured by our forms of understanding (Jackson, 1993). They play an important “role in constituting social relations and institutions” (Pixley, 2002). Emotions are also not always innocent, may be manipulated or used strategically to influence situations in organisations (Habermas, 1984; Mangham, 1998) and therefore are inextricably linked to social structures of power and inequality (Fineman, & Sturdy, 1999; Mumby, & Putnam, 1992; Sturdy, 2003; Williams, & Bendelow, 1996). Emotions may hence prejudice decision-making and outcomes during interactions (Mangham, 1998), resulting in agreements, collaborations, disagreements, conflicts, or inertia within the process (Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Zerbe, 2000; Burkitt, 1997; Fineman, 1993b, 2000a). Recognising emotions right from the very early stages of social engagement during any organising process may prove helpful in understanding the influence of certain emotions on development of those processes (Mangham, 1998).

As discussed earlier, human rationality is communicative, not purely instrumental; it cannot be restricted to either objective, subjective or social world as it belongs to a world constituted of all those three worlds (Habermas, 1984, 1987). Thus emotionality and rationality should not be considered as mutually exclusive. Rather they can be usefully treated as “separate continua that vary independently and can be applied to any simple action” (Hearn, 1993, p. 146). Fineman (1993c, p. 16) points out that “cognitions and emotions intertwine; ideas are laden with feelings, feelings contains ideas.” He highlights

three debates around this relationship: “emotions *interfere* with rationality; emotions *serve* rationality; and emotions and rationality *intertwine*” (Fineman, 2000a, p. 11). As servants of rationality, emotions “lubricate rather than impair rationality”, and as they intertwine, they “interpenetrate and flow together in the same mould,” and the boundary between the two collapses (Fineman, 2000a, p. 11). Thus the inherent ‘rationality / emotionality’ relationship in any engagement involving people should be acknowledged, and studies should capture and reveal the ensuing complexities, paradoxes and tensions (Fineman, 1993b, 2000a; Hearn, 1993; Mangham, 1998; Mumby, & Putnam, 1992; Putnam, & Mumby, 1993), and the various shades of ‘emotional colours’ and ‘emotional energies’ (Fineman, 1993a) that characterise any organising.

Moreover, as the context of organising influences the process (Hosking, & Fineman, 1999), I extend the above argument to organising for sustainability. I contend that emotions have deep connections with sustainability and hence such emotions around sustainability may also influence related organising processes. Fineman (1996) also underscores that emotions play an important role in motivating people and getting their commitment on issues that do not offer immediate results but promise long-term interest (see also Andersson, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2006). Sustainability is one such issue and its emotive power has been recognised (Barton, 2000). The widely-cited definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report can be read as deeply embedded in basic human emotions of care and concern for present and future generations of the Earth¹¹⁰. However, much of the research on sustainability has focussed on definitional issues and disputes around it (see Barbier, 1987, 1989; Bishop, 1993; O’Riordan, 1991; Pearce et al, 1989; Redclift, 1987), and has preferred rational and macro approaches around organisational, regional, national and global interests to emotional and micro issues involving individual self-interests, values,

¹¹⁰ Or conversely, the report promotes a rational, economic growth, focus as in the business case. My research takes a different perspective to understanding sustainability not only from a rational but also an emotional perspective.

attitudes and actions (Egri, & Pinfield, 1996; Starik, & Rands, 1995). And even though emotional terms like “misery”, “vulnerability”, “fear”, “concern”, “tragedy”, “frustration”, “sufferings”, “hope” and “aspirations” feature in the Brundtland Report around issues of survival, poverty, environmental degradation, peace and security, and natural and man-made disasters, I highlight that the Report emphasises, “needs” and “limits”, and regulative and normative institutions without substantial discussion on how these issues are understood and experienced differently by different people, and may influence processes organised under the banner of sustainable development.

Starik and Rands (1995) stress that individuals’ attitudes and behaviours oriented towards sustainability are influenced by their principal values and assumptions about the natural environment and their worldviews. They further suggest that organisations may need to cultivate the spiritual values of their members in their organisational pursuit for sustainability. With reference to environmental change, Egri and Pinfield (1996) recognise that self-interest at an individual level may be used as an important device for organisations to bring about change wherein organisations may merge individuals’ concern for the environment with organisational action (see also Andersson, & Bateman, 2000; Bansal, & Roth, 2000). A potential aspect of self-interest relates to organisational members’ concern for their immediate family and progeny. Individuals may become more willing to adopt environmentally friendly policies and practices and change some of their behaviour for the wellbeing of their future generations.

I hence contend that by focusing on stakeholders’ emotions as they collaborate with others for sustainability will help researchers obtain deeper understanding of some of the underlying stakeholder values and interests, and how those may influence organising processes for sustainability. I carry forward my analysis from the previous chapter to this and the next chapter. In these two chapters, I reveal how understandings and

misunderstandings existing and operating among stakeholders as they dialogically interacted with one another during these collaborative processes contributed to their experience and expressions of a range of positive and negative emotions, to a lesser or greater extent. I unmask the deeper meanings and expectations of stakeholders in those emotions, which were expressed either subtly or dramatically during the processes. I further demonstrate how some of those emotional expressions and outbursts in turn resulted in further understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders. I reveal how negative emotions of distrust, anger, pain, hurt, frustration, fear and confusion, etc., or positive emotions of trust, excitement, hope and pride, etc., influenced the dialogue among stakeholders, and both facilitated and hindered the collaborations. And with these analyses, I also empirically reveal that the stakeholders' emotionality and rationality were inherently intertwined, which sometimes served and at other times inhibited their engagement with others during the collaboration.

In the next section I highlight some of the methodological issues related to my research on emotions.

8A.3 Methodological issues in research on stakeholder emotions

As it was not my original intention to study emotions, my interview questions were not specifically targeted to identifying emotions. However, as I observed the meetings and was conducting interviews, I personally encountered and experienced emotionality. And as I analysed the data, I discovered emotions as a key factor influencing the three organising processes. I also acknowledge that when I started analysing emotions, I faced certain methodological and epistemological challenges. The intangible, private, transient, incomprehensible, and unmanageable character of emotions sometimes made it difficult for me to capture and neatly compartmentalise and present some emotions (Sturdy, 2003; see

also Burkitt, 1997; and Jackson, 1993). And because of the ubiquitous character of emotions, anything may be perceived as emotional or not be recognised as emotional (Hearn, 1993). Moreover, as I was a part of the interpretive setting, my interpretation may be considered problematic (Fineman, 2000a; Fineman, & Sturdy, 1999; Sturdy, 2003). I kept these issues in mind while observing and recording discussions of stakeholders that conveyed their passion and emotions as they engaged with others in their collaboration for sustainability. I have supported my interpretation with representative quotes to provide richness, emotional intensity and flow (Fineman, & Sturdy, 1999).

As Fineman (2000a) points out “studying emotions...requires an agile, sensitive researcher. It also requires the capacity to report (usually in words) imaginatively, illuminating, and conceptually developing our understanding of the emotional texture of organisations” (pp. 14 -15). While observing the URRSO meetings, I identified stakeholders’ proactivity, levels of commitment and interest in the organisation, and passions for sustainability. I discovered that stakeholders’ proactivity was greatly influenced by their personality, power and status in the community. I consciously developed my sensitivity to trace the ‘not-so-vocal’ stakeholders, identify subtle instances and facial expressions (Fineman, 2000a; Fineman, & Sturdy, 1999; Sturdy, 2003) reflecting deep-felt emotions. I gave prominence to the background conversations they had with others or with me in order to ensure that those ‘soft’ yet ‘passionate’ voices did not get lost in the world of ‘the bold and the loud’ and remain outside my research.

I found the stakeholder interactions in URRSO emotionally very intense and dramatic. In contrast, I observed that the METROCOP stakeholders, being formal representatives of their organisations, were acting more professionally. They were less expressive than the URRSO stakeholders in their display of emotions through their voice, facial expressions or body movements. They especially exercised a greater degree of self-control and were more

cautious as regards to open demonstration of those emotions, which might be perceived as negative by others. They, however, were fairly emotive in how they expressed themselves during the interviews.

As briefly highlighted in Chapters 2 and 4B, my participant observation and interview experiences turned out to be highly emotional encounters for me as well. I therefore recognised the need to keep a record of my emotional experience during this phase. In the next section I briefly describe my emotional journey, which started much before I enrolled in the Ph.D. programme, but became fairly intense for me as I engaged in this research and especially during the data collection phase.

8A.4 My hermeneutic horizon

I admit that this research was an intensely emotional experience for me because of my personal commitment and desire to contribute towards sustainable development, and because I developed friendly relationships with some of the stakeholders. Having been brought up in a developing country where I was exposed to and accepted poverty, hunger, crime, diseases and pollution in that society as harsh realities for the majority of people, over the years I developed personal sensitivity and a professional and intellectual interest in sustainable development issues. My Ph.D., thus for me, is more than just an educational degree. I see it as a connection to my past life in India and my family roots in Nepal, and an extension of my work experience solely dedicated to sustainable development. So, I acknowledge that my interpretations are influenced by my years of professional experience and expertise in doing research, developing and managing multi-party dialogue and collaboration for sustainable development. My interpretations are subject to various prejudices, hopes and dreams that I nurture consciously and unconsciously within myself for sustainable development. During the course of my research I often found myself

comparing and contrasting the lives and priorities of people living in India and in New Zealand. Acknowledging that my emotional connection with sustainable development and with these processes would have influenced my interpretation as well (Fineman, 2000a; Hosking, & Fineman, 1990; Sturdy, 2003; Van Maanen, 1988), I now offer a fairly ‘emotional’ account of my data collection experience.

I was actively invited to and was involved in organisational meetings, with stakeholders across URRSO and METROCOP processes warmly expressing their interest, concern and encouragement towards my Ph.D. research.

At the end of his interview, Andrew asked me when I was planning to finish my PhD. I said in another 2 years’ time. He said that I should speak to the URRSO members, tell them that I have to complete my Ph.D. in 2 years and if they want me to present a “well-rounded report” on URRSO, then the members should meet more frequently, develop a solid plan of action and be more committed. However, in my role as a researcher, I am being always conscious that I should not influence the organisational development, howsoever seriously I desire this organisation to flourish because of my own personal reasons that are connected with my Ph.D. and my commitment to sustainability. [URRSO Interview Fieldnotes, April 2004]

During data collection in the URRSO case, as I travelled two hours by an intercity bus to attend meetings and conduct interviews, I was touched by the genuine and warm acts of kindness and affection extended to me by the stakeholders. While some offered to drop and pick me up from the bus station or the meeting venues, others offered their home to me if I planned to stay overnight in the city. Being affectionately addressed, as “*my young friend*,” kindly complemented with statements like “*I enjoyed talking to you*” (as the interview ended), “*I feel I have a synergy with you, the way I feel with Claire*” (another stakeholder and her close friend). *And, I know there is a long way for us to go,*” and shown a desire to maintain friendships, even after completion of my Ph.D., has made this research a very special personal experience for me.

And every time I finished attending an URRSO meeting or conducting an interview, I felt as if I had just come out of an emotional hot zone. After the data collection, I would feel exhausted and emotionally drained from the whole experience. During my observations and interactions, I often felt that I was being bombarded with many different kinds of emotions. It seemed overwhelming for me at times, as I felt that with so much drama and action happening, I had so much to capture, and so much to comprehend and make sense of. For several days afterwards, I would find myself in a state of 'high' as I realised that I was getting some thrill from the URRSO data collection experience. With the dramatic and emotionally intense state of affairs within URRSO, memories of stakeholder interactions and conversations in those meetings and interviews would linger in my mind for days. I used to look forward to attending URRSO meetings as I started regarding it as an adventure package, for it offered elements of excitement, doubt, anxiety, surprise, frustration and fear to me. As everything seemed so uncertain and unpredictable, I would always find myself guessing what would happen next, who would make what move to steer URRSO ahead, and what influence that move might have on the process. In addition, as the process faltered, a fair degree of fear was breeding in me related to future of my data collection and progress of my Ph.D.

I thus acknowledge that the data collection experience for the URRSO case was like a roller-coaster ride for me. I was disappointed with the slow progress and ultimate demise of URRSO process. I often felt frustrated with my own unrealistic expectations of finding serious commitment to sustainable development from members involved in this organising process. I used to think that people living in developed countries like New Zealand, whose basic needs are mostly fulfilled, might take sustainability more seriously. And when I did not see them doing so in this particular organising process, not only did I feel disillusioned, I also surfaced and questioned my own prejudices in the process.

Moreover, observing URRSO from such a close distance, this data collection experience proved invaluable and unique, for it evolved my thinking significantly. Despite URRSO's failure to achieve its mission, I realised that I was becoming more appreciative of the process and had surpassed the boundaries of judging the process on purely instrumental grounds. The more I got involved in the data collection, the more I started reflecting deeply on the long-term implications of processes like URRSO. I increasingly started seeing some silver linings in the clouds of this failed attempt to collaborate, particularly when I placed this process, in the wide canvass of institutionalisation of sustainable development.

URRSO did bring together people from diverse backgrounds and interests, did stimulate their thinking on sustainability and people have developed projects, not directly under the umbrella of this organisation, but under different umbrellas or projects. Is it possible for me to measure or comment on the effectiveness and efficiency of organisations like URRSO, whose impact is not limited and confined within its own boundaries and can take place outside, among different groups of people and in different fora? [URRSO Interview Fieldnotes, July 2004]

Interestingly, I had a somewhat different experience participating in the METROCOP processes. It was definitely a much more sober, stable and a less emotionally intense experience. As I saw the commitment levels of METROCOP stakeholders and their hard work and sincere dedication towards their responsibilities, I started developing great respect for these local government officials. My feelings of respect were also accompanied by my feelings of empathy for them. I often understood the difficult position they were in and could recognise the enormous stress they were going through as they were carrying out their professional responsibilities to plan and achieve their local and regional sustainability mission. As I attended the METROCOP meetings, I could feel the tension and politics of stakeholders' engagement with each other. They were striving hard to make the collaborations successful despite their differences and dissatisfaction from the processes. I would often find myself picturing the plight of these officials. I felt that they were sandwiched between central government and regulatory expectations on the one hand, and community stakeholders and normative expectations, on the other.

I acknowledge that with my data collection experience, I gradually developed a different outlook towards these processes. The more time I spent closely observing METROCOP processes from inside, the more I started appreciating the value and potential of such processes. I feel I have become more patient and realistic in terms of my expectations from stakeholders and such multi-stakeholder processes for sustainability, as compared to those early days when I was collecting data on the URRSO case. For those who expect to see some immediate, dramatic, and tangible positive results for regional sustainability, such multi-stakeholder processes may appear slow or static. While I recognise that such processes on their own are unable to create a powerful impact and drastically change society on grounds of sustainable development, I also value the potential of these processes, within their own limitations, in the small and local successes, and even in the failures and learnings they generate. Thus, this dissertation is also a projection of my hermeneutic horizon, engulfing and fusing my emotionality and rationality, as a researcher in my analysis and theorisation of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.

In the next section, I present my analysis on emotions around sustainability which URRSO stakeholders expressed as they engaged with others and with me during the process.

8A.5 Emotions around sustainability

Under the theme of emotions around sustainability, I have identified seven emotional sub-themes, which are: (a) Sustainability and Excitement; (b) Sustainability and Empathy; (c) Sustainability and Hope; (d) Sustainability and Fear; (e) Sustainability and Pride; (f) Sustainability and Frustration; and (g) Sustainability and Stress. Through these sub-themes, I reveal the various kinds of emotions stakeholders felt in connection with the concept of sustainable development and around sustainability. As only the URRSO stakeholders

strongly expressed intense emotions around sustainability, I identified this as an important theme only in the case of URRSO.

Moreover, with those emotions around sustainability found mostly missing from the METROCOP cases, I used the difference in stakeholders' emotional expressions around sustainability to further reflect upon certain characteristics of multi-stakeholder organising processes across the three cases. I expose how, even though each collaboration was being driven by the sustainability movement, some of the emotional characteristics of social movement organisations like URRSO are very different from other processes like METROCOP-I and II, belonging to local government. I have also drawn on those emotional differences to further reflect on stakeholder behaviour in top-down and bottom-up initiatives designed to institutionalise sustainable development.

The following table gives a comparative picture of the seven emergent sub-themes under the theme of emotions around sustainability as observed and not observed across the three cases.

| Themes | URRSO | METROCOP – I & II | Sub-themes |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Emotions around Sustainability | • | - | Excitement |
| | • | - | Empathy |
| | • | - | Hope |
| | • | - | Fear |
| | • | - | Pride |
| | • | - | Frustration |
| | • | - | Stress (From busy lifestyle) |

Table 8.1 Multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability: Field-level emotions around sustainability

In the subsequent sub-sections, I present my analysis on each of the sub-themes.

8A.5.1 Sustainability and Excitement

This sub-theme reflects how sustainability because of its trans-disciplinary foundation has the potential to arouse excitement in stakeholders. I reveal how such excitement can influence stakeholders' motivation to get involved in multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability and influence the organising process, as observed in URRSO.

The trans-disciplinary approach within the sustainable development philosophy proved very attractive to various URRSO stakeholders. Some of them acknowledged that they found the first URRSO meeting very “*exciting!*” as a number of people “*who were really passionate about sustainability*” attended the launch function. They were excited that in URRSO “*there were people from all sorts of different groups.*” They thus regarded URRSO as a prospective ground where they could have a “*lot of fun*” as they would get opportunity to know and work with “*different*” individuals who shared “*similar*” interests and passion for sustainability.

Wow! What a wonderful tapestry of people! You know, from so many different fields within our community and so many learned....I mean, I felt very humbled to be there! [URRSO stakeholder]

For some stakeholders, URRSO was exciting because it not only gave them a platform to contribute towards sustainable development, it also gave them an opportunity to connect with old friends who also believed in the philosophy of sustainable development.

My friend, Claire (with great pride) rang me, and said, “You’ve got to come for this meeting” and it was a meeting on sustainability! Because we had talked at length about sustainability and about our understanding and as you know, we, in lot of times, called the same tune - Claire and myself! So, I trotted along to that with her. Had a very enjoyable meeting! [URRSO stakeholder]

Others were thrilled because, by participating in URRSO, they felt a greater a sense of belonging to their community, and a sense that they were not alone in the sustainability mission.

There were a number of speakers and I found it exciting because, "Hey, there are other people out there who think this is important!!" (with great excitement and with surprise, laughing heartily).
[URRSO stakeholder]

So, when some stakeholders found that URRSO was offering them a potential venue where they could develop or maintain new and old relationships in the community, they were excited to participate in it. As they participated, they felt they had a shared sense of purpose and power in that engagement. And some stakeholders were thrilled to join URRSO because they were also attracted to the glamorous 'global to local' appeal of sustainable development.

Mac: For clarity, I think it will be good if we put sustainable development is defined internationally as, as a sub-heading, and nationally, as another subheading.

Claire: We recognise that internationally, sustainability is about...

Mac: I was just going to suggest that you put - this is defined internationally as, and then go nationally, locally...

Claire: Ah, I see. That's quite good. That's a good idea, isn't it? Globally or internationally?

Ben: I would use the term "globally". That's the term, which was used in Agenda 21.

Teresa: I like the word "globally" though. (Everyone laughs)

Mona: It's far spicier than the word internationally! (Laughs). It's "sexier" is the word! (Everyone laughs)

Teresa: Globally is sexier than internationally. (Everyone laughs)

Ben: Maybe, globally is internationally sexier! (Everyone laughs)

Mona: It's got two Ls. It's sexier! (Everyone laughs)

Teresa: And hey, sustainability is sexy now! (Everyone laughs) Globally! This is [as] sexy as globally!!

Ben: I don't think I will ever look at that word again without the two legs! (Everyone laughs)

Claire: All right. Now, we now have....the first paragraph is now tidied up. We now go into the definitions - globally, nationally and locally. (Everyone laughs)

[URRSO MOU Sub-Committee Meeting, November 2003]

Thus, stakeholders' excitement about the concept of sustainable development and for sustainability played a critical role in inspiring them to join a collaborative, bottom-up initiative like URRSO that was aiming to contribute towards the sustainability movement. Its trans-disciplinary foundation and a broad horizon that engulfs and connects local concerns with the global ones, made sustainable development a powerfully appealing concept that not only attracted but also enthused stakeholders who were passionate about transforming society for greater common good. By engaging in URRSO, they found a

shared sense of purpose and felt empowered, which also made them feel important. They were excited that through URRSO they were able to connect with other members from community. Some were also excited by the prospect of getting opportunities to learn from others and work collectively towards bringing about positive social transformation. Thus, excitement around sustainability facilitated the initial dialogue among stakeholders and development of URRSO.

8A.5.2 Sustainability and Empathy

This sub-theme reflects how stakeholders' feelings of empathy and concern for others were evoked as they identified with the concept of sustainable development. It also demonstrates how those feelings motivated stakeholders to become involved in URRSO, and further influenced its organising.

Various stakeholders expressed their feelings of love, care, empathy, and concern, which sustainability evoked in them. Some expressed the deep attachment they had for our planet and “*natural resources*” – a connection which they had developed because of family upbringing, or life experiences. Some pointed out that it was their “*nurturing*” which brought them “*right into the concepts of sustainability, without the language*”.

I was brought up on a farm, on the Northern slopes of Mount Taranaki and was in a family that was politically conscious (She says with pride in her voice and passion in her eyes).... My father was a bit of a radical, but always looked for long term benefit.... A very gentle man! And I think, he gave me a fondness for the environment. We had strands of bush on the farm and my father, always used to say “I find my god in the outdoors!” (Her eyes moisten as she visualises the scene in her mind and the moment becomes very emotional for her and me). And those were, sort of my early foundations of the principle of sustainability. [URRSO stakeholder]

For some, sustainability was not just related to “*the exploitation of the planet*” but was also “*about the exploitation of people.*” It was also about “*poverty*” and “*insecurity.*” It was “*about quality of life.*” It was about “*creating a caring society of people, who actually do care about one another and who will look after one another.*”

Some stakeholders related to the concept of sustainability as a public expression of their concern for people - including their family members, or ‘others’ - people from their own community, other communities of the country and the world, present or future generations. For some “*partnerships for sustainability*” was for “*the future generations and that encompass their survival.*” They considered sustainability as an important reminder that people need to look beyond their immediate personal interests and start caring for others in their community.

Taking care of the future! Looking at the things we do now and ensuring that when we leave this earth, that this place can be a better place for our children and more children! So, it's again changing the whole consciousness to people saying “Hey, it's not about just today! It's not about tomorrow! It's about the future! And it's not about just me! And it's not about just my family! But it's about all of us! And it's not about just me and my family taking care of ourselves, it's about saying “Hey, what about the other people in this community?” (passionately and very sincerely. The energy in her voice is scintillating and deeply inspiring. It seems that she is all set to launch herself in order to bring that change in values of the society.) [URRSO stakeholder]

Following the suggestions in the Brundtland definition related to prioritising the needs of future generations, most stakeholders considered sustainability as a ‘legacy’ – of assurance, safety and security – which they wanted to leave behind for the coming generations of their family.

I believe that whatever we do today, I should be doing it in such a manner that my grandchildren can do it, with safety, in what every tomorrow type of thing. [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, sustainable development as a philosophy evoked deep feelings of empathy, love and care in certain individuals, who then driven by such emotions, were further motivated to engage in URRSO and contribute towards sustainability. URRSO gave them a sense of belonging to such a caring community of individuals who believed in the philosophy of sustainable development, and who wanted to work collectively with others to protect the Earth and various forms of life that inhabit the planet. Such feelings had a powerful positive influence in stimulating stakeholders’ ‘initial’ interest and involvement in URRSO, and facilitating the dialogue and collaboration among them for sustainability. However,

later my analyses will reveal that these emotions were not powerful enough to sustain stakeholders' interest in URRSO.

8A.5.3 Sustainability and Hope

This sub-theme reveals how stakeholders, by associating with the concept of sustainable development, revived their hopes of creating and living in a better society. It demonstrates how those hopes influenced their involvement in URRSO.

Stakeholders shared that sustainability gave them a hope of a society which took “*care of the environment*”, and which offered “*increased levels of business confidence and also the viability of economy*”. They expressed their desire to live in “*a people-friendly city and region - culturally vibrant, socially just, politically participatory, economically productive, and ecologically sustainable.*” They dreamt of living in a society where they felt “*close to nature*”. They hoped to experience “*the look of the place that is green, rather than the concrete driven tenements, the man made.*” They hoped for “*security, safety, a place where they feel comfortable, and that does not necessarily mean in economic terms*”. They longed to live in a place where “*diversity is treasured*” and a lifestyle “*where arts and culture are a part of living and...that means festivals, singing and dancing, and poetry and joy.*” They hoped for a future society where they felt confident that “*their children can walk to school safely*” and “*where there are systems in dealing with crime and violence.*” They hoped that through sustainable development they could create such a society. Moreover, the central government’s vision for New Zealand as a “*land where diversity is valued and reflected in our national identity; a great place to live, learn, work and do business; a birthplace of world-changing people and ideas; a place where people invest in the future*” [URRSO Memorandum of Understanding, December 2003] reinforced their hope and assured them that they were not alone and unjustified in harbouring such aspirations to create and live in a better society.

Some stakeholders connected spiritually with sustainability. They “*had a hope*” for “*a new era*” which would involve “*reassembling some of the values*” on “*social responsibility, interdependence, the common good, heritage values, the role of education*” that have been lost, but could hopefully be “*re-asserted, in a new way!*” They hoped for an era in which people’s consciousness would be elevated to such a level where people could surpass their personal goals of accumulating greater material wealth and possession at any cost, and recognise their spiritual existence and connection with various forms of life on Earth and hence treasure and protect them.

Thus, stakeholders harboured some hope that people’s quality of life would significantly improve if their society was developed on principles of sustainable development. With a dream of having a brighter, more peaceful and beautiful life for themselves and their community, most of the stakeholders engaged in URRSO with a hope that they could work together to convert such a dream to reality. And with such a hope from sustainable development, stakeholders were initially stimulated and interested in engaging in dialogue and collaborating with others, through URRSO, to achieve sustainability. Thus such hopes, to some extent, served the initial development of URRSO.

8A.5.4 Sustainability and Fear

This sub-theme uncovers various kinds of stakeholders’ fears, worries and anxieties about what they saw as the currently unsustainable and disharmonious pattern of development and consumption in society. It shows how, by getting involved in a process like URRSO that was connected with sustainability, they were attempting to address some of those fears. It thus reflects how those fears also motivated stakeholders to get involved in URRSO.

Sustainability prompted stakeholders to think about “*our very survival and our very future!*” They thought those were “*the biggest issues of all! About survival of the world we live in, really! And how much its resources can endure and be replenished!*” They were worried that “*our prosperity is*

threatened; our current pathway is unsustainable – ecologically, socially and culturally, and economically’’
[URRSO Memorandum of Understanding, December 2003]. Fearful of the uncertainties confronting the planet and future growth and prosperity of society, they underscored the urgency to take corrective measures guided by the principles of sustainable development.

And that our children [should have] a just right, to not being brought up in violent environments.... If you were to think, what kind of a life would I like to have for my child? That quality of life - for every single child that is born, irrespective of where they are! (As she speaks this very passionately, her eyes are filled with tears. I am moved by the intensity and depth of her expression. There is an amazing sorrow and fear, yet, a deep hope, in Teresa’s voice and her eyes reflect that dream). [URRSO stakeholder]

Other stakeholders, especially those who represented the business community, considered sustainability as a long-term investment that guaranteed a ‘profitable’ return and minimised long-term risks that came with unsustainable development.

To me, sustainability means that I can stay on the land or stay where I am, and farm, and to make a living of that particular piece of land!.... If I could not make some money to stay there, then it is not sustainable...you know, then sustainability goes out of the door! Cause we have actually got to make money, we also have to look after the environment. We look after the environment, as well as make some money to stay there! [URRSO stakeholder]

I actually, genuinely, want my grandchildren to be able to run a business, you know, in the next generation! (with desperation and fear. At the same time, he says it very assertively and in a demanding fashion, as if it is his genuine right to ask for that and expect that). And unless, we take some actual steps, to, you know, convince people to change their way of thinking, to change their way of manufacture, change the way they buy their product, in terms of waste and all that sort of thing, then we are not going to do that! [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, stakeholders in URRSO generally realised that anthropogenic activities had caused serious environmental degradation and contributed to ecological imbalance. Some of them were very fearful about the future of economic growth and prosperity of their communities, human survival and needs of future generations. Such fears prompted them all to seriously think about sustainable development, and influenced their motivation to engage in URRSO which was organised to achieve sustainability.

8A.5.5 Sustainability and Pride

This sub-theme reflects how stakeholders derived a sense of pride and an enhanced sense of self-importance and self-esteem as they associated with projects on sustainability in general. It shows how such feelings tended to attract them to engage in URRSO, which further influenced the course of organising.

With a wide range of issues that need to be addressed while planning policies and initiatives on sustainable development, some stakeholders recognised that by engaging in projects on sustainability they would have opportunities to network with influential citizens or reputed organisations at national and international levels. Because of their involvement in some sustainability projects in the past, some of them felt proud that they had this networking privilege. Based on those experiences they felt motivated to engage in URRSO as well.

I was on the [X] New Zealand Executive and so was [another local body politician]. And he and I became friends. And because, like me, he had many of the same sort of thoughts, many of the same sorts of policy drivers, the pair of us, became quite excited about what [sustainability] meant and that's when we found out about this [international organisation involved in local environmental projects]. And that's when we said "Wow, now this is.... we think local is great, but thinking locally also means that you have to think globally" and so by [the year y], my [organisation] was a member of [that organisation]. We were invited to a workshop in Thailand. And five of us went, which was quite remarkable! [URRSO stakeholder]

And there were others who expected such networking opportunities to arise for them in future as they got involved in URRSO and as the process matured. Thus, some stakeholders viewed URRSO as a lucrative forum where they could meet influential citizens and raise their social profile, which would further enhance their self-esteem and pride.

Yeah, I suppose, I [have got] a bit of profile out there. And who was I? ...My profile has increased as well. People are starting to listen. People are starting to take notice.... So your credibility, it's really....I suppose, these last six months have been about building my credibility.... And it's a credibility for myself. As well that people will start to take notice... it's not about taking notice of "the person", [but] what it's about [is] taking notice of "what is being said."And also, we have become known, most probably as "women who work in the area of social sustainability" (with humble pride). [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, with sustainable development increasingly becoming a high-profile agenda item in social and political circles of New Zealand, some stakeholders became hopeful that while contributing to sustainable development through such collaborations, they may also receive valuable opportunities to build and expand their networking with influential individuals. Those networks could help them enhance their social status and boost their public image. As they became involved in URRSO, the pride some of them felt in networking with some influential citizens further influenced their engagement in, and organising of URRSO.

8A.5.6 Sustainability and Frustrations

This sub-theme projects various frustrations that stakeholders felt either as they interacted with various regulatory institutions, or as they reflected on their experiences with past/current social practices and systems developed on unsustainable pathways. It reveals how those frustrations influenced stakeholder engagement in URRSO.

For some stakeholders, their frustrations with the current practices or systems in society prompted their interest in sustainability. Some stakeholders were deeply frustrated with the regulatory institutions as they found government policy formulation and implementation processes distant and inaccessible to local citizens.

Here we are eight years down the track, and we sit here with all these reports here, and yet we are talking about this community, we are talking about engaging society, and they don't even know! (Loudly) And that's the irony! If we are going to be looking for sustainability, for God's sake, let's get out there! I am sorry about my frustration at the moment (she says apologetically)! Please get out there and ask the people and say "Look this [plan] was done in 1995, is this what you want?"

They hoped that as regulatory institutions increasingly adopted sustainable development as a policy those institutions would also implement mechanisms that actively involved public. Such an approach would help in bridging the current divide between policy formulation at regulatory institutional level and policy implementation involving citizens.

The only way that we are going to be able to talk to people, to actually get from the people, from the community, from the 120, 000 people who live in the city is by actually asking them (sounds desperate and passionate) “What is it that you want?” It is simplistic! It is holistic! It is about sustainability! It’s about people! Because without people of this community, we are just wasting our time. And unless we actually, go out, we can have these indicators in the book, but I think the biggest performance indicator here is the fact that eight years down the track, none of us know about it! [URRSO stakeholder]

They felt that with greater public participation some of their frustrations around inaction would be taken care of. They thus regarded URRSO as a platform where they could communicate with policy-makers and express their concerns.

...[reminding] the policy makers, the Council and the Mayor and the people that building roads, [and providing] clean water is not enough! It’s not enough! There is a need for more. [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, stakeholders’ negative prejudices and frustrations related to functioning of the regulatory bodies, their frustrations from negative trends in society, and their interests to contribute to the policy process concerned with sustainable development motivated stakeholders to engage in URRSO.

8A.5.7 Sustainability and Stress

This sub-theme reflects how stakeholders’ busy and stressful lifestyles diluted their voluntary commitment to URRSO¹¹¹. It also shows how stakeholders’ feelings of composure and relaxation, and the lack of priority and urgency which they attached to sustainability negatively influenced the course of organising in URRSO.

Most stakeholders acknowledged that their involvement in URRSO was more of a pastime, in which they would like to remain engaged, if and when they had the time.

¹¹¹ Even METROCOP stakeholders were stressed in their jobs. However, despite the work-related stress, they could not disengage from METROCOP-I and II as the failure of the two processes would have had serious negative implications for their organisation, work and careers.

Everyone is extremely busy. Everyone is very focussed on what they consider to be their essential work. There are quite a number of people, even at the senior management team here, who would see this as an unnecessary or a “nice-to-do” kind of exercise, rather than something that is really important! So, a concept like sustainability, and I guess, this is kind of reflection of society as well, you see, the societies that have actually, actively embraced sustainability, are usually the ones, the people who have actually got the time to think about it, you know (laughs). Personally, I mean, I don’t have the time to do it at the moment. I mean, you know, I have got more than enough to do. I mean I could really enjoy taking a lead in it, if I didn’t have a demanding full-time job, but I do at the moment! [URRSO stakeholder]

Some members expected others to take the initiative and steer the organisation ahead, either because they did not have “*much gusto as [they] used to have*” or they had “*other interests*” or were “*busy*.”

Thus, facing no immediate crisis, most stakeholders’ demanding work schedules and stressful life styles coupled with the long-term orientation of sustainable development, caused them to attach low urgency and priority to actually achieving sustainability. Such an outlook coupled with the fact that their engagement in URRSO was of a voluntary nature, also diluted their commitment towards URRSO. As a result, URRSO was less of a priority to some stakeholders which ultimately proved detrimental to its organising.

8A.6 Discussion

In this section, I integrate the analyses presented in the previous section. I cast a lens on stakeholders’ emotional utterances connected with sustainability in order to rationalise why the URRSO process failed to sustain itself. My critical hermeneutic training prompts me to scrutinise stakeholders’ emotions around sustainability with some doubt as well as some faith (Prasad, 2002). I assess the nature of stakeholders’ involvement in URRSO and their commitment to sustainability based on their validity claims of truth, rightness and sincerity (Habermas, 1987). I have also used Fineman’s (2000a) language of emotions ‘serving’ and

‘interfering’ with sustainability not for the purpose he ostensibly suggested it (in terms of emotions serving and/or interfering with rationality), but because I find it useful to demonstrate how not all emotions, however positive they might appear, are unproblematic in the quest for sustainability.

Various stakeholders came together with great excitement and joined URRSO as different people inspired by the dream of a sustainable future. Sustainability connected people to their family histories and family values, as well as to the future generations in their families. It also linked them to their region as stakeholders expressed their desires to care for, or expect care from others in the region.

The excitement, a potentially positive emotion that came with the ‘concept’ of sustainable development, initially ‘served’ the organising process. Especially when stakeholders’ excitement fused with other emotions of hope, compassion, threat, pride and frustrations, it was potent enough to motivate them to seriously engage in the process. For example, the excitement and pride stakeholders derived by networking with diverse and influential citizens proved lucrative enough for them to initially remain committed to the organising process. However, with such a diverse group, opportunity to network with everyone in the region proved challenging, mostly because different stakeholders came to URRSO with different interests and agendas – some of which were complementary, while most were conflicting. And while the dialogic foundations of URRSO allowed different stakeholders to express their diverse views, it also proved harmful because it unrealistically encouraged them to nurture diverse and great expectations from the process, which later served as a breeding ground for various debates. For example, out of the socio-cultural, environmental and economic challenges facing the region, which should be addressed first and why? Which stakeholders’ priorities should be deemed most important by the URRSO and on what grounds? Or should all those issues be addressed collectively using simultaneous and

parallel processes; and if yes, how could URRSO accomplish such a goal? As stakeholders argued to defend their claims, it not only led to confusion, it also became increasingly difficult for everyone to listen to each other. While some stakeholders' views were incorporated in the process, other views were devalued and rejected, which further led to low stakeholder morale. Thus the initial fervour and excitement from the trans-disciplinary focus of sustainable development eventually fizzled and became a source of frustration, eventually 'interfering' with the process, and making it difficult for most of the stakeholders to endure this potentially rich networking relationship.

The empathy, hope and fear around sustainability felt by stakeholders are positive emotions that 'served' the organising process. Fusing well in the context of sustainable development these emotions accounted for stakeholders' passion for sustainability. URRSO offered a stimulating forum to nurture and enflame that passion, further stimulating the dialogic relationship. However, feelings of empathy became a source of frustration for some stakeholders who judged others on grounds of perceived truth and sincerity. Some stakeholders saw others in the URRSO as more superficially engaged in it, especially those who they considered were treating URRSO as more of a pastime, or were engaging in it mainly to network with influential citizens and raise their social profile. And such views resulted in deeper frustration for those more passionately committed ones, mostly because they expected others to be as passionate, selfless and committed to the cause as they were themselves. They often challenged others to raise the intensity of their passion and be ready to make certain sacrifices in their personal lives in ways that 'directly' contributed to creation of a sustainable society. Some of them aggressively demanded proof of the extent to which all stakeholders were seriously committed to sustainability, and were prepared to put others' needs at least on par with their own. Those differences caused them to become greatly disillusioned with the process and eventually interfered with it.

Stakeholders' hope for a bright and positive future inspired and motivated them. It initially served the organising process by directing stakeholders' attention on what a sustainable region might entail and thus aided in planning and goal-setting. However, translating something as abstract as hope and dreams into achievable, time bound and measurable outcomes proved not only a highly time-consuming and resource-intensive exercise, it was also laden with practical difficulties. Some stakeholders gracefully accepted that their hopes of a sustainable future may not be realised in their lifetime, in spite of their working hard to achieve those dreams. Other stakeholders were very impatient and stressed that they did not want to wait for a lifetime to see positive results. They demanded that the URRSO, instead of engaging in lip-service, should work towards generating immediate and visible positive impacts on regional sustainability. Some stakeholders were very disappointed and frustrated with the process as their expectations were raised beyond what could be realistically achieved in a given time frame by a small group of individuals. Thus, generating a utopian vision of a sustainable future and perhaps unrealistically raising stakeholders' hopes contributed to ideological clashes and eventually interfered with the organising.

Pride felt by stakeholders as they engaged in this regional sustainability mission proved positive and hence seemed to serve the organising process, as discussed above. However, this feeling proved very detrimental for, and interfered with the process, especially when some of the stakeholders, primarily became involved in the URRSO with the presumed intention to build their social network and move ahead in life. Coming with certain vested interests, they were often found to dictate an organisational agenda that seemed to favour their personal or professional goals. Assumptions around such vested interests greatly frustrated those stakeholders who had joined the organisation with social goals rather than personal goals in mind. And as they became frustrated, they decided to disassociate from the process.

Of all the emotions stakeholders expressed, the differences in personal passions fuelling ongoing commitment proved most detrimental to URRSO. For some sustainability was more of a “*pastime*” than an urgent priority, which was evident in the feelings of composure and relaxation which those stakeholders associated with sustainability. Gripped initially by excitement, they took time to voluntarily join URRSO and pursue a project of their personal interest and passion. However, with the passage of time and the emergence of other interests and priorities, their initial enthusiasm seemed to fade. Some stakeholders stopped contributing towards the organising process and blamed it on their stressful work schedule or on other competing priorities in life. They expected others, who they considered had spare time, to take up the cause and contribute more actively towards the process. Such feelings hence most seriously interfered with the organising process.

Thus, in spite of starting with great fervour and enthusiasm, and investing considerable resources to launch URRSO, and develop the MoU to formalise shared understanding of sustainability and seek formal commitment of stakeholders, URRSO failed to realise its initial promise. It ultimately reached a status quo situation within just six months of its launch. URRSO’s failure reflects paradox in voluntary collaborations for sustainability. This failure came as a relief for those volunteers who had other pressing priorities, and as a source of irritation for others who wanted to more quickly realise certain tangible outcomes on regional sustainability. In common was the anticipation for what URRSO might achieve at the outset, and the subsequent resignation and realism about what it did not achieve. For some, the latter amounted to frustration. In a rational sense, stakeholders’ emotions could be seen to have imbued sustainability with such incredible promise and great expectations that neither this process, nor stakeholders by themselves, could realistically achieve all that was desired.

In the next Chapter 8B, I present my analysis on the theme of ‘emotions for others and for the process’. I then discuss the wider implications of the dynamics of those emotions on the three cases I investigated in my dissertation, and on sustainability, in general.

Chapter 8B

Dynamics of Emotions – Emotions for Others and the Process

8B.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my analysis on the theme of “Emotions for others and for the process”. Under this theme, which emerged strongly across all the three cases, I have identified seven underlying sub-themes that are: (a) Confusion and Frustration; (b) Mistrust and Suspicion; (c) Fear and Nervousness; (d) Anger; (e) Hope and Satisfaction; (f) Pessimism and Disillusionment; and (g) Stress. With these sub-themes, I reveal the different kinds of emotions felt by stakeholders for each other, and for the dialogic collaboration. Later, in section 8B.2, I discuss the overall dynamics of stakeholders’ emotions as they engaged with others during their respective collaboration for sustainability. In section 8B.3, I conclude the chapter.

As mentioned earlier, I have grouped together the stakeholders’ emotions for others, and those for the collaboration. I did so because through my analysis I realised that those emotions were intricately connected and appeared in mixed and inseparable forms. The following comparative table summarises the emergence of various emotions across the three cases.

| Theme | URRSO | METROCOP – I & METROCOP – II | Sub-themes |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|---|
| Emotions for others and the Process | • | • | Confusion and Frustration |
| | • | • | Mistrust and Suspicion |
| | • | • | Fear and Nervousness |
| | • | • | Anger |
| | - | • | Stress (To make the collaboration work) |
| | - | • | Hope and Satisfaction |
| | • | - | Pessimism and Disillusionment |

Table 8.2 Multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability: Field-level emotions for others and the process

8B.1.1 Confusion and Frustration

In this sub-section, I present my analysis of the sub-theme of confusion and frustration. I expose the various kinds and levels of confusions that prominently characterised all the three cases and the frustrations that were generated as a result. I thus unmask how confusion and frustrations that emerged during the dialogue influenced the three cases.

In spite of ongoing efforts during dialogue sessions to generate greater understanding among stakeholders, there was a lot of confusion and as a result, a fair amount of frustration, across all the three processes. For example, in URRSO, most stakeholders said they were “*frustrated*” because it seemed that there were “*people with lots of ideas and lots of things*” but little clarity around how was the process “*going to move forward in actually achieving things?*” [URRSO stakeholder]. Frustrations also emerged because of ambiguities around URRSO’s organisational structure – stakeholders were confused whether they should follow a “*communication type model where people are learning and coming together*” or a “*grassroots*” action-based model.

...if this group is going to be heard, it needs the ability. And if it is not recognised formally, but by participation and by any other mechanisms, it is just going to be any other chat session! And that is essentially frustrating, that’s the one that causes people to drop off! [URRSO meeting, November 2005]

Different conceptual understandings and expectations of sustainability added fuel to the fire of confusion burning during all the three processes. More frustration was generated as a result.

Mac: *If we are talking about vision of sustainability for the region, all we are doing is rewriting, a yet another definition of sustainability (sounds helpless and frustrated) and linking that on to [our region]. What’s the point of doing it?*
Billy: *Reinventing the wheel!*
Jose: *We can do the vision for URRSO. We cannot do it for the whole region. We are not representing the whole [of our] region!*

Shannon: Can I suggest that this would be rewritten, based on the discussion and we will try and have it rewritten, so that it reflects the broader notion of sustainability but pins it down to the ability of URRSO to deliver what it wants to deliver. This is the way of doing it.

Paul: I think I must be on something else! (seems very frustrated)

Gilbert: I think we are getting utterly confused on this.

[URRSO meeting, September 2003]

I think community outcomes...funny thing, it sounds really simple when focused at the local bit, but it gets more and more complex when you start to overlay that regional - what is the purpose and intent of regional outcomes as opposed to local? We have not really worked that out! Nobody has really worked that out! We should have put more energy into that! But, I think,... we all don't share the same views. And so maybe, misunderstandings arise because of that.

[METROCOP stakeholder]

Some stakeholders across all the three cases were confused about the various terminologies used during the processes. As a result they were becoming frustrated.

I think, please excuse me for saying this, but this is one of the “white-middle class” forum (looks very frustrated)But first of all, I would like to understand what indicators are! I mean, I am on this bloody forum, but I am ignorant! [URRSO meeting, September 2003]

Lisa expressed her dissatisfaction and confusion because of the “messiness of the processes” and with “so many things and small details floating around” there. She said that she was losing track of things. She found as the collaboration was proceeding its purpose was also evolving, and at times it was getting confusing for her to understand the relationship between, and the purpose of the two METROCOP processes. [METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, November 2005]

They wanted to engage in deeper dialogue to clarify confusion related to their respective process or on sustainability.

For me, it's quite a new learning - sustainable development indicators and all those kind of things. If you want to engage people, first of all, people will link through communication language. [URRSO meeting, September 2003]

Maybe, for that sort of thing to work, maybe we all needed to be kind of, in it together from the beginning, with a clear intent around why are we working together.... If we had all talked of things – this is our process and we are all going to work on it together and this is the key point here, we would have a common and shared understanding of what the purpose was and how it fitted into our process. [METROCOP stakeholder's comments on METROCOP-I process]

When some efforts were made to resolve such language issues, paradoxically, stakeholders even found those efforts confusing and started becoming frustrated that they were spending too much time just “talking” about issues. They wanted to see action and change.

Such an approach to dialogue contributed further to confusion and frustration in the process.

It is difficult when we get people coming from different arenas of the environment sector to come and share and talk at the same platform. And here we are talking of bringing people from various sectors of the society. I don't see this development as a failure but it is frustrating.[URRSO meeting, September 2003]

There is a tendency for some of these regional collaborations to be just a hell of a lot of talk. And, you know....uh (he looks frustrated and tired with the thought of regional collaboration)....I don't see anything new coming up. People just repeat the same old stuff! They just give it a different name!....O.K. now where is the difference? I don't see it! It's so much bloody marketing going on! And it's all smoke and mirrors. But, at the end of the day, I ask them do they actually see any fundamental change? Or anything, which is really different? Lots of talk! Yeah! (He sounds frustrated and bit angry). Too much talk and too little doing, often, I think! I find that very frustrating. [METROCOP stakeholder]

I found it amusing and ironic at the same time when I observed stakeholders disagreeing about particular issues on which they had an apparently similar stance. When confusion occurred around various issues I observed that often stakeholders either looked lost or bored and frustrated. Sometimes, as they further communicated with each other, they would confess that they were probably trying to say the same thing, or had a similar stance on some issue, or did not come up with something that was unique and drastically different from what they already knew. The dialogue to arrive to this point contributed to confusion, took time, and essentially frustrated the stakeholders.

The above analysis reveals confusion and frustration as two key emotions that stakeholders experienced as they dialogically engaged with other stakeholders in their respective collaboration. On one hand, various kinds and levels of misunderstandings, as discussed in Chapter 7, added to frustration and confusion among stakeholders. On the other hand, those two emotions also created further misunderstandings among them. Confusion was mostly because they had not pre-defined what they collectively understood by sustainability and how they should address issues related to regional and local sustainability. There was a lack of clarity around definition and use of concepts and terminologies on sustainable

development. In order to effectively communicate with one another, it could have helped to adopt a common language on sustainability from the very start of the respective process. Moreover, different expectations of the process or of others involved in the process, which stakeholders harboured, made those collaborations a cumbersome, ambiguous and frustrating encounter for most of those involved. However, I also acknowledge that considering the wide gamut of issues that are connected with sustainable development and the diversity of perspectives that need to be incorporated for comprehensively understanding and solving the problems, it would be unrealistic to expect that such collaborations would be devoid of confusions and frustrations, howsoever perfect the planning of the collaboration might be. Thus, with confusion and frustrations characterising such processes, I argue that those emotions negatively influenced all the three cases.

8B.1.2 Mistrust and Suspicion

In this sub-section, I reveal the mistrust which stakeholders across the three cases experienced for each other. I also expose how, while mistrusting others, they also became suspicious of others and more cautious of their involvement in the collaboration.

Across all three cases, stakeholders were reasonably mistrusting of others involved in the process. While some mistrusted certain individuals, others mistrusted the organisations, or the sectors which others represented. For example, the majority of the METROCOP stakeholders and their respective territorial local authorities seemed to greatly mistrust the Metropolitan Regional Council (MRC). Observation and analysis of the METROCOP meetings and interviews revealed that the territorial local authority stakeholders carried very strong negative prejudices against the MRC. Some of the negative prejudices had been built because of political rivalry between the MRC and the territorial local authorities in the

region, and had strengthened over the years because of negative experiences at the organisational level. Those prejudices also made them distrustful of the MRC.

And some of that, I think, are kind of issues around, respective organisational cultures and what's O.K. within a particular organisation. I think, for the MRC, it's sort of institutional behaviour....The issues are not just common to this Community Outcomes Process. They are bigger than that! [METROCOP stakeholder]

And also there is a bit of history, from what I understand, as mistrust between the MRC and the other councils. [METROCOP stakeholder]

The organisational distrust for the MRC seemed to have entered into the METROCOP processes as well, casting a shadow over the dialogue and collaboration for sustainability.

What we wanted was to be an equal partner in the joint process! And I think it felt, the whole way along it was almost like, the kind of public voice from MRC that it is the joint collaborative process, but the intent isn't there! It was hideous.... Does it want to serve them rather than the needs of every body in the region? [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think I was quite cynical [when it came to expecting something from METROCOP-I] (she has a big laugh)! Because of my first early discussion and it felt like quite a lot of "game playing". And honestly, I think some of the fundamental things that [my organisation] wanted to see, being sort of being acknowledged as "building blocks" of the way forward, it was a real struggle to get those in line! It was not building on what Territorial Authorities have done to date! [METROCOP stakeholder]

The not-for-profit and business organisations, and individuals involved in URRSO did not trust the local authorities and their representatives involved in the process.

Because of [this city's] previous track record, in terms of local government, there is a complete lack of trust between, certainly, the larger business community and local government. Uh, the larger businesses in town consider local government people to be unemployed idiots (laughs)! They really should not be paid! [URRSO business community stakeholder]

The reason why I want [URRSO] to keep the Council honest is because they develop the indicators, they then monitor them and then they report on the results. And, then what happens is that they move the goalposts. If they don't like the results, they change the mechanism. [URRSO stakeholder]

Moreover, in the case of URRSO, certain individuals were not trusted because of their political strength, reputation and networking in the community. And as those individuals

became involved in steering URRSO, there was a fair degree of scepticism among a number of stakeholders, including those belonging to the local authorities.

...there would be quite a lot of cynicism towards them from certain sections of the community, I am sure. I mean, you don't get to be a [power holder], and be as proactive a [powerholder], as [individual B] was, without making quite a lot of enemies on the way.... perhaps, there are quite a lot of people, who if they hear something as an initiative of [individual C] will actually see it as that of [individual B]. So it will be better to have a broader representation of that little steering committee. [URRSO stakeholder]

Interestingly, the local authority stakeholders in URRSO and the MRC stakeholders involved in METROCOP processes seemed well aware that other stakeholders involved in the process mistrusted them. And as the three collaborations progressed and stakeholders experienced negative interactions with, and vibes from one another, further distrust was generated.

Some indications in the initial documentation that MRC were trying to take a lead and not gearing up to work together, which is fine, but actually taking a lead over the territorial local authorities! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Local authority stakeholders were involved in the exercise, right from the beginning (pauses for 5 seconds). But, there is a perception, I think, that the control on this initiative has been wrestled away from them. Not only that, but it has been wrestled away by a former [influential personality and power holder], who maybe politically at odds with lot of people in the [local authority], at the moment. [URRSO stakeholder]

And with those negative experiences, some existing negative prejudices seemed to have deepened further. Thus, mistrusting others and with their preset or newly developed suspicions, stakeholders seemed to approach their and other's involvement in the respective processes, and their mutual interactions with a great deal of caution. Most of the stakeholders across all the three cases were often fairly sceptical of the outcomes of the process, and did not give full commitment to the process.

I think, initially, we got involved at a more personal level. The organisation, did not necessarily commit to it. I was invited to attend and I went! Um, and meanwhile during the process, we went to the Council and said here's what's going on and what do you think? And they basically said,

‘Well, just let them get on with it! We actually don’t think they should be doing it. But, if they want to do it, well, that’s fine!’ [METROCOP stakeholder]

‘It was more a watching brief - see what develops! Uh...we were not necessarily convinced that, uh, it was going towell, I had doubts, some doubts in my own mind how it might work.’ [URRSO local authority stakeholder]

The above analysis reveals that stakeholders across the three processes were fairly distrustful of each other. The mistrust felt by stakeholders had historical roots and was more deep-seated. Some of the negative prejudices they had were based on their individual or organisational negative experiences of interacting with other organisations, sectors, or individuals on different platforms. Those negative prejudices seemed to have been carried forward to the URRSO and METROCOP processes as well, thus influencing the nature and level of their current involvement. Moreover, as they engaged in these processes, some stakeholders acquired some new experiences that further reinforced their old negative prejudices. With those negative prejudices stakeholders became even more distrustful and suspicious of the process and the others involved in it. Thus the three multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability were fraught with a high degree of mistrust and suspicion that cast a negative influence on the organising.

8B.1.3 Fear and Nervousness

In this sub-section, I reveal various kinds of fear and feelings of nervousness which many stakeholders across the three collaborations experienced as they engaged with others. I expose how those feelings influenced their involvement in the respective processes.

As revealed earlier, interacting with someone different from themselves - either as an individual, organisation or a sector representative - yielded some misunderstandings.

Recognising various differences and attempting to align some of those differences to a direction that would be collectively agreed by most stakeholders proved highly challenging.

Trying to come to an agreement proved a constant source of tension.

We have to understand and acknowledge [that there will be differences] and not get impatient and storm outside the room. At times, I wish I could get this done faster, but I cannot do it alone. I need other people's help. [URRSO meeting, September 2003]

It's just about the difference there, the politics, the tension of politics between different councils based on having different cultures, different outcomes, different expectations, and goals. There is certainly a tension in there! [METROCOP stakeholder]

There were lots of stages at which we thought certain councils were going to pull out! [METROCOP stakeholder]

The challenges included some resistance from stakeholders, and also instilled some fear about the process.

We already have a whole layer of projects, that we have already developed through consultation with our community that aim to achieve the sustainability goals. So I guess, I will be reluctant coming to a forum, where I get told what other, like additional things that I have to do. [URRSO Steering Committee Meeting, October, 2003]

Actually it was hard, because every step of the way, it was extremely difficult! (She sighs and sounds tired). And I have been able to cope with that by negotiating with every single person, every step of the way....They just did not like it! They just did not want really want to be in there! [METROCOP stakeholder]

As described earlier, carrying negative prejudices and distrusting others involved in the process, most stakeholders across the three cases were fearful and nervous in their collaboration. They often seemed to be worried about whether, and how, other's roles in steering the collaboration would suit or harm them and their interests.

I think that, probably, they feel a loss of control. I suspect. Um...they probably feel threatened by the idea that [URRSO] is actually going to act as a "watch dog" for their activities.... they probably feel a bit disempowered, because they felt that they were actually supporting the [URRSO] and trying to do the right thing and then [individual's name] kind of grabbed it.[URRSO stakeholder]

Um, in terms of, yeah, is MRC doing this to try and take a lead role over all the council, or is it really a genuinely partnership thing? So, you know, just nervousness about that, I guess, front! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Such nervousness was heightened especially when the local authority stakeholders in URRSO and the METROCOP processes felt that the process was going in a direction which they considered could be potentially antithetical to their identity and purpose, either as an individual, or as a representative of an organisation or a sector.

Um, I think that [URRSO] could [play] quite a useful role.... provided that it was objective and that it was done in a positive way, and that it wasn't used to "blackmail" organisations into activities. [URRSO local authority stakeholder]

Uh, the dialogue process was reticent all the way along, because I think the local authorities were wary that the MRC was going to come in and want to take a very authoritative approach. And that was not where we were coming from, at all! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Ironically, as they collaborated, some of the local authority stakeholders, across all the three cases, also seemed to feel bit threatened by the potential of the collaboration. Such feelings of threat were associated with the anticipation of facing competition in the future from other local authority stakeholders in case of METROCOP, or from URRSO itself.

Now, I know that, Petra is quite supportive of [our] model! And would like to see that reproduced in some way at a regional level, which is fine, except that from a local "selfish" level, that really concerns me and the council (She sounds bit troubled and nervous about it). Because if it actually distracts [community stakeholders] from what we are trying to do locally, because people can't sustain that level of activity, then we won't be very happy either! So, we are hugely supportive of collaborative activity and really believe in its value, but because our focus is [our city], we want that to be focussed on [this city], not on the region, necessarily. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Tania: But the worst case scenario would be that we could end up competing with [URRSO]. That "consultation fatigue" that we were talking about - the idea of networking in URRSO was that the consultation could be done in one, and have all the people at the same time. But, then if URRSO is doing their consultation and then we are doing our consultation with the same people, you know, it confuses the issue!

Geoff: And then it could actually really impact on our process, the due processes that we have to follow, plus their own process.

Tania: It could make twice the work! [URRSO local authority stakeholders in an interview]

The above analysis reveals that the collaborations were characterised by a fair degree of fear and nervousness among stakeholders as they constantly encountered differences at various levels. Influenced by their negative prejudices and feelings of mistrust, they were constantly

monitoring and evaluating the role of others in steering the process. As the processes evolved, some stakeholders across the three cases became fearful when they saw potential threats emerging for themselves or their organisation. Others, especially the local authorities, became fearful when they realised that the process was generating potential opportunities that could empower other individuals or the collaboration (as in URRSO), or other local authorities (as in METROCOP) with whom they were competing, to some extent, for resources in other arenas outside the purview of these collaborations. Such feelings of fear and nervousness dampened the faith in dialogue and collaboration to a fair degree, and thus negatively influenced those processes.

8B.1.4 Anger

In this sub-section I show anger, a negative emotion, was experienced and expressed by some stakeholders, across the three cases, and influenced the spirit of dialogue and the process of collaboration.

With a high level of confusion, as demonstrated earlier, generally characterising these processes, many of the stakeholders across the three cases experienced feelings of anger because of the collaboration. They would become angry as and when they found things were not getting resolved, or not meeting their original expectations, or when they felt they were not getting due value from the process. In the case of URRSO, some stakeholders openly expressed their anger. Others involved in the METROCOP and URRSO cases, while talking with me during interviews and thinking retrospectively about the collaborations and their interaction with others, expressed their anger.

We didn't really get anything out of [Joint consultation project] that was useful! What value did it add? (She says it bluntly, there is a reasonable amount of irritation and frustration in her voice). It sucked up a huge amount of resources! [METROCOP stakeholder]

It's going to get really maddening if we get to four 'o clock and we still have not decided that whether it is for the vision for URRSO or for the people of [this region]. I, for one, won't be back.

So can we have a vote on what vision statement we are trying to write? (sounds very irritated).
[URRSO meeting, September, 2003]

The “Greenies” more wanted it as a “drop-in” centre, you know, where you can get your latte or your coffee and that sort of things and talk about things. Whereas, more practical-minded people, like myself, I want more than that. I actually, genuinely, want my grandchildren to be able to run a business, you know, in the next generation! (assertively with a great deal of anger as well as desperation and fear in his voice). [URRSO stakeholder]

Others were angry because they felt they did not have an equal say in the collaborations and were not given due hearing during the processes.

...we never feel heard! And we have not really felt heard, over the last year....You know you are talking about kind of collaborative process and not behaving in that way! [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think, from [our] city’s perspective, we would have been really happy for MRC to have a leadership role from an early stage in identifying outcomes. Or identifying a way to identify outcomes (She laughs ironically). But to have a leadership role and to work in a collaborative way. Not to be the decision maker!we needed to have a voice in that decision-making!
[METROCOP stakeholder]

Well, I think people need to get a chance to speak if they want to! (with conviction and very assertively). But also.... you know, there needs to be some awareness of other people’s feelingsI think that’s part of some of the problems.... You need to also listen to what other people have to say! And respect! You know, I think, a lot of respect is required in something like this (assertively with some frustration and anger). [URRSO stakeholder]

Some stakeholders seemed hurt by what they saw as vested interests and the deliberate attempts of others to exclude them from the process.

I don’t think they saw us as a stakeholder. We didn’t see ourselves as a stakeholder. We saw ourselves as a collaborative partner! But, I think, we have been relegated to a sort of “subservient” partner. And I guess, a lot of things related to principles around working in a collaborative way is about sort of transparency, sort of integrity. And I think, sometimes I have felt that, with the way they have worked, that isn’t what exactly happened! [METROCOP stakeholder]

It’s a major turn-off for a very large proportion of the URRSO because they have to be willing to put up with someone who is going to get right in your face and argue and knock back. What I view as the key leadership points is someone who is going to always make you feel like your opinions are valued even if you agree to disagree on some things versus a sense of being personally attacked, and forced into a role. I think those are the key factors. [URRSO stakeholder]

Particularly in the case of URRSO, representatives of the local authorities involved were upset with the course of events and decided to take a low key role in any further development of the organisation. Their stance was one of the key factors that proved detrimental to URRSO's continuation.

[Individual's name]....undertook a bit of a coup really!....And it's not really a criticism, actually. I mean, we needed to make progress.... But there is this whole bunch of people, who were really quite upset about that. And they as advocates for the group might cause problems for that in future, I suppose. [URRSO stakeholder]

Thus, anger was a strong negative emotion which some stakeholders, across the three cases, experienced as they collaborated with others during the process. A possible explanation for their angry feelings could be that stakeholders came to such collaborations with different kinds of hopes and varying levels of expectations. They had diverse personal and professional interests and agendas connected with sustainable development. They also came to such processes with varying skills and capacities to understand and deal with those differences with others, and varying levels of tolerance to ambiguities. As they started realising that things in the collaborations were not working according to their original expectations, in addition to being confused and frustrated, many of them became resentful of the processes, and became angry with others involved in the collaboration.

8B.1.5 Stress

This sub-theme reveals various kinds of stress which stakeholders underwent as they endeavoured to achieve their individual and collective missions for local and regional sustainability through such collaborations. It also shows how, despite their differences and ideological clashes, stress generally positively influenced the collaboration. Since this nature of stress emerged strongly in the METROCOP processes and was not apparent in the URRSO case, the analysis in this section is confined to the former cases only.

METROCOP stakeholders often acknowledged that they felt reasonably stressed because of their responsibilities and the challenges that came with their organisation's mission on sustainable development. With the revisions in the LGA 2002 and heightened expectations of central government for multi-stakeholder engagement on sustainable development, some stakeholders pointed out that a huge number of collaborative fora, involving local authorities, had been set up. They acknowledged that they were finding it increasingly stressful to deal with the pressures and demands on time and resources they were required to commit to those different processes.

Often, we take part in these processes, slightly reluctantly, because of resourcing. There are so many of these regional processes and forums and things that we simply cannot keep up! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Primarily, the reticence around collaboration is about funding. That everybody thinks that they will be landed with jobs to do which require funding and that no new funding comes with this process. The financial pie does not get bigger! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Most of the stakeholders were concerned about trying to understand the new institutional environment. They also seemed conscious about how the institutional change favouring sustainable development had started changing their organisations' cultures and structures. I often observed that stakeholders would constantly remind each other of the enormity and complexities involved in collaborating among themselves for regional sustainability.

Richard also raised his concern that everyone in the team needs to be kept informed on who is doing what? "There is going to be so much next year!" He highlighted that coordinating the joint process and everything together may prove to be very stressful, overwhelming, confusing and complicated. "It's going to get quite complicated. There is so much out there!" [Joint Consultation Working Group Meeting Fieldnotes, October 2004]

Moreover, all of the stakeholders generally seemed under great stress to perform and make the collaboration successful, as well as to look credible before the community stakeholders and central government, as they made efforts, within their own limitations, to collectively contribute towards regional sustainability. They were often very cautious about the steps

and decisions they were taking during the processes as they knew it was connected with their individual organisation's LTCCP. They could not afford to make any mistakes in METROCOP-I and II because those mistakes would have some serious repercussions on their organisation's image and performance, including their own performance appraisal.

Petra reiterated that the three processes "need to be in touch," remain closely aligned to one another and that the Joint Consultation team should "ensure that there is a consistency in whatever we say." While analysing the community survey and communicating the results "we should ensure that the joint context is there", said Petra. "I will play a bit of policeman role to ensure that the joint context is there", said Petra assertively. [Joint Consultation Working Group Meeting Field notes, September 2004]

And while stakeholders often acknowledged that they were quite stressed because of the enormity of the responsibilities and tasks they had at hand, interestingly, they were also using these processes to express some of their fears and vent some of their accumulated stress.

Lisa expressed her concerns around the enormity of this project. She said, "One year after, and there is still so much stuff to do. It looks scary!" Others agreed with Lisa, confirming the hugeness of this project and the challenges that came with it and would come in future as they progressed in their mission to achieve regional and local sustainability collectively. [METROCOP-II Meeting Fieldnotes, November 2005]

Despite their differences, as the processes went on, I started noticing that the METROCOP stakeholders generally had often started considering each other as peers and seemed to have developed a level of cordiality in the relationship.

The URRSO stakeholders, quite in contrast, seemed very relaxed about their involvement and achieving success in their collective mission. Some of them, however, did find their encounters stressful probably because of the confusion, distrust and fear operating in the process, or maybe because of the lack of progress. But any sense of mutual distress caused by wanting to make the collaboration successful was missing in URRSO. And some of the stakeholders ultimately proved their detachment with the process when they either stepped

back, or did not fulfil their commitment in terms of what they had volunteered and set out to do for URRSO.

The above analysis demonstrates that as the METROCOP stakeholders became involved in these processes connected with institutional change towards sustainability they encountered various challenges, complexities, risks and ambiguities at broader institutional levels and at their local organisational level. And as they carried out their professional responsibilities, those circumstances, in turn, created stressful conditions for most of them. I also revealed how those conditions made stakeholders appreciate others' roles and contributions in helping them understand and manage the institutional change process. Thus, METROCOP-I and II processes proved helpful for stakeholders to deal with some of those professional stresses as, despite their mutual differences, they increasingly depended on others involved in the collaboration and shared their concerns.

8B.1.6 Hope and Satisfaction

In this sub-section, I reveal how stakeholders' positive feelings of hopes and satisfaction co-existed along with other negative emotions which, as I highlighted earlier, were potentially dampening the spirit of dialogue and collaboration. I also demonstrate how hope and satisfaction played a positive role in steering the METROCOP processes. Since these feelings were expressed only by the METROCOP stakeholders and was found to be mostly missing in the URRSO case, my analysis in this section is confined only to the METROCOP cases.

Even though stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction and other negative emotions with the way the regional collaboration was being organised or led, and had complained about various aspects of it, overall they seemed reasonably satisfied with their collective achievements.

Sue expressed her satisfaction with flexibility they got in the tight timeline and acknowledged that “Petra gave us that flexibility” which was very helpful. Anita looked at Petra and said emotionally, “Petra gave me a personal level of response. There were times I did not know so many things and did not know where to look for. I would call Petra and she would help me with figures etc. I was given personal attention and helped, and things were discussed with me, and that was very good.” She seemed very grateful and thankful to Petra and Petra accepted that gracefully. There seemed to be general consensus and satisfaction among the members in the group that Petra had spearheaded the project very well, giving people that support which they needed from the team member who was convening the whole process, but who at the same time gave them some autonomy to fulfil their commitment in the set time frame. [Joint Consultation Working Group Meeting Fieldnotes, September 2004]

They seemed impressed to some extent that despite their differences and grievances they had been able to successfully achieve their collective goals.

So, you need to be realistic, in what you can expect and not expect! And that other person also has to accommodate her own council and her own political directives, so it's quite a balancing act. I think, if you actually think about it, she has to balance her own council plus six others. And everyone has got demands. So, in terms of that, it has probably been very well done!.... one can imagine that something like that could easily lead to someone getting rather unhappy along the way. And no one seems to [be unhappy].....so, that probably actually says a lot for the way that it has been done! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Overall, most of them carried positive feelings about their collective efforts and felt fairly satisfied from their collaboration. They generally recognised that the METROCOP processes helped them improve their relationship with other local authority stakeholders. Stakeholders had increasingly started acknowledging their need for support from others as they worked towards their local and regional sustainability objectives. In spite of their differences, I generally observed respect and trust gradually building up among METROCOP stakeholders during the course of the collaboration, which was also expressed during the interviews.

I think there have been some good relationships built over that, though and Petra has managed to move things forward, so that we have actually progressed. [METROCOP stakeholder]

...we have actually established a very good relationship!.... so, that's been a very good spin off! (He says it very forcefully exuberating a great deal of great satisfaction). Yes, developing good, solid relationships with people, especially [District B] and [City A].... Yeah, I think, it's good! At least, there is someone now....if there is an issue, you can pick up a phone and I think, because of the time, that this has been going on, one is far more comfortable with being honest and open about

things. You can actually say what you think, and I think that's very good. [METROCOP stakeholder]

They also expressed hope as to its future prospects.

Yeab, I pin all my hopes on this monitoring and reporting and doing that jointly, because I can see that there will be great benefits for the region, as a whole, to do that jointly. [METROCOP stakeholder]

I conclude that despite METROCOP stakeholders' negative prejudices, not so positive experiences of collaborating with others and the negative emotions generated during the due courses of organising METROCOP-I and II, overall the stakeholders felt satisfied with their collective achievements. The two cases demonstrated that stakeholders were slowly building their trust and gradually developing better relationships with each other. And as I compare the METROCOP processes with that of the URRSO, and find such feelings of hope and satisfaction were not experienced by URRSO stakeholders, I am prompted to recognise and reflect upon the important role regulatory institutions can play in generating such positive emotions among stakeholders (although I admit negative emotions in response to regulation are also a possibility). Through their coercive mechanisms such regulatory institutions not only created conditions wherein stakeholders were forced to participate in METROCOP-I and II, they were also obliged to spend time together, and be publicly seen to try to adopt a more mature and long-term outlook. During the course of organising, many of those stakeholders came to understand the positive and negative aspects of the processes and their relationships within. Despite their ideological differences, they seemed to become more appreciative of their relationships with others and remained committed to the process. Thus, regulatory institutional pressures forcefully generated conditions that indirectly helped nurture positive feelings of hope and satisfaction among stakeholders. And despite holding on to some negative emotions and feelings, METROCOP stakeholders' overall feelings of hope and satisfaction from the process helped in facilitating collaboration among stakeholders.

8B.1.7 Pessimism and Disillusionment

In this sub-section, I reveal how the feelings of pessimism and disillusionment which stakeholders experienced in their engagement with others dampened their spirits and motivation to further collaborate. As these feelings of pessimism and disillusionment emerged strongly only in the URRSO, analysis in this section is confined only to this case.

As highlighted in the previous section, overall the METROCOP stakeholders were satisfied with their collaborative experience. They were not particularly pessimistic or disillusioned about their involvement in the process, or the prospect of taking the collaboration to the next stage. In contrast, a strong feeling of pessimism and disillusionment gripped most of the URRSO stakeholders probably because of their collective failure to take the process forward to a point where they felt they had achieved something useful.

I am slightly more negative about it. But to me, personally, I am pessimistic that anything at all will come out of it at all. I guess, that's partly because we do not have a good model that is there to follow or we haven't built a good model, which will address that sort of wide-spectrum of expectations. I have some doubts now about that (laughs ironically). [URRSO stakeholder]

Tania: I felt a little bit concerned that there was a "bias" against Local Government (says very carefully), and that the Trust type of board which was established did not have representation from Local Government. There was not anyone from [Regional Council], anyone from the [educational institution] university or anyone from the city council, but they were initially involved. So, I kind of felt that we were being "pushed out" a little, but that might have been just my own...

Geoff: I feel absolutely the same way as well....

Tania: And we have not been contacted at all, since then! We have been completely left in the dark...[URRSO local authority stakeholders in an interview]

Dejected and disillusioned, most stakeholders seemed to have lost their patience and motivation to remain committed to URRSO.

Well, I don't know whether they do [fit into my personal interest and philosophy of life] anymore! Because there doesn't seem to be anything happening! [URRSO stakeholder]

I conclude that misunderstandings among URRSO stakeholders not duly resolved in the initial stages of collaboration created an atmosphere of pessimism and disillusionment within the process. Fuelled by other negative emotions brought to and generated during the process, stakeholders' pessimism and disillusionment resulted in loss of motivation and negatively influenced the continuation of URRSO.

8B.2 Discussion

As analysed and discussed earlier, I underscore that stakeholders across the three cases became involved in those multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability, either as institutional actors or as social movement actors. They had different motivations and motivational levels to contribute towards the sustainability movement. They also came to such processes with different levels of understandings and expectations of sustainability, and the collaboration. For social movement actors like most of those involved in URRSO some of their motivation to get involved in such a civil society organising process had a powerful emotional 'logic'. For other institutional actors like the local authority and business representatives involved in URRSO and the METROCOP processes, their motivation to engage in those processes was more rationally driven – it was primarily governed by a powerful regulatory and business logic as opposed to an emotional logic. But whatever be the logic – emotional or rational – behind stakeholders' involvement in the process, these three cases of multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability were not devoid of emotions. They increasingly became intense emotional encounters. Being human, stakeholders involved in those collaborations experienced and expressed a wide range of emotions with varying degrees of intensity.

As uncovered in my analysis, understandings and misunderstandings generated among stakeholders during the collaborations contributed to positive and negative emotions,

respectively, in those processes. Moreover, positive and negative emotions characterising the stakeholder interactions, further influenced the development of understanding and misunderstanding during the collaboration. Thus I underscore that there existed a cyclical relationship between stakeholders' emotions and (mis)understandings and the collaborations involved fusion of those two horizons.

Moreover, often those processes provided ideal conditions for expressions of mostly negative, rather than positive, emotions and feelings among stakeholders for each other and the process. As the collaborations progressed, stakeholders across the three cases felt confused, frustrated, mistrusted, cautious, fearful, nervous, angry, hopeful, satisfied, disillusioned, pessimistic or stressed about their engagement with others, or their involvement in the process. Emotionally and rationally driven understandings and misunderstandings within such processes become intricately 'intertwined', sometimes 'serving' and other times 'interfering', with their collaborative efforts. Negative emotions fuelled and fired other negative emotions, which then further strengthened a cycle of negative emotions and misunderstandings and hindered those processes.

Moreover, the apparent failure of URRSO and the success of the METROCOP processes provoke me to reflect on the emotional expressions of stakeholders and their tolerance to accept others and their differences across different processes. In spite of the strong normative pressures on stakeholders to collaborate with each other for regional sustainability, why did URRSO not succeed in its mission? And why were stakeholders in METROCOP processes able to overcome their mutual differences and disagreements and succeeded in achieving some of the goals they had originally set out for the collaboration? In trying to find answers to these questions, I cast some doubts on the real potential and contribution of such dialogic collaborative processes of organising for sustainability. I am also stimulated to challenge the real potential of civil society organisations like the URRSO,

and reflect on the practicalities of their existence and survival in a society driven by competing goals. I also question the popularisation and increasing institutional dependence on multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration for achieving sustainability.

I recognise stakeholders' strength and capacity to deal with diversity and hence manage their own emotional experience and expression is greatly dependent on their motivations. Barton (2000a, p. 248) notes that sustainable development "while an intellectually powerful construct, has little emotive power – not sufficient in most situations to win hearts and galvanize action." Being a civil society organisation, URRSO was not under the direct influence of any regulation on sustainability and did not have to meet any regulatory deadlines. While this regulatory freedom gave enormous flexibility to URRSO to explore issues on sustainability, it also made it easy for it to break apart as there were no regulatory sanctions or penalties on stakeholders if they disassociated from the process. Probably if URRSO, using its dialogic design had drawn further on the Local Government Act 2002 to develop certain coercive mechanisms that monitored stakeholders' involvement and ensured their commitment, it might have been able to hold stakeholders together and sustain the process for a longer period of time. Had the process been subject to a regulatory time frame and had expectations of measurable outcomes, like in the METROCOP processes, then such circumstances probably would have forced stakeholders to rationalise their individual emotions, especially the negative ones, and effectively manage those in positive ways. In such a case, in spite of their emotional grievances and ideological differences, they may have been forced to develop greater tolerance for ambiguity. They could have also tried harder to collectively find a middle ground with more realistic expectations - one being that as a collective they had limited powers to bring about sustainability, and if successful those would only have been incremental changes. However, such is not likely to be the nature of bottom-up civil society social movement organisations.

I thus recognise the significance of regulatory institutions in attempts to achieve sustainability, and the importance of certain coercive mechanisms within various multi-stakeholder collaborative processes. I contend that by exerting their coercive influence, and especially on public sphere organisations like URRSO, regulatory institutions may in fact facilitate such organising and help stakeholders feel satisfied to some extent that they could achieve the limited goals they set out with during the collaboration. However, in making such an argument, I present a big paradox because I challenge the foundational principles of public sphere organisations. How can stakeholders involved in civil society organisations enjoy the freedom of communication and expression, and how can those organisations be rightfully called the ‘people’s organisations’ if they are subject to coercive pressures? On the other hand, how, in the absence of coercive pressures, can such organisations and dialogic stakeholder engagements become more accountable? How can they be less of “*lip service*” and more of concrete contributions for sustainability? I discuss these issues in depth in the forthcoming Chapters 10 and 11 of this dissertation.

8B.3 Conclusion

In Chapters 8A and 8B I have revealed how the three cases of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability were deeply embedded with various kinds of stakeholders’ emotions - their emotions for others and the collaboration. In the case of URRSO, stakeholders’ emotions around sustainability were also involved. I applied the principles of hermeneutic circle and fusion of horizons to: (a) rationalise the ebb and flow of those emotions through the collaborations; (b) expose some of the dynamics of stakeholder engagement as different emotions fused with one another and evolved to yield desirable or undesirable effects on those organising processes; and (c) demonstrate the interdependence and dynamic interaction among stakeholders’ understandings, misunderstandings and emotions. Thus, I constantly engaged in moments of interpretation and reinterpretation

(Phillips, & Brown, 1993) to highlight and critique the emotionality-rationality relationship and the paradoxes inherent in such processes. I also raised some fundamental questions which I think are critical to understanding such multi-stakeholder dialogic processes that offer great promise for sustainability. As stated earlier, while casting a rational lens on emotions I recognised that emotionality and rationality intertwined (Fineman, 2000a) both in the data and in my own problematisation of some of the paradoxes revealed.

I dedicate the next chapter to reveal the dynamics of time as stakeholders dialogically engaged with each other during collaborations for sustainability. I carry forward the knowledge that I have generated from my analysis in this and the previous two chapters, and reveal how temporality of such processes is inherently and intricately connected with stakeholders' understandings, misunderstandings and emotions. I thus highlight the dynamic interplay of stakeholders' understandings, misunderstandings, temporal and emotional considerations as they collectively engaged with others during the three processes.

Chapter 9

Dynamics of Time

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I highlight time as one of the themes that emerged during my analysis of all the three cases. There are three emergent sub-themes under this broad theme: (a) Time and sustainability; (b) Time and collaboration; and (c) Time and politics. My analysis reveals the various kinds of temporal considerations related to sustainability, and the diverse temporal realities that confronted stakeholders as they participated in the collaboration. I uncover how the various temporal influences influenced their collaboration for sustainability.

In section 9.2, I present a literature review on the notion of time to explain my theoretical conceptualisation of time. I underscore the importance of time-based research in organisation studies. I also highlight how time influences social interactions and organisations, including multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability. In section 9.3, I briefly cover some of the methodological issues which are specific to research on time, and which I did not cover in the methodology and methods chapter. In section 9.4, I present my analysis of the three sub-themes. In section 9.5, I integrate my analysis related to the three sub-themes to discuss the dynamic implications of time on the collaborations. In section 9.6, I conclude the chapter.

9.2 Temporality of organising for sustainability

As the theme of time emerged from my data analysis, I decided to further explore relevant literature on the notion of time. In this section, I present a condensed literature review to

explain my conceptualisation of time and its role in organisations. I argue that temporal influences on organisational forms, structures, people and processes are significant and therefore should not be undermined in organisational scholarship. I also contend that time and sustainability are inherently connected. I thus underscore the importance of studying temporality of multi-stakeholder organising processes in general and for sustainability in particular.

Time is a fundamental and ubiquitous component of any form of life. Modern industrial society has propagated a linear, quantitative and homogenous perspective on time. Hassard (1996) points out that according to such linear conceptions, the past cannot be repeated, the present is transient, and the future is infinite and exploitable. Time is treated as an objective and quantitative resource, which can be measured and infinitely divided, confining our thinking of time to mostly clock and calendar time. Benjamin Franklin's statement that "time is money" is a reminder of this widely-accepted and often unchallenged conception of time as a valuable resource, a critical factor of production with an economic value that should not be wasted (Blount, & Janicik, 2001). Our institutions are playing a critical role in structuring this sense of time and imbibing within many of us a time discipline that conditions us to an organised time-consciousness (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001; Hassard, 1996). Consequently, time is often experienced as a sequence and a boundary condition in our social dealings (Yakura, 2002). Our lives are often so much dictated by time that we sometimes act as its puppet, dictated by clocks, diaries and calendars of ours and those of others. The acts we perform become timely rituals, influenced by rules, norms and taken-for-granted beliefs. Our professional, social and family commitments are often judged on the basis of how much time we give. Our calibre is also often judged in terms of how efficiently we use our time to effectively manage various responsibilities and facets of our lives. By raising some important ontological questions as to whether time is an objective 'fact' present 'out there' or a

‘subjective essence’ created through a social network of meanings, Hassard (1996) challenges such traditional and linear thinking about time (see also Bluedorn, & Standifer, 2006; Hendricks, & Peters, 1986; Mainemelis, 2001).

Time has been seen to yield a useful focus for understanding individual and organisational behaviour (Dubinskas, 1988; George & Jones, 2000; Hoffman, 2001; Scott, 2001).

However, different studies have promoted the notion of time differently. There is no one satisfactory theory of unitary time. While some studies regard time as a resource, others consider it as a context, a mediator of other processes, or a moderator of other processes (Poole, & Hollingshead, 2005). Hassard (1996) calls for deeper understandings of time by capturing its objective as well as subjective features. Das (1993) urges management and organisation scholars to recognise time as an intrinsically complex, a highly variable and a problematic subjective phenomenon. George and Jones (2000, p. 659; see also Hassard, 1996) advise that during organisational theorising scholars should not always treat time merely as a background phenomenon or a boundary condition. They propose that time should be recognised as an “intrinsic property of consciousness” and during theory building due consideration should be given to “the past, future, and present and the subjective experience of time” (George, & Jones, 2000, p. 659). Such an approach will enable researchers to develop deeper understandings of how different people experience work and behave in organisations under different temporal influences.

While research on time has mostly been conducted in sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and philosophy, management and organisational scholars have also increasingly started focusing on temporality in organisations. The recent proliferation of publications on the notion of time in academic journals¹¹² demonstrates that management

¹¹² For example, the 2001 Academy of Management Review (Volume 26; Issue 4) was a special issue on time. The aim of this special issue was to advance the theoretical understanding of time in organisation and

and organisational scholars are increasingly recognising time as a fundamental premise on which organisations, organising processes and institutionalisation are dependent (see Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Blount, & Janicik, 2001; Bluedorn, & Standifer, 2006; Eberhardt, & Shani, 1984; Huy, 2001; Lawrence, Winn, & Jennings, 2001; Mainemelis, 2001; Zaheer, Albert, & Zaheer, 1999). However, time still largely remains as an under examined concept in management and organisation studies. It has been pointed out that organisational research is generally ‘temporally insensitive’ because it mostly considers time as only clock or calendar time and grossly exaggerates temporal homogeneity (Clark, 1985). And even in studies where temporal factors are considered explicitly, they are usually treated as a “linear, uncontrollable, constantly unfolding fact of life rather than as a variable, socially constructed in part, and experienced in different ways” (Butler, 1995, p. 925).

Most studies on organisations in the context of natural environment also demonstrate such temporal homogeneity and insensitivity. Shrivastava (1994) has labelled the organisation and natural environment scholarship as “CASTRATED”¹¹³ because of its mostly narrow, economic and anti-naturalistic focus on environmentalism. He advises that scholars should overcome reductionist tendencies that concentrate on immediate external environmental factors (for example, economic, social and technological factors). He invites theorising that rethinks relationships between organisations and environment based on for example, temporal and spatial influences (see also Hoffman, 2001; Scott, 2001).

Scholars are being encouraged to explicitly investigate temporal influences on management functions and organisational processes and relationships (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001; Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Arrow, Henry, Poole, Wheelan, &

encourage organisation and management scholars to use a temporal lens in their research (Goodman, Lawrence, Ancona, & Tushman, 2001).

¹¹³ The full mnemonic is - Competition, Abstraction, Shallowness, Theoretical immaturity, Reification, Anthropocentrism, Time independent (ahistorical), Exploitable, and Denaturalised (see Shrivastava, 1994).

Moreland, 2005; Bluedorn, 2002; Bluedorn, & Denhardt, 1988; Butler, 1995; Das, 1993; Gersick, 1988; Lee, & Liebenau, 1999). Also, there have been calls for research that can reveal the rich inter-subjective features of time and the varying temporal meanings, experiences and expectations of organisational members, and how those influence organising processes (Bruneau, 1996; Goodman, Lawrence, Ancona, & Tushman, 2001; Hassard, 1996; Hendricks, & Peters, 1986; Huy, 2001; Zaheer, Albert, & Zaheer, 1999). These calls are backed up by an alternative school of thought which considers time as a socially constructed phenomenon that is embedded in, and carries various social meanings, and which constrains or facilitates human relationships (Dubinskas, 1988).

Social time is qualitative and cyclical (Hassard, 1996). As people engage with others, they make subjective sense of their social interactions by connecting their present experiences to their past and trying to find a connection to their future (George, & Jones, 2000). People may develop certain temporal parameters to make sense of what is happening around them, evaluate events and make judgements about the others who operate in alternate temporal systems (Dubinskas, 1988). Accordingly, they may make sense of the present moment as a good or bad time to decide whether they should further engage fully or partially in, or completely withdraw from those interactions (Bluedorn, 2002; Clark, 1985; Poole, & Hollingshead, 2005). Thus, people's consciousness, which structures their meanings and intentions, is based on certain retentions from the past and prospective orientations towards the future (Clark, 1985).

It has been pointed out that different societies or groups develop different conceptions of time (Blount, & Janicik, 2001; Dubinskas, 1988). They may differ in their temporal focus - that is in the level of importance they attach to the past, present and future - which may in turn influence members' priorities and decisions (Bluedorn, 2002). For Durkheim, time is an outcome of collective consciousness, and members of a particular community may share

a common temporal consciousness and integrate their different activities to give a certain cultural rhythm to that community (Hassard, 1996; Ballard, & Seibold, 2003). According to Dubinskas (1988, p. 4), “within each community, the patterning of time is a central aspect of social order and process, as well as a focal point of meaning and knowledge production”. However, individuals’ temporal conceptualisations within a community may not be uniform as different individuals have different “temporal personalities” which influence the way they perceive, interpret, use, allocate or interact with time (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001). Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 40) highlight that there are two types of time which influence human behaviour: “inner time” which flows within individuals according to their physiological rhythms, and is different for different individuals; and “standard time” as the “intersection between cosmic time and its socially established calendar” which is intersubjectively available. Ballard and Seibold (2003) highlight that temporal constraints influence communication patterns, group norms and relationships. Time may therefore act as a “backdrop for behaviour, thoughts and feelings” (Jones, 1988, p. 26) and become one of the bones of contention, especially in situations where people coming from different spaces collectively engage and plan and organise their ‘valuable’ time and resources to address a particular problem (see also Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999). Hence there is a need to generate deeper understanding of social time and its influence on organisations.

In light of the above review, I understand time as a relative, subjective, variable and problematic phenomenon (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Arrow et al., 2005; Das, 1993; Lee, & Liebenau, 1999). And instead of considering temporality in terms of discrete time blocks, I have ontologically regarded time along a continuum that intricately connects the past to the future through the present¹¹⁴ (Das, 1993; George & Jones, 2000; Hendricks, & Peters, 1986).

¹¹⁴ My analyses from the previous chapters also demonstrate this aspect of time featuring in stakeholder interactions.

I argue that temporal issues and concerns have special relevance to multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability, especially because the various stakeholder involved in such processes not only have diverse perspectives on sustainable development, others and collaboration (as I demonstrated in the previous three chapters), they may also have different temporal personalities. Because of their different temporal personalities they would differently perceive, interpret, use, allocate, or interact with time, and thus behave differently (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Bruneau, 1996) during the collaboration. Ballard and Seibold (2003, p. 396) propose “organizational members’ experience of time is mediated via their occupational group membership, their organizational culture, and their work group norms” (see also Bluedorn, & Standifer, 2006). They will thus bring their ‘time influenced personas’ to the process.

Moreover, a person engaged in two or more activities tends to accordingly distribute time between the activities, and move back and forth between them. Such a movement and its pace may vary from one person to another. Thus, I suspect that as different stakeholders become involved in multi-stakeholder processes, it is likely that they might have to adjust the pace of their work in their organisation or personal life. They might also have to synchronise their pace with that of others involved in the collaboration. Differences in pace and time allocated may contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts, and generate negative emotions like frustration and confusion, leading some stakeholders to may be even question the nature of their involvement (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001; Bluedorn, 2002; Dubinskas, 1988; Mainemelis, 2001; Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999) in the collaboration. I therefore anticipate that certain temporal agreements may have to be worked out at various levels so that emerging challenges and conflicts are duly addressed (Ballard, & Seibold, 2003; Hassard, 1996).

I also contend that temporal factors prominently emerge and affect the institutionalisation of sustainable development and course of attempting to implement it. Our being and time is inseparable (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1953). Time also crucially influences the emergence of environmental debates and resolution of environmental conflicts in society (Hassard, 1996; Hoffman, 2001). It has been proven that the harmful effects of past and present environmental degradation from anthropogenic activities cannot be confined to temporal or spatial boundaries (Hediger, 1997, 1999; Pearce, Markandaya, & Barbier, 1989; WCED, 1987). They are likely to impact our ecosystem for centuries to come. Bluedorn's notion of "temporal commons," explicit in many notions of sustainable development (e.g. WCED, 1987), recognises a future as "commonly" dependent on those living at present, the "stewards" of that temporal commons. Sustainable development philosophy considers such global and timeless dimensions of environmental problems by underscoring that any development process thinking should integrate social, economic and environmental concerns and priorities in such a manner that inter and intra-generational equity is preserved and promoted. As discussed earlier, the philosophy embraces an infinitely long, wide and ambiguous 'time horizon'- distances which people, individually and collectively, look into the future (Bluedorn, 2002).

In the next section I highlight some methodological issues related to my research on the notion of time.

9.3 Methodological issues in research on stakeholders' time

Originally, I did not intend to study time. I therefore did not ask direct questions about time during the interviews. My research design also does not include any time, frequency or efficiency measurement studies. It involved observation of real time-interactions (Arrow, et al., 2005) and interviews, to capture stakeholders' behaviours and events in the life of the

organising processes as they unfolded, and their retrospective reflections as well as their future expectations. It appeared during meetings that stakeholders were controlled by different clocks - there seemed to be a divergence in individuals' temporal conceptions on sustainability and the organising process. While some seemed very patient in terms of their expectations from the process, others seemed to be in a hurry as they desired to achieve and demonstrate tangible success through their collaboration. As discussions on time frequently featured in meetings and interview discussions, I noted it in my field notes as one of the factors influencing all the three processes. Later, as I analysed the data across the three cases, temporal issues emerged so strongly that I recognised time as one of the themes.

I present my data analysis in the next section. I empirically demonstrate how various temporal factors influenced stakeholder interactions during the three collaborations. I carry forward my analyses from the previous chapters and weave them in with this analysis. In doing so, I reveal the complex interconnections among understandings, misunderstandings, emotionality and temporality of these processes as stakeholders collectively organise for sustainability.

9.4 Time

Time emerged as an important theme across all the three cases. Under this theme I analysed three sub-themes: (a) Time and sustainability; (b) Time and collaboration; and (c) Time and politics. My analysis of these sub-themes reflects stakeholders' various temporal considerations around sustainability and the collaboration, and how those considerations influenced their collaboration for sustainability.

The following table gives a snapshot of the various emergent sub-themes which occurred across all the three cases.

| Theme | URRSO | METROCOP – I & II | Sub-theme |
|-------|-------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Time | • | • | Time and sustainability |
| | • | • | Time and collaboration |
| | • | • | Time and politics |

Table 9.1: Multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability: Field-level timings

9.4.1 Time and sustainability

This sub-theme unmask how sustainable development is intricately connected with time, and how stakeholders’ social construction of sustainability as a ‘temporal concept’ further influenced the nature of their involvement in the three collaborations.

As revealed in my previous analyses, stakeholders derived a sense of purpose and identity from the task at hand, either as individuals or as organisational members, and expressed a common belief in the importance of adopting sustainability as a guiding philosophy for development of their respective regions. Sustainability connected stakeholders’ horizons spanning past experiences and future expectations from life to their current focus. It stimulated them to think that human existence was not only about “*getting things right for people, now*” but was also about looking into “*generational time frames*,” so that we leave behind a quality of life for “*people’s children and grand children*” which is “*at least as good as, if not better*” than our present standards [METROCOP stakeholder]. Sustainability thus seemed to cast their thoughts toward the future partly based on lessons learnt from the past and offered the promise of long-term benefits and security. Some stakeholders considered that sustainable development was about “*changing the whole consciousness*” of people in ways such that they would start acting in a “*less havoeful*” manner and start realising that “*it’s not about just today! It’s not about tomorrow! It’s about the future!*” [URRSO stakeholder]

I would look at sustainability as it is not a “thing in itself”. There is a reason why one would want to be sustainable. It is to look at your own quality of life, at the moment, but also for the

future! So, I don't think it's a thing in itself. There is a reason why one would want to do it.
[METROCOP stakeholder]

Different stakeholders had different temporal depths of understanding sustainability, as based on cultural-cognitive, normative or regulative institutions. As demonstrated in my earlier analyses, stakeholders came to such processes with varying temporal depth of understanding on and expectations from sustainability, ranging from long-term to short-term, and from slow to fast paced social changes. Moreover, for some URRSO stakeholders the connections between sustainability, their past and future were personal and familial in nature. Stakeholders also recognised that different societies, regions and cities had institutionalised sustainability with different degrees of priority and urgency.

The societies that have actually actively embraced sustainability, are usually the ones...the people who have actually got the time to think about it, you know (laughs)... I suppose in terms of the western world, New Zealand is quite a long way behind some of the countries, I have seen. And it varies from place to place within countries as well, of course. [URRSO stakeholder]

I guess, we are quite early on that path – sustainability – particularly, compared to the [other] city, which has probably got sort of a really clear task whereby you could identify what part [it] sees that as being made a reality. I don't think [our] city is in that position, yet, either in terms of how we plan for the future of the city or indeed, how we, as an organisation, operate. There is some work that has become active in the last couple of months, around what corporate sustainability means for [our] city. So, it's becoming much higher up in the agenda, both at officer level and politically. And I guess, it has started to kind of drive how much of our council does its business, but what sort of speed does that happen and what impact does it have, we will have to wait and see. [METROCOP stakeholder]

However, there seemed to be a common agreement across the three cases that the timing was ripe for sustainability to be taken seriously.

Our council's view on sustainability? Yeah, I guess that changed with the election of the new council, last year. I think it will be fair to say that prior to the local body election, previous councils, you wouldn't really have heard that term "sustainability" really being used. And although it was in the officers' language, there was not a lot of "buy-in" at a political level, which obviously impacted as in what was fed into council's direction. It is interesting to note what the current council has to say. I think the main line of the introduction of the draft annual plan, which has just gone out, makes a statement like "[Our] city is committed to sustainability".
[METROCOP stakeholder]

The timing of institutional change also influenced stakeholders' perceptions and legitimised their acceptance of sustainability, further influencing their involvement in these processes.

I think, the Local Government Act combined with the current Council, the new senior management team and just the phase of changing which kind of places sustainability in people's frames of thinking, have all meant that it is probably coming of age [in our] city! – really now rather than probably, you know, five or ten years ago. [METROCOP stakeholder]

That is, you know, after the Local Government Act has been passed, I think there has been a growing realisation that we do have more of a responsibility and more of a mandate to enter into some of these spheres. At least to be considering it...to be considering those facets [of sustainable development]. [URRSO stakeholder]

As highlighted in the previous analyses, local authorities were facing significant institutional pressures to manage growth and respond to resulting socio-cultural, economic and environmental challenges. METROCOP processes, in particular, were dictated by a tight regulatory timeframe and stakeholders were under pressure to organise themselves and meet their respective targets related to the local and regional community outcomes within a set time frame.

Up until recently, up until the new Local Governmental Act, it was seen as environmental regulations and management and strategies that really bring the whole of the region together. And I guess, now, it means we need to take a broader approach. So, the environmental focus is very strong here. We now need to look at how we broaden our council's interests across the social and cultural aspects. We have [already] broadened them across the economic wellbeing sector. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Other stakeholders recognised that cognitive and normative institutions legitimising sustainability currently seemed stronger than what they were in the past, further pressuring organisations to adopt policies and practices that could contribute towards the sustainability of their communities.

But we have got to work hard to protect that and manage that kind of tension between growth and people's kind of increasing expectations of what they want! That kind of managing the various factors that go in making the city, successful and a fantastic place to live! I think it is kind of fundamental to, you know, the place [this region] is – you know, we attract a lot of immigrants at the moment. And part of that is for lifestyle reasons. But, I think, that will change if we don't

take a long-term view and get that balance right! And I think that will have all sorts of impact on the economic wellbeing in the long term. [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think we have a germ here (referring to developments in URRSO) that could ignite the whole community. I have absolutely no doubts that the time for sustainability, as an issue, is arriving! It's become a part of people's conversations now, where even five years ago, people had difficulty with the word. [URRSO stakeholder]

Perhaps, the time is right now, in a way that it was not back then. Because all the local authorities have to consider sustainable development, that's the government directive that they have to consider sustainability. ...Others have been thinking about sustainability for quite some time. And so, there is a critical mass of organisations now that have an awareness of it and an active desire to pursue it in some way. [URRSO stakeholder]

The above analysis reveals that the timing of the institutional change and intensity of the normative, cognitive and regulative institutional pressures favouring sustainable development legitimised stakeholders' understanding and acceptance of sustainability. The timing therefore seemed right for them to collaborate with others. Moreover, for some sustainable development is a connecting link between their life's past lessons, present experiences and future expectations. As they engaged with other stakeholders during such processes, they socially constructed and accepted sustainable development as a temporal concept in a manner that stimulated them to develop a long-term vision of sustainability, and hope for a better future along a longer time horizon.

9.4.2 Time and collaboration

This sub-theme reveals how varying time-based institutional logics of individuals or organisations motivated, connected or dissuaded stakeholders across the three cases from participating in such collaborative processes for sustainability. It reflects stakeholders' conceptualisation of time as a valuable commodity that needed to be optimally utilised influenced their involvement in the collaboration.

Most stakeholders, across the three processes, expected that by working together they would save individual time and energy and make faster and more significant strides towards regional sustainability. As demonstrated in earlier analysis, some stakeholders expected that

by sharing their knowledge and expertise through such collaboration they would be able to acquire new knowledge and build their individual capacities. Other stakeholders, especially local authorities involved in URRSO and METROCOP, were also concerned about optimally utilising the time of community stakeholders and minimising “*consultation burnouts*”. Working collaboratively to contribute towards regional sustainability, while simultaneously working to achieve local sustainability, thus appeared to them as a powerful institutional logic that would promote efficiency in the system.

So, that, I guess, was an attempt to work together to coordinate to limit the demands on stakeholders. That joint perspective worked pretty well, bearing in mind the disparate sort of approaches and timelines around the region. And for that all other information was kind of shared back with all the TAs who wanted that information. Say even if they were not able to attend it, they wanted to kind of find out what was said. So, it seemed to be kind of “best fit” with the difficulties faced, you know, in terms of time. [METROCOP stakeholder]

It also provided an opportunity to demonstrate that local authorities could work collaboratively with each other for the common good of their region and thus build their credibility as ‘team players’. However, in contrast, one METROCOP stakeholder opined based on his experiences of working in the community that the community stakeholders would be unhappy to hear of his council’s collaboration with the regional council. He imagined those stakeholders saying:

“Fix things in this district, first, before you go and play in the regional level.... Stop wasting money and your time doing that, and solve things out in our district, first!” [METROCOP stakeholder]

As previously discussed, different stakeholders involved in the collaborations were at different levels of understanding of the concept of sustainability and acceptance of the philosophy of sustainable development. As a result, they, either as an individual or as an organisation, had adopted a different ‘pace’ for embracing aspects of sustainable development and implementing them, and contributing to the sustainability movement.

This difference in pace in turn influenced the way they viewed and experienced their collaboration.

Moreover, being situated at very different stages in the regional sustainability movement, they came with divergent interests, expectations and commitments. Conforming to the same pace therefore proved challenging. For instance, local authorities involved in METROCOP had designed “*different processes*” to meet their individual obligations towards their 2006 LTCCP. They were clearly at “*different stages*”, governed by “*different timelines*”, in terms of their individual preparedness and advancement towards sustainability of their respective cities, districts or the metropolitan region. Some Councils were recognised by others as “*leaders in the field*”. They were admired for putting in place systems and procedures that identified community outcomes, and developing a long-term vision for sustainability of their community “*very early on*” while the legislation was still being planned. Other councils were mid-way, and some scarcely even beginning to engage in the process. Each local authority involved in METROCOP thus confronted the regulatory and normative pressures with varying capabilities and expertise. Of particular significance was the realisation and nervousness among ‘slower’ council stakeholders that they were facing competition from and had to catch up with the ‘faster’ councils. And what made it more challenging for the former councils was that they lacked resources, financial and human, and hence time, to effectively participate in the collaborations and to develop a robust system, especially for their first long term community plan.

But because of the issues we face, we simply do not have enough staff! We simply cannot attend to all of the things that we should be attending, because we are in that mid-way point (he sounds a bit frustrated and helpless) than other small councils and we are not mature yet! We are bit awkward. We are probably in a teenager stage (he laughs)! Probably it will take us few years....but that actually presents a whole bunch of challenges in itself. If you look at something like sustainability, of course, we are doing things. We have very good intentions, and it's up there in all our statements and things.... But what we actually do, is probably not quite out there! Simply because of resources ... resource is a major issue for us. [METROCOP stakeholder]

The issue, which comes back to again, I think, is the whole budget issue - that in order, to collaborate, it takes time and resources. It is very expensive on time and resources! And I don't think most of the councils have that personnel resource to do it. We don't either. [METROCOP stakeholder]

Some stakeholders in URRSO, although personally committed, hailed from organisations that did not take the “*time to think about sustainability*”. They were content to monitor the development with a view to increased participation at some politically right time.

I am looking to slowly bring the organisation into [URRSO] in more and more meaningful ways, really. I think, I think just because of where this organisation is at with its own culture, that's the only way it's going to work. Sitting down with the management team, given the individuals that they are, given the work loads they have, given where the focus of energies is at the moment, I just really don't think that having conversation about sustainability would particularly help anybody (very assertively). [URRSO stakeholder]

I think the biggest barrier was the time pressure, the resource that was required! I think that's when councils thought about pulling out of it. It was because they were trying to find out a way that was acceptable to their councils and executives. It was taking more time than they probably felt they had. But at the end of the day, we kept them all there (seems very pleased and proud of this achievement)! [METROCOP stakeholder]

This difference in pace was not just confined to organisational levels but was also noted at individual levels. Stakeholders came to such processes with different temporal personalities and senses of urgency in terms of expecting or contributing towards change. Some stakeholders were more patient and more tolerant of others, taking a pragmatic “*long-term benefits view*” of these processes.

But, I think, we know that the collaboration will take time! [METROCOP stakeholder]

It's about relationships, building relationships! It requires lot of patience! [METROCOP stakeholder]

What we are doing is a change process! Um....not just in our own organisations, but in the way all organisations work together. And that's very slow, very time consuming, and requires robust relationships.... And yeah, that's slow...that's slow. And also changing...yeah, setting ourselves targets and measures. Things don't change that fast in relation to moving towards target, so you see incremental change, if you are lucky! But often you see these things remain static too! So, umm, I just think that ...it just takes a long time. It takes a long time! [METROCOP stakeholder]

At the third tier level, where I am, and I think relationships are based around the resource. If you have got time, you will talk to someone! And you will be probably more than happy to talk to

them. You might or might not be enthusiastic about what they are doing. [METROCOP stakeholder]

I think that voluntary collaboration is always slower than statutory collaboration! Yeah. I think, in effect, the act does not enforce us to collaborate. It just has some requirements that encourage us to collaborate. [METROCOP stakeholder]

[Development of URRSO] has been slow! It has got a lot further to go, but that may be just the reality of mobilising networks and the time people have. Um... so the time factor, I don't think we can perhaps go too slow for too long! [URRSO stakeholder]

Other stakeholders were highly impatient because they expected to see tangible outcomes immediately or wanted to get down to action without spending any more time on planning. Such divergence in pace and time-based expectations coupled with ambiguities around what should be considered as local outcomes and what should be considered regional outcomes often surfaced and complicated the dialogue among stakeholders. Stakeholders across the three cases often expressed their lack of knowledge and confusion and sought clarity around issues not explicated in regulation. Discussing such issues consumed a lot of time during meetings and contributed to confusions, frustrations and delays in the process.

Um...the other problem with the dialogue delivery was that actually that even though we were talking to each other, we were often talking past each other! Because we are using same words but with different meanings. We also come from organisations with different cultures, and as well as with the community outcomes process, we are all at very very different points! So, for [my city] it's been years doing this stuff and felt that, O.K. are we going to get any value out of participating in this? Or were they just going to be, you know, trying to get value from us! So, yeah, clearly some scepticism, I suppose, around the value on it for us! There was a lot of talking upfront and I think, we kept on revisiting the same thing again. I think that was, you know, you go back to the meeting and you would be raising the same issues again and again, and I think, because of all those things which we just spoke about, we needed to be clear in our discussions what we were really there for? What our contributions might be? And so, really we were just talking, I think, versus to, maybe try and establish some common ground there! [METROCOP stakeholder]

But, we were not clear enough about what was that supposed to achieve and what was the kind of framework we were operating within? (She sounded very confused and frustrated). I think we wasted lot of energy talking about detail on that, which if we have got a...something clear upfront, not have to "run around in knots" quite so much! And part of that was a time line issue, I guess. I think it's really difficult working with among the TAs and at different processes as well. So, always tempted to go off and do rather than plan to do! But, I think we should have spent lot more time planning. [METROCOP stakeholder]

As discussed earlier, such delays and frustrations were more evident in the case of URRSO. While some stakeholders at URRSO slowly withdrew from the process as they were busy with their other commitments and claimed they did not have time to do voluntary work for regional sustainability, there were others who had joined URRSO with expectations of change sooner. When they did not see anything concrete happening in the timeframe they had in mind, they became very frustrated and decided to withdraw from the process.

We came to do something and not to argue over words...I have given up and I am not coming here again (storming out of the room)! [URRSO stakeholder]

Uh, but it would depend on what [URRSO] decided it wanted to do....If it's about debate and that sort of a thing, then we can again provide some support to it, provided we think.... it's going in a useful direction. If it's just going to be a "talk-fest", then we may not be quite so enthusiastic. [URRSO stakeholder]

Paradoxically, stakeholders across the three processes demonstrated that they wanted to find common grounds for collaboration without having to spend much time talking about their differences and coming to solutions.

I conclude that stakeholders across the three cases generally considered time as a valuable commodity that should be optimally utilised. They participated in the collaborations hoping that by mutually sharing their resources, skills and capabilities, they would enhance their individual capacity and problem-solving skills related to sustainable development. They also hoped that they would become more efficient and save time and resources by learning from others' successes and failures, and not repeating the mistakes which others made. Thus temporal constraints motivated stakeholders to collectively mobilise their resources for sustainability and facilitated multi-stakeholder collaboration for sustainability. However, with different stakeholders' different levels of understanding and acceptance of sustainability, along with their different temporal logics and expectations around sustainability and collaboration, there emerged several misunderstandings, confusions and other negative emotions during the process. Ideally, stakeholders might have devoted time

to address some of those misunderstandings and remove some confusion from the process. However, temporal constraints and pressures practically prevented them from addressing these problems, which further fuelled misunderstandings among them and hindered their collaboration for sustainability. Thus different temporal realities also contributed to ideological clashes and conflicts within the processes.

9.4.3 Time and politics

This sub-theme reveals how time was used as a political instrument to influence such collective organising for sustainability. It sheds light on the interplay between time and politics as stakeholders engaged in those processes.

Stakeholders engaged in METROCOP processes were under enormous “*time pressure*” to meet regulatory requirements, not only in terms of producing local community policy outcomes but also regional community policy outcomes. They therefore did not have the luxury, liberty or the flexibility to spend too much time. As the regulatory environment was relatively new, some stakeholders expressed their inexperience, lack of confidence and heightened scepticism in working collaboratively for regional sustainability. Even though some wanted to give more time and attention to the regional collaborative processes, they confessed that ironically, they did not have enough time and that they were enormously pressured for time. They not only had to develop their local outcomes process, they also had to manage it according to their individual council timelines, while learning to adjust to the new regulatory environment at the same time.

Time constraints and political considerations fuelled discontent and scepticism among stakeholders. In METROCOP-I, not only did its stakeholders need to forge agreements, but they also needed the consent of the political wing of each council. The joint publication which also included the community survey form needed to be mailed out to community

members in the region, and responses to be received from them within a very tight timeframe. Timings of conducting and analysing the survey was critical because the regional community outcomes had to be identified from the survey and incorporated for the 2006 round of LTCCP for the region.

So, when you have got a very short time frame and with no room to manoeuvre in there, I found it difficult to actually let some of the responsibility go! And I do not know again whether I would! Uh...the timeline was absolutely crucial! We were on two timelines! We had a “public” time line that we gave the whole team. And then we had a “ghost” time line that gave me an extra 24 and in some cases 36 hours to bring things together – to meet the various deadlines.[METROCOP stakeholder]

The joint publication required varying levels of approvals and sign-offs at political and managerial levels in individual councils, before it could be administered to the community, which all stakeholders found very frustrating. They noted that it slowed down the collaborative process. All local authority stakeholders said they were dissatisfied with the autocratic processes and the bureaucracy involved.

So, in the sense, I guess, I fell back on some quite strong, in the sense, may be autocratic processes, to actually get things moving, and to drive it on a time frame. I put a very tight time frame in place and negotiated with everyone, every step, as to whether or not they would agree with that. Every time there was feedback, we amended something, so while I drove things forward, I put proposals out! I made the utmost effort to include every piece of feedback I got, out of it, so that the other participants would feel that they had a role in shaping the process. I felt that with the dissonance amongst the project team, there was a very strong risk that they might end up not owning the project and that half-way-through pulling out! And that was because I was required to get most of the work done this year, because there wasn't a great will outside! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Some METROCOP-I stakeholders pointed out that they were not given enough time and room by the MRC to develop the publication in ways that would have helped them meet their individual needs. They were generally “*not happy with the publication*” because it seemed to have primarily served the purpose of the regional council, and they felt that such an approach was against the spirits of a true collaboration. Some said that they found the experience of working collaboratively on the publication a “*waste of time*”. This particular

experience deepened some existing negative prejudices. There were doubts expressed as to the real intent of the regional council.

For example, papers have been circulated without enough time to get any meaningful input. Different versions have gone to different people. Circulation has not been in place! So, you are left wondering – is it poor process or is it intent? So, I guess, there has been a bit of credibility issue! And, the timeline, for that particular element, of the [METTROCOP-I] was particularly tight! But it meant that, getting various things right and pulling them all was all the more political! But, it seems to me that I guess, even more recently, when the timeline has not been very tight, the same issue has occurred. And so, is it kind of the intent that is making it or is it just poor process- too many other pressures or whatever, I don't know! I don't know! But it's been an ongoing frustration! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Well, it slows it down, because of our council's processes. So, for [individual's name] to get approvals from all the councils including her own, it had to be a political process, I suppose, when things went through. And all our councils had different processes and so it could take a couple of months for something to go to the Council and then it might have to go back again. Um...yes, yes, it was quite difficult! I think prime example was the Community Survey that was done. We all fed into developing those documents, but because it was such a sort of political process – each of us putting our feedback in and [individual's name] trying then to align that with what MRC would live with, as well, and in the end, it was not entirely satisfactory! The result was not entirely satisfactory! Because it was very difficult! [METROCOP stakeholder]

Contrastingly, in URRSO, which was not obliged to meet particular regulatory deadline, time was used as a tool to manipulate the future course of the organisation. With the aim of engaging a wide spectrum of stakeholders, much time and energy was invested to develop an ambitious funding plan and an inspiring Memorandum of Understanding. But the voluntary nature of this civil society organisation gave it enormous temporal flexibility to develop the process. Delay tactics were used sometimes to diffuse tension among stakeholders, especially in bitter ideological clashes, or to suit the time schedules of stakeholders who had volunteered as facilitators, but later were not able to devote more time owing to other commitments.

I think what is happening is that this issue is quietly...quietly gathering momentum....and I guess, politics is all about timing. Sometimes you have to nudge a bit. Sometimes you have to let the fires flame away in that natural air. People are talking about this. They are interested in this. And, I guess, I am not totally in a hurry, because, it's quietly gathering strength anyway. [URRSO stakeholder]

Some stakeholders passionate about sustainability became involved in URRSO in their individual capacity, but the delay in organising frustrated them and dampened their spirits to engage seriously or any further in the organisation.

Um... so the time factor, I don't think we can perhaps go too slow for too long! [URRSO stakeholder]

Umm...(she thinks deeply and says) I think...I think, I would go again (she seems a little hopeful) but I am a little less (says firmly and sounds a bit bitter)... you know, just because of ... How many months have gone by? ... That it was 8 or 9 months without hearing anything, that have gone by, that I am less enthusiastic now about ... this... and yeah. I am disappointed! (she looks sad and hurt). And I am less enthusiastic about this forum actually...being a kind of ... active ... part of the society for now ... (there is a long pause, she thinks very deeply, seems and sounds disillusioned). [URRSO stakeholder]

Other stakeholders instrumental in launching URRSO declined to invest any more time towards developing the process when they realised, as revealed earlier, that certain stakeholders had taken charge of the collaboration with their supposed vested interests of turning it into a “watch dog” agency to monitor certain local authorities, on grounds of accountability.

I conclude that depending upon the flexibility or rigidity of the timeline governing the process, stakeholders may have had more or less time respectively to explore their disagreements and come to some consensus. Time was sometimes used as a powerful means to manipulate the course of events during multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. Moreover, as there was a regulatory timeline to be followed as in METROCOP-I and II, the stakeholders were motivated to resolve their mutual differences, and come to some basic compromise, which in turn facilitated their collaboration. Thus temporal constraints and pressures, especially governed by regulative institutions, played a crucial role in invoking compromise among METROCOP stakeholders.

9.5 Discussion

My analysis in this chapter reveals that as stakeholders became involved in such processes they used certain temporal criteria, incorporating aspects of their understandings of the past, present and future, to make sense of, and socially construct their collective understanding of sustainability. They had different levels of understanding of sustainability which in turn drew upon their different past learnings, present experiences, and future expectations ranging from long-term to short-term development, and slower to faster paced changes. Different temporal perceptions and expectations from sustainability fuelled disagreements among stakeholders as they attempted to collectively understand and contribute towards the sustainability movement.

Timings of institutional change promoting sustainable development intensified regulative and normative forces in society and played a significant role in legitimising acceptance of the concept of sustainability and motivating stakeholders to participate in multi-stakeholder collaborations for it. Moreover, as different organisations had different levels of acceptance of the philosophy of sustainability, and were at different stages of involvement in the sustainability movement, they had different paces of contributing towards it. Such a difference in organisational pace also influenced organisational stakeholders' understanding, acceptance and pace of their contributions towards the dialogic collaboration.

Temporal constraints also played a vital role in motivating stakeholders to collaborate and collectively mobilise their resources for the sustainability movement. All stakeholders considered time as a valuable resource which they wished to optimally utilise. They therefore became involved in such processes with a basic temporal expectation that by sharing mutual knowledge, skills and experiences on planning and implementing sustainable

development initiatives they would become more efficient. They hoped that by learning from each other they would ultimately save their time.

Thus, stakeholders across the three cases participated in such field-level processes with different temporal logics and expectations related to multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. However, with their different individual or organisational understandings and pace in contributing towards this movement they had varying temporal subjectivities connected with sustainability and the collaboration at the individual and organisational levels. Moreover, because of the conceptual ambiguities within the philosophy of sustainable development, stakeholders needed considerable time and patience to collectively understand and forge conceptual agreements on sustainable development before they proceeded any further. However, ironically, the temporal pressures confronting stakeholders because of their demanding personal and professional commitments often prevented stakeholders from engaging in deeper dialogue to resolve confusions. Those temporal constraints further fuelled misunderstandings among them, causing ambiguities, frustrations, delays and conflicts during the processes and hindering collaboration. Thus while temporality was critically embodied in such processes, it was intricately and dynamically connected with emotionality of, and the understandings and misunderstandings generated during those collaborations.

I use the following diagram to pictorially represent a cycle involving fusion of stakeholders' horizons on emotions, time and (mis)understandings.

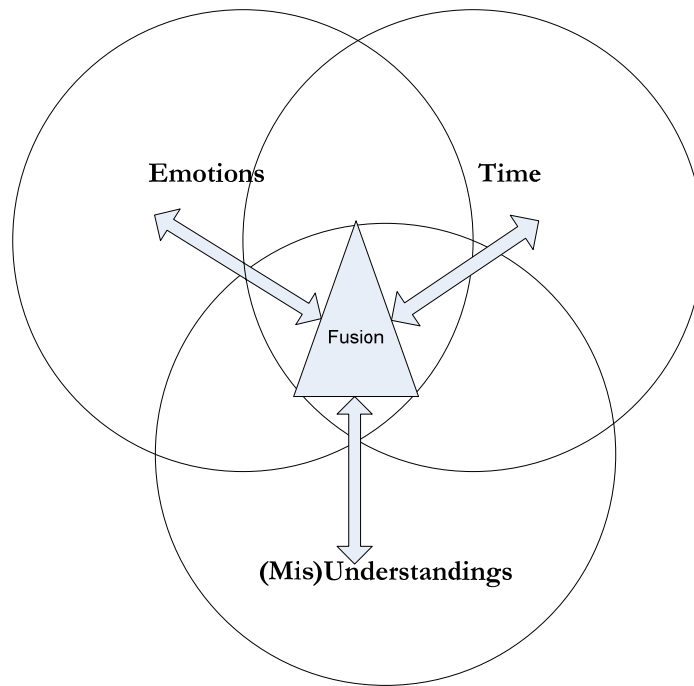


Figure 9a: Fusion of Horizons: Dynamic interplay of stakeholders’ emotion, time and (mis)understandings

Those three cases of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability were also characterised by a significant temporal paradox. While stakeholders would logically seem to have felt more satisfied with the process if their views and priorities on sustainability were duly heard and incorporated during the collaboration, they also did not want to “*waste their time*” talking about and agreeing on sustainability. Thus, ideally those three collaborations for sustainability required adequate stakeholders’ time and efforts to engage in deeper dialogue. Through deeper dialogue they could not only develop mutual understanding on sustainability before taking collective action, they could also develop a good level of understanding among themselves. Realistically, however, as they faced serious temporal constraints and pressures, the stakeholders in these three processes generally did not want to devote much time towards attempts to achieve a collective conceptual agreement on various aspects of sustainable development.

My analysis also provokes me to ask some fundamental temporal questions as I try to understand multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. How much time do

stakeholders need to get to know and understand others? How much time is needed to talk about sustainability in order to come to a collective conceptual agreement on sustainability that satisfies all the stakeholders involved in the process? How and on what criteria can one prioritise and divide time between dialogue and collective action for sustainability? By raising these temporal questions, I explicitly lay grounds for future research on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.

In the next section, I conclude this chapter.

9.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I revealed the influence of time on the three cases that I investigated in my dissertation. I unmasked how various temporal considerations of stakeholders connected with sustainability, and with collaboration influenced their expectations and perceptions of such processes. I revealed how time influences collaboration for sustainability. I demonstrated the complex and dynamic interplay among stakeholders' understandings and misunderstandings and temporal and emotional considerations during these processes.

In the next chapter, I weave in the theoretical framework of my research with my theoretical conceptualisations and empirical analyses on the dynamics of stakeholders' (mis)understandings, emotions and time to theorise multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.

Chapter 10

Integrating the Analysis and Theory:

Dynamics of Multi-stakeholder Organising for Sustainability

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a theory on multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability. It is a grounded theory of collaborations developed among stakeholders through dialogue and in the context of sustainable development. It explains how multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability occur in local settings. This theory is based on three cases of dialogic collaborations, METROCOP-I and II and URRSO, which were organised in New Zealand in response to a regulatory institutional change promoting sustainable development at local levels. I have built the theory on the premise that such collaborations are inspired by and founded on the ideals of communicative understanding and action among stakeholders.

In section 10.2, I present my research findings and theorise how multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability takes place in local settings. While theorising, I have weaved in the different literature and empirical strands of my research. Thus, I have integrated: (a) my ontological and epistemological underpinnings of human relationships, communication, understanding and action as influenced by critical hermeneutics; (b) my theoretical framework that cross-fertilised institutional theory and social movements theory; (c) my conceptual understanding of organising, sustainable development, stakeholder engagement, dialogue, collaboration, emotions, and time; and (d) my empirical analyses of the dynamics

of stakeholders' understandings and misunderstandings, emotions, and time as observed in the three cases. In section 10.3, I conclude this chapter.

10.2 Multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability

In this section, I present a grounded theory of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability to explain how their organising takes place in local settings. First, I briefly discuss the overarching rationale of my research and highlight the research questions that guided my inquiry. I also clarify the nature of my research findings. In the following sub-sections, 10.2.2 to 10.2.5, I weave together my theoretical conceptualisations and empirical findings to give insights on the various questions that guided my inquiry.

I reiterate that the texts of my research (the three multi-stakeholder processes I investigated) were deeply embedded in the macro context of sustainable development and a wider social movement towards sustainability. Therefore the theory of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability that I present also integrates the texts and context.

10.2.1 Research Direction

Multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations have been popularised as panacea for complex local to global problems confronting governments, businesses and society, at large. Key global policy initiatives stress that to institutionalise sustainable development, top-down and bottom-up initiatives drawing the expertise and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels are required (Agenda 21, 1993; UNCED, 1992; WCED, 1987). Dialogue and collaboration have therefore been increasingly promoted as powerful institutional mechanisms that can help understand sustainable development and achieve sustainability (Hoffman, 1998; Macnaghten, & Jacobs, 1997; Presas, 2001). However, paradoxically multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations

are not unproblematic solutions for sustainability (Gray, 1989; Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002; Pillay, Rosswall, & Glaser, 2002).

Inspired by my work experience on multi-party dialogue and collaboration on sustainable development, I began this Ph.D. process as an intellectual quest on this topic. My investigation was based on three different cases of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations, at two different levels of institutional hierarchy: (Case 1) URRSO representing a bottom-up process; (Cases 2 and 3) METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II representing top-down efforts, organised to achieve regional sustainability in New Zealand.

The overall objective of my research was to deeply understand how sustainable development can be institutionalised through multi-stakeholder processes. The overarching research question governing my inquiry has been: *How do multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability occur in local settings?* Under the broad umbrella of this question I investigated five sub-questions: (1) *Why do various stakeholders participate in collective organising processes for sustainability?* (2) *How do stakeholders' intentions influence multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability?* (3) *How do various characteristics of sustainable development influence stakeholders and their collective organising for it?* (4) *How do various characteristics of multi-stakeholder organising, in general, influence such processes for sustainability, in particular?* (5) *How do stakeholders' perceptions on outcomes influence multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability?*

My research conclusions are my subjective and partial insights into the phenomenon of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability derived from the foregoing analyses. The findings from my analyses are specific to the three cases I investigated. Those findings cannot be generalised to other dialogic collaborative settings for sustainability. However, I emphasise that emotionality, temporality, understanding and misunderstanding are inherent constituents of any organising (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Arrow, Henry, Poole,

Wheelan, & Moreland, 2005; Fineman, 1993b, 2000a, 2003; Mumby, & Putnam, 1992; Putnam, & Mumby, 1993; Scott, 2003; Weick, 1979). Therefore some of these dimensions which I highlight in this dissertation, could be witnessed, but in different shades, and to a greater or lesser extent, in other settings as well. And thus some of the findings could be relevant and applicable to other multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability.

I also underscore that different qualitative case study researchers generate different insights and findings on the same case (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005). My hermeneutic horizon (Gadamer, 1975; Prasad, 2002; Prasad, & Mir, 2002) is of course influenced by my life experiences. My personal and professional identity is a product of my life connections, particularly with the poorer and developing countries of India and Nepal, and the richer and developed countries of New Zealand and the U.S.A. where I have lived. My conclusions and subjectivity, including my level of optimism or pessimism about the phenomena under investigation, are therefore influenced by my multinational life exposure. My interpretations and world views may therefore be very different from another qualitative researcher studying the same three processes but having a different world and life view.

Based on my analyses of URRSO, METROCOP-I and METROCOP-II cases, in the following sub-sections 10.2.2 to 10.2.5, I address either one or two specific sub-questions of the dissertation. In instances where my insights are related to two sub-questions, I have grouped and addressed the two sub-questions together. For example, sub-sections 10.2.2, 10.2.4 and 10.2.5 cover two sub-questions. Each of the three sub-sections, 10.2.3, 10.2.4 and 10.2.5 give partial insights on question 4.

The order in which I present my insights into various sub-questions varies slightly from the numerical order in which I presented those questions earlier in this section. I have done so

to ensure a logical theoretical flow in this chapter. I, however use the same question numbers as designated previously.

10.2.2 Intentions in collaborating with others for sustainability

In this sub-section I present my insights on the first two sub-questions: (1) *Why do various stakeholders participate in collective organising processes for sustainability?* and (2) *How do stakeholders' intentions influence multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability?*

Stakeholders participated in those collaborations for sustainability for several reasons that I became aware of. They had different personal and/or professional values, ideologies, interests, backgrounds and expertise. Their decision to participate in the collaboration spanned across the three different but interconnected objective, social and subjective worlds (Habermas, 1984). My analysis reveals that the regulative, cultural–cognitive and normative institutions (Scott, 2003) promoting sustainable development philosophy in society were important components of stakeholders' three worlds. These institutions were interrelated and mutually dependent and they simultaneously exerted different kinds and levels of institutional pressures (Hoffman, 2001) on stakeholders to collaborate for sustainability.

At the regulative institutional level, most stakeholders who were representing the systems world comprised of business and local government subsystems (Habermas, 1987), across the three cases, viewed their collaboration from a more objective stand point. They became interested in such collaborations for various instrumental reasons like preparedness and response to the changing regulatory environment on sustainable development. For example, across the three cases, the Local Government Act 2002 and the regulatory timeline which confronted the local authorities played a powerful role in motivating them to become involved in those multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability. They had

to develop a strategic plan on sustainability of their respective local or regional community. Some of the other non-local government stakeholders involved in URRSO also wanted to prepare their respective organisations to understand and respond to those new regulatory changes, which they feared would ultimately impact their organisations as well.

Moreover, my analyses reveal that all stakeholders also hoped to acquire new learning on sustainable development and derive inspiration from others who were either already involved, or were much ahead of them in the sustainability movement. They wanted to know how to develop policies and implement actions that could help them contribute towards the movement.

Stakeholders thus communicatively rationalised (Habermas, 1984) that such collaborations would be good learning platforms where they could share their knowledge, skills, and experiences from past failures and successes with each other (see also, Calton, & Payne, 2003; Roome, & Wijen, 2005). Through their respective processes they hoped to mobilise and share their resources and capabilities with others (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Diani, 1992). They expected that by participating in such processes they would be able to further build their capacity to grapple with various organisational and societal changes that were required under the new regulatory environment promoting sustainable development in New Zealand. They also hoped that by collaborating with others they would be able to develop systems that effectively and efficiently engaged a wide range of community stakeholders in the sustainability movement without putting undue pressure on everyone's time and resources. Thus, by working together and sharing their resources they were aiming to save time and costs, and make faster and more significant strides towards sustainability.

The stakeholders' decisions to become involved in collaborations for sustainability were however not just restricted to the objective world of systems and regulative institutions.

They were also governed by other spheres of institutional influences at cultural-cognitive and normative levels, and engulfed stakeholders' subjective and social worlds. Together, those represented the lifeworld, comprised of meanings, communications, emotionality, rationality and relationships (Habermas, 1987) among stakeholders, including those belonging to the business and local government sub-systems.

The cultural-cognitive institutions, developed more naturally and unconsciously by stakeholders over a period of time (Hoffman, 2001; Troast et. al, 2002), played a vital role in influencing their decisions to collaborate with others through those processes and become involved in the sustainability movement (see Diani, 1992; Gusfield, 1994; Melucci, 1996). Such institutions included stakeholders' meanings, values, emotions and prejudices (Benford, & Snow, 2000; Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Zucker, 1991) connected with the sustainability movement, collaboration and others involved in the collaboration.

Thus their decisions to collaborate for sustainability were neither purely rational nor purely emotional. They were both rational and emotional (Fineman, 1993a, 2000a; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Hearn, 1993), with emotions sometimes serving and other times hindering the processes (Fineman, 2000a).

Some stakeholders were fearful of current patterns of unsustainable growth and consumption in society. They were empathetic and compassionate towards others, including various life forms and non-living resources belonging to the present and future generations of the Earth. Such emotions were mostly exhibited by URRSO stakeholders only. For them, URRSO acted as a potential avenue where they could at least channel and translate some of those inner feelings of care and concern into meaningful practices that could potentially benefit society. They hoped that through such collaborations they would be able to contribute towards creating a more sustainable region - where natural resources

would be used in a manner that the needs of the future generations would not be compromised, and which would offer the promise of brighter, more prosperous and happier lifestyle not only for themselves and their family, but for coming several generations.

URRSO, in particular, initially gave some stakeholders a social platform where they could feel more hopeful about a positive future. By participating in URRSO they felt satisfied with the fact that they were at least socially contributing towards creating a more sustainable region. Other stakeholders who were also aspiring to have a better quality of life for themselves and others in the region regarded URRSO as one of the coping mechanisms to deal with their frustrations from disharmonious developments in society. They used URRSO to vent their grievances about negative experiences they had with stakeholders, especially from other sectors, whom they blamed and held accountable for not actively contributing to sustainable development.

At the normative level, there were several pressures on stakeholders which also influenced their decisions to participate in the collaborations. As my analyses reveal, the collaborations offered stakeholders a platform wherein they derived a sense of purpose and belonging - either as a resident, or an organisation, or as a member of a professional or an informal social network - to a community of stakeholders. That community included stakeholders who were either personally or professionally concerned about the long-term development and common good of their region. Working together with other stakeholders who faced similar challenges and who were either personally or professionally involved in the movement gave them a sense of security and empowered them with some confidence that they were not alone in their mission.

Mounting expectations from other individuals, groups, organisations or sectors also pressurised stakeholders to collaborate with others. Some stakeholders experienced fear of alienation from their respective community if they did not participate in the organising processes. In addition, the local authority stakeholders also faced coercive pressures from community stakeholders and from the central government if they did not collaborate with other local authority and community stakeholders for sustainability. Moreover, some of the stakeholders also used the process as evidence to publicly demonstrate to others, including the central government and community stakeholders, that they were professionally or personally committed to the sustainability movement. They were perceived to have used the collaboration as a platform to help boost their social image and profile. The process also helped them feel proud of their socially responsible actions in collaborating with others for the good of their region.

Thus, stakeholders were under the dynamic and simultaneous influence of various institutional forces operating at regulative, cultural-cognitive and normative levels. Those institutional forces fused in complex and unpredictable ways (Hoffman, 2001) to exercise different kinds of pressures on stakeholders. Subject to those varying institutional pressures, stakeholders recognised strengths and weaknesses as a professional or as members of a community, and positive and negative aspects of their roles with respect to their expected contributions towards the sustainability movement.

Accordingly, different stakeholders developed different institutional logics (Brint, & Karabel, 1991; Friedland, & Alford, 1991; Lounsbury, 2005; McAdam, & Scott, 2005) of collaborating with others in this social movement (della Porta, & Diani, 1992; Touraine, 2001; Waters, 2003). Not only did those logics have a rational and/or emotional foundation, they were also constantly evolving for each stakeholder as they engaged with others during the process. Stakeholders appeared to constantly evaluate how the process

was progressing, and revisit their decision of whether they should remain associated with, or could disassociate from the process, or remain passive. While addressing other research questions in sub-sections 10.2.4 and 10.2.5, I further unpack how those institutional pressures influenced stakeholders' decisions to continue or discontinue their involvement or remain passive in the collaboration.

10.2.3 Characteristics of dialogic collaborations for sustainability

In this sub-section I give insights into the fourth research question: (4) *How do various characteristics of multi-stakeholder organising, in general, influence such processes for sustainability, in particular?*

I recognise the three multi-stakeholder organising processes I investigated in this research as 'field-level' processes (Hoffman, 2001; Scott, 2003) of stakeholder engagement for sustainability. Stakeholders stepped outside their immediate individual, organisational or sector-specific boundaries to participate in the respective multi-stakeholder collaborations. The collaborations proved to be highly reflexive, rapidly evolving, fluid and dynamic communicative process of relationship-building (Crane, & Livesey, 2003) among interdependent stakeholders who personally or professionally aspired to contribute towards sustainable development. Each process served as a relational field where stakeholders had the opportunity to communicate with, and relate to different individuals and organisations (DiMaggio, & Powell, 1991a; Fligstein, 1991; Scott, & Meyer, 1991) on sustainable development issues. The processes, however, also emerged as highly complex, messy and communicatively distorted process of engagement (Gorner, 2000; Habermas, 1987; Scheibler, 2000).

As stakeholders dialogically engaged with one another, their interactions involved fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1976; Prasad, 2005; Prasad, & Mir, 2002) of stakeholders'

understandings and misunderstandings, emotions and time, in complex and unpredictable ways. The dynamics of organising (Gray, 1989; Weick, 1979) in those three cases thus involved the dynamic interplay of stakeholders' understandings and misunderstandings, emotions and time around three different areas: (a) the concept of sustainable development and sustainability; (b) the relationships with other stakeholders involved in the process; and (c) the multi-stakeholder organising process.

On the one hand, the dialogic foundation of the collaborations proved helpful for those processes in some ways. The various ideal characteristics of dialogue, discussed in Chapter 5, provided conditions for stakeholders to attempt to understand each other, the collaboration, and sustainable development / sustainability. Dialogue provided conditions to foster understanding and relationships (Gadamer, 1989; Habermas, 1984) among stakeholders, which are noted as essential for achieving sustainability (Ross, 1998; UNCED, 1992). Stakeholders were offered opportunities to creatively explore (Bohm, 1998; Habermas, 1984) their individual and collective understandings and mutual agreements and disagreements related to sustainability and collaboration. They also discussed important issues and concerns that confronted them as citizens and members of professional organisations.

Thus, dialogue during the process provided stakeholders with opportunities to become more learned, reflective, creative and self-liberated (Bohm, 1998; Freire, 1972) with regard to understanding sustainability, the collaboration, and their relationship with others engaged in the process. As they communicated with each other to understand more about sustainability and contribute to the goals of the collaboration, they also tended to 'reflect' (Freire, 1972) on their and others' behaviours. Based on their respective experiences in the process, at later stages they communicatively rationalised (Habermas, 1984) the positive and negative aspects of those behaviours and their relationships with others during the process.

They also reflected on their individual and collective successes, failures and learnings during the process. Accordingly, they confirmed, renewed or withdrew their membership from such processes. Their experiences stimulated some of them to think critically about (Freire, 1972) and rationalise how they, individually and collectively, could better handle diversity of perspectives, develop greater tolerance for ambiguities and further improve their relationships with other stakeholders.

Therefore, the dialogic foundation of the three collaborations for sustainability made their respective organising an increasingly self-evolving, temporary and open-ended process (Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Ross, 1998) for stakeholders, even in the more top-down processes. The dialogue also provided, to some extent, stimulating conditions for ‘transformation’ and ‘co-creation’ of new ideas.

However, on the other hand, those characteristics of dialogue, paradoxically and ironically, also acted as practical hurdles for these collaborations. The scope for exploration (Bohm, 1998) offered by dialogue could unfortunately be so easily stretched that it often became too large for stakeholders to accommodate and comprehend emergent multiple perspectives and opinions on various issues and concerns around sustainability, stakeholders and collaboration.

Thus, during the processes stakeholders’ expressions came with various validity claims. As they dialogically engaged with each other, consensus and dissensus on what constituted sustainability, how others should behave and contribute towards the collaboration, and how the collaboration should proceed, emerged and evolved. As my analysis reveals, stakeholders appeared to be constantly judging each others’ knowledge, expertise, identity and level of commitment to the collaboration, and to the sustainability movement, against their individual and subjective criteria of truth, sincerity and rightness (Eriksen, & Weigard,

2003; Habermas, 1984; Outhwaite, 1998). While some validity claims of stakeholders were accepted by a majority leading to consensus in the processes, others were unaccepted and hence rejected.

Moreover, historicity - a critical temporal feature of human existence (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1953) - was one of the essential temporal ingredients (Blount, & Janicki, 2001; Bludorn, & Standifer, 2006; George, & Jones, 2000) of the three collaborations. As my analyses reveal, the stakeholders' understandings and emotions constantly oscillated among the three different but interconnected temporal modes of past, present and future (Gadamer, 1985). In one sense, the historicity of human beings proved helpful to such processes as it reminded stakeholders of the grievous environmental and social damages caused by anthropogenic activities. It helped them appreciate the necessity and importance of collaborations for sustainability, and motivated them to become involved in, and contribute to the sustainability movement.

However, historicity also gave stakeholders scope to remember and harbour various positive and negative prejudices (Gadamer, 1989; Palmer, 1969) connected with sustainability, others, and the processes in which they were involved. And the negative prejudices which some stakeholders had developed because of their negative experiences with others in the past prevented them from viewing these processes with fresh perspectives and as a clean slate. They were therefore not able to participate in the collaborations without biases. Some of the prejudices of stakeholders were so deep, longstanding and ingrained that it made some stakeholders less receptive or even closed to listening to, and accepting new ideas and others' perspectives. Some stakeholders were resistant to changing or compromising their deep-seated values and beliefs on sustainability, and their attitude hampered the spirit of dialogue and collaboration to a great extent. Such behaviour was predominantly observed in URRSO. However, METROCOP stakeholders

were willing to compromise on their beliefs to some extent because of the regulative institutional pressures which I further unpack in sub-section 10.2.5.

Thus, the liberating potential and transformatory power of dialogue seem idealised features that may enable stakeholders to elevate their individual consciousness to a collective state of consciousness (Bohm, 1998; Freire, 1972), which can then be favourably aligned to goals of collaboration and sustainability. However, in practice, and as evident from my analyses of the three processes, such liberation and transformation was not easy to achieve.

Stakeholders' past lessons, present experiences, and future expectations related to sustainability, themselves, others and the processes were constantly at play and acted as source of tension within and among stakeholders.

My analyses also revealed that unless closely monitored and controlled, dialogue on sustainability offered conditions that ironically hosted various ambiguities and contributed to chaos and conflicts. As stakeholders tried to communicatively rationalise (Habermas, 1984) the innumerable understandings and misunderstandings (Gadamer, 1989) generated during the process, and come to an agreement on what they understood by sustainability and how they should take the collaboration ahead, the three processes were filled with a wide range of mixed emotions like hope, satisfaction, confusion, frustration, mistrust, suspicion, fear, nervousness, anger, pessimism, disillusionment, and stress. Thus, paradoxically, dialogue facilitated conditions that made those multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability emerge as tense, stressful and confusing encounters for the majority of the stakeholders, to a greater or lesser extent.

And as stakeholders' understandings, misunderstandings, emotions and temporal concerns fused in complex and unpredictable ways, these processes for sustainability emerged as a highly messy and communicatively distorted process of human engagement. While through

dialogue stakeholders could freely articulate their opinions (Bohm, 1998), the different validity claims on sustainability and collaboration that were raised by stakeholders during the process could not be settled solely based on the strength of argument. With so much ambiguity and divergence present in the process, it was not only difficult to keep track of all arguments, it also became very challenging to collectively decide and agree on which was the strongest and fairest argument among them. Moreover, stakeholders' stressful and busy life styles and the time pressures they faced made dialogic listening (Ross, 1998) very difficult. Coercion, exclusion, domination and unequal opportunities to communicate thus became common characteristics of these processes. The three collaborations were also subject to several manipulations that suited the interests or timelines of certain powerful stakeholders. Thus the processes suffered from severe distortions in communicative understanding and action, and were not ideal speech situations as one might expect or hope dialogic collaborations to be (Benhabib, 1992; Gerner, 2000; Habermas, 1987; Harrington, 2001).

10.2.4 Identification with sustainable development, others and collaborations

This penultimate sub-section gives insights into the two research questions: (3) *How do various characteristics of sustainable development influence stakeholders and their collective organising for it?* and (4) *How do various characteristics of multi-stakeholder organising, in general, influence such processes for sustainability, in particular?*

Collaborations, in general, are supposed to thrive on the power of diversity. It has been recognised that diversity strengthens and enhances the potential of such processes (Gray, 1989; Roberts, & Bradley, 1991; Rondinelli, & London, 2002). As my analyses reveal, diversity is also paradoxically a huge reservoir of potential impediments for collaboration.

For example, in the three cases I investigated, different stakeholders came to their respective collaborations with their distinct personal, professional and/or organisational identities (Gioia, 1998; Marquez, 2001; Whetten, & Godfrey, 1998). As individuals, they were different from one another in terms of their personality, including their emotional (Burkitt, 1997; Fineman, 1993b, 2000a) and temporal (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Ballard, & Seibold, 2003; Bluedorn, 2002; Hassard, 1996) orientations, communication and interpersonal skills, and capabilities to tolerate differences of opinions and adjust to others. The divergence in organisational identities, their individual personalities, and knowledge, experience and skills contributed to difference of opinions and clashes among stakeholders during the three processes.

Stakeholders also differed in their individual or organisational understanding of sustainable development, and preparedness to implement it. And as they participated in such processes, they brought in an understanding of sustainable development which some of them had built over a long or a short period of time based on their personal experiences, interests, values and personal identity, and/or their professional training, organisational culture and organisational / sector-based identity.

For example, some stakeholders in URRSO participated in the processes because they were motivated individuals who were interested in the sustainability movement and wanted to contribute towards positive social transformations. Those stakeholders often carried forward an understanding of sustainability aligned to their individual identity, and frequently admitted to it being inspired by their family upbringing or personal values and experiences.

And there were others in URRSO, and all the stakeholders in METROCOP-I and II, who participated in those collaborations because of professional reasons. They brought forward

understandings of sustainability that were often professionally inherited as organisational or sector representatives, and which tended to be favourably aligned to their organisational or sector-based identity.

Moreover, with different stakeholders being at different stages of their involvement in the sustainability movement and with different levels of understanding on sustainable development, those processes were often characterised by stakeholders using different language and terminologies on sustainable development, which suited their individual or organisational identity, interests and ideologies.

Stakeholders also differed in their knowledge, skills and experience to implement actions contributing to sustainability. Some stakeholders who were newly involved in the movement or who perhaps felt less passionately about sustainable development tended to be more open and willing to engaging with others. They seemed to be more flexible in considering others' view points and collectively developing a new understanding of sustainability essential for the purpose of collaboration. Thus, for those stakeholders, their own understanding of sustainable development was evolving as they were dialogically engaging with, and learning from others. And there were others who had developed such a distinct understanding of sustainable development over several years that it had become deeply engrained in them. For those stakeholders, mostly those participating in URRSO, it therefore became difficult to agree on a new understanding of sustainability that was being collectively formulated during the process. For them it implied that during the process of negotiating a new understanding of sustainability for the purpose of the collaboration, they would have to change and hence compromise on their individual understanding of the concept. Some of them were not open to such change.

In addition, my analyses reveal that stakeholders in the three processes were also trying to find a collective identity (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Melucci, 1996) for the collaborations. The identity of the three processes depended upon: (a) different individual and/or organisational identities of stakeholders; (b) the understanding of sustainable development that they had individually or organisationally developed; and (c) the collective understanding of sustainable development that they were trying to develop during the collaboration. As my analyses reveal, trying to find an identity for the collaboration proved challenging not only for URRSO, but even for those top-down more mandatory processes like METROCOP-I and II (possibly because they were relatively early responses to new legislation).

Paradoxically and ironically, one of the biggest problematic in multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability is the identity of sustainable development itself. The sustainable development philosophy has been susceptible to innumerable ideological debates and discourses not only at the global level but also at various national, regional and local levels of society (Berke, & Conroy, 2000; Dresner, 2002; Dryzek, 1997; UNCED, 1992). Moreover, there exist multiple layers of constantly evolving and parallel socio-cultural, economic and environmental debates on sustainable development (Dovers, & Handmer, 1992) at those various levels of society. Such countless debates have contributed to creating a fragmented identity of sustainability, further giving a highly fluid character to the sustainability movement (Pearce et. al, 1993; Pillay, Rosswall, & Glaser, 2002).

In addition, across the three collaborations, debates around which stakeholders were local stakeholders and which were regional stakeholders, and what their respective roles should be as far as regional sustainability is concerned further contributed to identity fragmentation of sustainability. Stakeholders' debates and disagreements around local community outcomes and regional community outcomes, and boundary issues around

what belonged to the cities or districts versus the region; and what contributed to local sustainability as opposed to regional sustainability were also some of the outcomes of the dialogue that contributed to a fragmented identity of sustainability. Such debates also contributed to further fragmentation of the identity of these multi-stakeholder collaborations.

In addition to its fragmented identity, I also recognise that sustainable development as a philosophy exists and operates on a long and ambiguous time horizon. For example, in the three collaborations, while conceptually associating with sustainable development, stakeholders connected their past lessons and memories with their present experiences and future expectations from life as a person or as a professional. Thus, different stakeholders had different temporal foci (Bluedorn, 2002) and timelines for understanding, developing and implementing policies on sustainable development, and contributing towards the sustainability movement.

Moreover, I also note that one of the biggest ironies and paradox connected with sustainable development is that no one knows exactly what a sustainable future might look like. No one knows when and if sustainability would be achieved. Stakeholders therefore came to such collaborations with different temporal foci and depth of understanding and temporal expectations of sustainability - ranging from long-term to short-term horizons, slow to fast paced social transformations, and radical or more modest changes.

With so many above factors contributing to identity inconsistency and fragmentation (Crane, & Livesey, 2003; Gray, 1989) of sustainability and that of the collaborations, dialogue among stakeholders often became very challenging. Different individual and organisational identities of stakeholders interacted in complex and unpredictable ways with different understandings of sustainable development shared and explored during the three

processes. It was not easy for stakeholders to clearly communicate with each other and come to a consensus on what they collectively understood by sustainability. Thus, developing one common understanding of sustainable development, which satisfied most stakeholders and served the purpose of collaboration proved a very challenging goal. Various ambiguities and failure in attempts to develop that collective understanding of sustainable development and sustainability contributed to fragmenting the identity of the collaboration.

10.2.5 Outcomes of dialogic collaborations for sustainability

This final sub-section gives insights into the fourth and the final research questions: (4) *How do various characteristics of multi-stakeholder organising, in general, influence such processes for sustainability, in particular?* and (5) *How do stakeholders' perceptions on outcomes influence multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability?*

The three processes were characterised by different levels of stakeholders' commitments (Gray, 1989; Hunt, & Benford, 2004; Logsdon, 1991) to, and expectations either of the collaboration, or of sustainability. As stakeholders engaged in their respective collaboration they brought their diverse expectations of, prejudices on, and commitment to 'sustainability'. They also brought in their diverse expectations of, prejudices on, and commitment to 'collaboration'. Those expectations, prejudices and commitment spanned across and engulfed their horizons of understandings, emotions, and time, and further influenced stakeholders' level of attachment or detachment to the process as it evolved.

And as stakeholders engaged in dialogue with others, while some of them openly acknowledged and expressed their expectations from the process, most of them remained silent about it during the process (even though they often confided these aspects in the interviews with me). Most of them were also not open and transparent within the

collaboration about how much of a commitment they were ready to give towards the process. This lack of transparency negatively impacted the dialogue among stakeholders. Divergence in stakeholders' levels of commitment to, and expectations from the process became one of the principal sources of disagreements, misunderstandings, dissatisfaction, resentment and frustrations among stakeholders.

As discussed earlier, for some stakeholders, especially those who voluntarily involved themselves in URRSO, sustainability was a highly emotive issue. Sustainable development evoked a wide range of powerful emotions in some stakeholders. Being passionate about the movement (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Melucci, 1996), these stakeholders committed to such processes mostly for emotional reasons connected with sustainable development. In URRSO some of the 'emotions around sustainability' (for example excitement, empathy, fear, frustrations, hope) which might be initially conceived of as generally positive were not unproblematic in terms of what they promised. They not only 'served', they also 'interfered' with the potential achievement of sustainability and the related collaboration. In one respect, the emotive potential of sustainability was highly valuable for implementing and facilitating such processes for sustainable development because positive emotions could be channelled to draw in a wide range of stakeholders to participate and contribute towards the sustainability movement.

However, some of those positive emotions around sustainability, which some URRSO stakeholders felt were so strong that they fuelled their convictions and also overpowered their rationality to such a great extent that those stakeholders were highly unrealistic in their expectations from others as well as from the collaboration. Some of them nurtured such a high level of excitement and hopes from sustainability that it also made them impatient towards accepting and tolerating differences of opinions either on sustainability, or on how the process was to be developed further to achieve the desired results. With their

expectations raised beyond what could be realistically achieved in a given time frame by a small group of individuals, they ultimately became disappointed and frustrated with the process.

Moreover, some URRSO stakeholders also relied on their emotions around sustainability, for example the strong feelings of care and empathy which they had expressed for society at large, as a yardstick to judge the sincerity and level of commitment of others involved in the collaboration. In finding others less passionate, they judged them as less committed to the movement, and became disillusioned and frustrated with the collaboration. Thus as the process evolved and disagreements on various accounts prominently featured, those strong and intense positive emotions which some stakeholders felt around sustainability not only fizzled, they also made it difficult for stakeholders to come to a compromise on various issues raised during the collaboration.

As discussed earlier, there were other stakeholders who became involved in URRSO and METROCOP-I and II because of more pragmatic and/or professional reasons. Moreover, some stakeholders approached the collaborations with an apparently greater sense of duty and/or responsibility, hoping that others were equally committed to the process and sustainable development. Some stakeholders who carried certain negative prejudices for others viewed such collaborations with great deal of scepticism. They were doubtful of the intentions of others involved in the process, and hence were sceptical about the process as well. They seemed to engage more superficially in the collaboration and appeared less committed to such processes. Some adopted a wait and watch policy to observe the direction which the collaboration would take, that is how favourable or unfavourable the process would become to their organisational or individual identities, interests, and ideologies.

Moreover, the level of regulatory influence on such collaborations, and the access which organisations or individuals involved in the processes had to other multi-stakeholder fora on sustainability that were being organised simultaneously, also influenced how seriously stakeholders regarded their respective collaboration. For example, in URRSO, the local government stakeholders decided to withdraw from the process as and when they realised it was going in a direction that could potentially threaten their image and politically harm them or their organisation(s). Since they were participating in other multi-stakeholder fora at the same time they had the option to possibly use those opportunities as evidence of their commitment to collaborative approaches for sustainability.

However, METROCOP-I and II processes were under the direct influence of the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 and the central government. As a result, stakeholders involved in those processes did not have attractive escape options, despite some deep-rooted ideological differences and negative prejudices present in METROCOP – I and II. As the regulatory institutions demanded some accountability from these processes, the METROCOP stakeholders were more responsible and responsive towards the collaboration. Those coercive influences forced stakeholders to overcome their emotional grievances emerging from ideological differences on collaboration and sustainability, and negative feelings about certain other stakeholders. They had little choice, but to find a common ground (albeit not a radical one) that served goals of the collaboration. Thus, coercive pressures from the LGA and the central government played a critical role in binding the stakeholders together and preventing the process from a complete break-down.

In contrast, URRSO being a bottom-up civil society organisation and with the absence of regulatory institutional expectations and pressures missing, some stakeholders managed an easy and reputationally safe exit from the process. As discussed earlier, the exit occurred when those local authority stakeholders found that the collaboration was acquiring an

ideology which was potentially threatening and moving in a direction their organisation may not be comfortable with. In my view, with so many grounds available for stakeholders to disagree with one another and get involved in ideological conflicts, there was a greater likelihood for stakeholders to remain committed to URRSO if they had participated in it as representative of an organisation which was formally committed to the collaboration. However, expecting such formal commitments in a bottom-up civil society organisation might be unrealistic.

Moreover, irrespective of whether the stakeholders and the collaboration were directly subject to regulatory institutions on sustainability or not, some stakeholders in all the three collaborations decided to take a more passive role, especially when they realised that the process was not meeting their original expectations. Some of them decided to become involved in these collaborations in such a manner that they would devote only a minimal amount of time and effort to the collaboration which was sufficient for them to publicly demonstrate their commitment to collaboration for sustainability. This way they could meet the minimal regulatory or normative expectations which others had from them for working towards sustainability, and hence avoid financial and/or reputational penalty or alienation from the regulatory institutions, or their respective professional or social community. Paradoxically, such relatively passive involvement in the process facilitated the collaboration, to some extent. Those stakeholders harbouring an indifferent outlook to the process were less agitated by, and less reactive to differences emerging during the process. By remaining passive at least they did not greatly contribute to intensifying the negative emotions arising during the process.

And as different stakeholders had different learning aspirations related to sustainable development their commitment towards and interests in the collaboration also varied. Some stakeholders who thought they knew more on the subject than did others eventually

appeared less interested in the processes. This loss of interest was either because they thought others could not teach them anything new, or because they feared that as they shared their knowledge and expertise others would learn from them, become more knowledgeable and experienced and possibly jeopardise their or their organisations' leading position.

Moreover, stakeholders participating in such collaborations differed from one another in their patience and outlook towards outcomes of such processes. Some stakeholders were more realistic in expecting what such micro processes and a small group of stakeholders could achieve in a small time frame. And there were others who, tending to be more idealistic in their approach, participated in such processes with what might be considered unrealistic expectations. They hoped that such collaborations would radically transform society by generating more powerful and visible impacts on regional sustainability in the immediate future.

Having addressed the various research questions that guided me in my Ph.D. investigation, I conclude this chapter in the next section.

10.3 Conclusion

I regard the three cases of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability investigated in this dissertation as examples of 'field-level' processes (Hoffman, 2001; Scott, 2003) of stakeholder engagement that involved individuals and/or organisations, and were designed to achieve sustainability. These collaborations emerged to be highly complex and dynamic processes of relationship building. Stakeholders were simultaneously subjected to constantly evolving regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive institutional pressures on sustainability as well as collaboration, which engaged their subjective, social and objective

worlds. When they came to such processes, they brought certain prejudices and experiences related to sustainability, others and collaboration. The relationships that further developed during the processes were therefore dependent on stakeholders' collective understanding of sustainability, others and the collaboration. This process of relationship-building also involved their emotions, time and other resources across these three dimensions.

As the collaborations evolved over time they were characterised by an unpredictable, complex and dynamic interplay of understandings and misunderstandings among stakeholders that enflamed the process with a range of positive and negative emotions. And as stakeholders engaged emotionally and rationally with others, while some of those prejudices and experiences which they had initially brought to the collaboration were reinforced in positive or negative ways, others were shattered or further evolved to produce new understanding, knowledge and experience, not only on sustainable development, but also on collaborative relationships. The collaborations thus proved as hermeneutic experiences (Eriksen, & Weigard, 2003; Habermas, 1984) for stakeholders.

Moreover, there seemed to be lot of ambiguity around the three processes, in terms of what they were trying to achieve as a collective. Lack of a clear and distinct identity for the collaboration, along with a fragmented identity of sustainable development and different stakeholder identities negatively influenced these three field-level processes. However, for these processes to be effective and meaningful for the stakeholders and for sustainable development, it was important that a clear and distinct identity of collaboration was developed and communicated at the early stages and clearly communicated to the stakeholders. In order to develop a collective identity of collaboration, stakeholders needed to agree on and clearly define what they collectively understood by sustainable development and what common language they would use to communicate on it. I, however, also recognise that it is not going to be easy or necessarily even possible to develop such an

agreement, given the inherent diversity of stakeholders involved in such processes of organising for sustainability, and the intricacies of the sustainable concept itself.

Thus, overall those collaborations presented themselves as a highly complex and paradoxical process (Aram, 1989; Clegg, 2002; Calton, & Payne, 2003; Ellinor, & Gerard, 1998; Stohl, & Cheney, 2001) of communicative understanding and action (Gadamer, 1989; Habermas, 1984). They were influenced by regulations and norms. They were also laden with, and critically influenced by various kinds of stakeholders' emotions and facets of time emerging from, and contributing to different kinds and levels of understandings and misunderstandings among them.

Emotionality, temporality and misunderstandings proved as inherent but highly problematic constituents of organising (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001; Arrow, Henry, Poole, Wheelan, & Moreland, 2005; Bluedorn, 2002; Fineman, 1993b, 2000a, 2003; Mumby, & Putnam, 1992; Putnam, & Mumby, 1993; Scott, 2003; Weick, 1979) collaborations for sustainability. These three cases of dialogic collaborations also illustrate how the systems world of sustainable development is so intricately connected with the lifeworld, and that for effective and efficient institutionalisation of sustainable development these two worlds should be considered as integrated, and not treated in isolation (Habermas, 1987).

I conclude that despite several promises that multi-stakeholder collaborations offer for achieving sustainability, those three processes were paradoxically embedded with several perhaps inherent complications and challenges - both for the collaborations as well as for achieving sustainability (Gray, 1989; Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002; Pillay, Rosswall, & Glaser, 2002).

In the next chapter, I conclude the dissertation by discussing the broad implications, positive and negative, of such micro processes of dialogic collaborations on the macro sociological processes of institutionalisation of sustainable development, and the sustainability movement.

Chapter 11

Dissertation Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of my dissertation. In section 11.2, based on the theory of multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability that I presented in the previous chapter, I discuss the broad implications of dialogic collaborations on sustainable development. Those implications may serve as a theoretical and/or a practical guide for others who either wish to better understand such processes and/or effectively and efficiently develop them. In section 11.3, I highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions that I have made through my research. In section 11.4, I point out some of my research limitations. In section 11.5, I suggest future lines of inquiry that can be pursued further from my research to generate greater understanding of collaborations for sustainability. In section 11.6, I conclude my dissertation.

11.2 Implications of dialogic collaborations on sustainable development

In this section, I discuss the broad implications, both positive and negative, of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations on sustainable development. I discuss the potential of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations and the inherent problems in depending upon them as institutional mechanisms to achieve sustainability. And as I highlight the implications in sub-sections 11.2.1 to 11.2.3, I also make some general recommendations as to how can these processes be made more meaningful for sustainable development and for stakeholders. The recommendations, however, cannot be categorised as purely theoretical or practical primarily because my PhD research is a grounded theoretical explanation of real life phenomena; it is

not an empirical justification of elite theoretical concepts. Therefore, some recommendations have a stronger theoretical focus, which then makes them more relevant to researchers interested in investigating such processes. Other recommendations may help practitioners to understand hidden complexities of such processes, which they may like to consider when designing future dialogic collaborations for sustainability. However, I caution that the practical recommendations I give are not in the form of a step by step 'How to' manual. My recommendations are my insights on how can such processes be practically managed, and be made ultimately effective for sustainable development and stakeholders.

As I discuss the implications and make recommendations, I also raise certain questions, as I did in the previous empirical chapters. As those questions have further been evoked by my theorisation, I don't have deeper insights to offer on them. However, by asking those questions I unmask critical issues concerning such micro processes of collaborations at field levels, and how they may ultimately impact achievement of sustainability at the macro levels of society. I underscore that those issues may need to be addressed by conveners who are planning and implementing such collaborations, and by scholars who aim to investigate such processes. I also recognise that different readers, based on their subjectivity, may have different insights on those questions, and/or may have other questions.

11.2.1 Dialogic collaborations as potent mechanisms to achieve sustainability

On an optimistic note, I recognise the potential of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations and emphasise that they have certain positive implications for sustainable development. I regard relationships and learning as two significant outcomes of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations. Such processes offer valuable social grounds to stakeholders wherein they are encouraged to think about and become involved in developing relationships with others – including some of those with whom they would have otherwise never engaged with – for sustainability of their region. Even though some processes may be loosely and informally

organised they can still serve as powerful sites to build social solidarity, and formal and informal links and relationships among various stakeholders for sustainability. Thus, as stakeholders communicatively engage with each other, such processes build social capital (Adler, & Kwon, 2002; Andriof, & Waddock, 2002) required to implement sustainable development initiatives and steer the sustainability movement ahead.

And as various relationships among some stakeholders may develop during the process, some may break down due to irreconcilable differences and others may flourish. In this process of relationship-building, stakeholders acquire new and different experiences - some perhaps sweet and others bitter - which might become critical learnings for them (Grondin, 2002; Taylor, 2002). While some of those learnings would likely be on sustainable development, others could be about how to effectively and efficiently cultivate relationships with different individuals and organisations, from similar or dissimilar sectors, and how to collaborate to contribute towards the sustainability movement.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that such learnings would neither be finite (Gadamer, 1989; Wachterhauser, 2002), nor would necessarily radically or immediately transform stakeholders and society (Habermas, 1987; Hoffman, 2001; Taylor, 2002). Based on their learnings and experiences, stakeholders may gain clarity about: who they might usefully associate with, further; who they should develop relationships with during the collaboration; and whether they might develop new relationships, with different groups of stakeholders, outside the collaboration.

Hence, the learning acquired by the stakeholders may not remain physically confined to that process; instead it might be shared, to a greater or lesser extent, with other organisations and groups of stakeholders in different collaborative settings, and thus carried forward to other processes in the form of new experiences and prejudices. Each experience, good and bad,

which stakeholders acquire by participating in such processes, evolve them as individuals in potentially positive and negative ways. They lay seeds for new learnings and prejudices, and gradually and subtly transform stakeholders (Grondin, 2002; Taylor, 2002). The transformation could be of their identity, personality, consciousness and understanding in ways that prompt them or their organisation to become more or less involved in the social movement (see Giugni, 1999; Lounsbury, 2005; Zald, 1996) towards sustainability.

As discussed earlier, the sustainability movement as a new social movement, launched and actively promoted at global levels, demands and requires large scale structural and cultural changes at local levels in ways that needs of present generations are met without compromising on those of future generations (Pearce, & Barbier, 2000; UNCED, 1992; WCED, 1987; Waddel, 2005). Those changes also include changes in people's values and understandings on sustainable development.

I thus recognise that multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations have the potential to bring about institutionalisation of sustainable development by facilitating development of stakeholder relationships and enhancing their learning on sustainable development. These field-level processes are 'lifeworlds' of stakeholders' knowledge, experiences and relationships that are well integrated with the systems world of organisations, including those belonging to the government, for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. Through facilitation of stakeholder relationships and learning, these processes also enable subtle and gradual regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive institutional changes in society (Hoffman, 2001) and contribute to the sustainability movement.

11.2.2 Dialogic collaborations as problematic solutions for sustainability

On a pessimistic and sceptical note, I, paradoxically and ironically, recognise that multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations are not unproblematic solutions to achieve sustainability. Despite their potential to nurture relationships and generate new learnings and experiences for stakeholders on how to understand sustainable development, and how to implement policies and practices supporting it, I cast several doubts on their practicality and ‘real’ potential. I contend that such processes would be more effective for sustainability: if they yielded more tangible outcomes and concrete action; if they were more of ‘action grounds’ than ‘*talk fests*’; and if they could give concrete evidence that the learnings acquired and the relationships developed during these processes directly contributed to solving social problems. It appears critical that people get to see some concrete evidence of how the learnings and relationships developed through dialogic collaborations have actually contributed, or are contributing to sustainable development. I worry about the possibility that we may construct these processes themselves as achieving sustainability, when there is clearly much important ‘on the ground work’ remaining to be done as a result of dialogue and beyond it.

I raise the following fundamental questions related to ‘organising’ of such dialogic collaborations. In doing so, I unmask various problematic issues involved in such collaborations. These questions are of relevance to researchers and practitioners, and are concerned with effectiveness and efficiency of dialogic collaborations, and their implications for sustainable development.

- How might we design multi-stakeholder dialogic collaboration, amid the inherent and inescapable problematics of stakeholders’ time, emotions and misunderstandings, so that the exploratory and transformational potential of dialogue can be effectively utilised to then serve the process and ultimately sustainability?

- How might we organise processes in a manner that can coherently capitalise on different stakeholders' perspectives, create synergies from disagreements, and solve ambiguities that emerge during stakeholder dialogue?
- Despite ideological differences and conflicts, how might we create favourable conditions during dialogue that further stimulate or at least sustain stakeholders' initial interest in sustainability and their motivation to collaborate with others?
- How much time and what resources might usefully be invested to initiate and develop collaborations?
- What are the boundaries of regional sustainability and those of local sustainability?
- What are the priority issues for regional sustainability and how are those issues different from ones for local sustainability?
- Who are local and who are regional stakeholders? Which stakeholders are common to the local and the regional community?
- What visions of regional sustainability exist? Are those visions the same or different from those of collaborations for sustainability?
- In addition to encouraging stakeholders to express their diverse opinions and share their respective vision of a sustainable future, how can stakeholders be taught to go beyond their individual mental models and expand them in ways that they are not only ready to see and accept others' visions, they are also able to actually co-create a collective vision of a sustainable society?
- How can we translate and divide abstract visions of a sustainable society into smaller and tangible milestones which can then be used as reference to guide stakeholders and give them a clear sense of direction and focus on more concrete implementation and progress towards sustainability?
- To what extent are stakeholders able to collectively accomplish the initial goals set up for collaborations?
- To what extent have the processes been able to satisfy various stakeholders' expectations related to sustainability, and the collaboration?
- What kind of value do stakeholders derive in return for the time and resources they invest in the collaborations?

The above questions may appear simple, but in my view, are the fundamental ones. Some of the above questions were also raised by stakeholders in the three cases examined. The questions have no easy answers outside the understandings of specific cases. If not duly attended to and answered - either because of lack of time, or lack of knowledge around those areas – they raise the potential, as evident from my analyses, of confusions and frustrations in

the processes. I hence recommend that those who are contemplating or facilitating multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability should seriously think about the above questions, and come to the process with at least some tentative answers on which to seek agreement. Clarity on those questions will also help in defining some boundaries for dialogue on sustainability. It will also make dialogue more focused for the purposes of the collaboration, as well as possibly temper expectations, and provide a basis for focused evaluation. I also recommend that those questions may be pursued by researchers in an effort to further understand these processes.

In addition, it seems to me after around four and a half years of my involvement, reflection and analyses on these three processes that favourable conditions for meaningful dialogue during collaboration can be created in different ways. For example, as conveners plan to approach various stakeholders in order to seek their support for such processes, they should have some broad goals of the collaboration planned. Those goals should then be clearly communicated to the stakeholders in the early stages of collaborations. Conveners should also clearly think and decide on what kind and level of expectations they have from those stakeholders whom they have invited to collaborate. The expectations, either in terms of stakeholders' organisational or individual responsibilities, time and other resource commitments towards the collaboration, should be clearly communicated to the stakeholders at those initial stages. Knowing clearly what the goals of the collaboration are, and what are the expectations that stakeholders need to meet, will help them assess their individual or organisational position, and decide on the kind of commitment they want to give to such processes.

Moreover, as conveners plan such processes they might try to assess stakeholders' level of awareness on sustainability issues and understand to what extent do their knowledge levels on sustainability issues differ from one another. Such processes could therefore, ideally,

start with a dialogue on sustainability wherein stakeholders discuss their individual understandings on sustainability, further collectively explore those, and come to some basic agreement on what they collectively understand by it. They may accordingly be able to formulate a common language on sustainable development and a comprehensive list of common terminologies to use during the process to communicate with each other. Such an approach could give stakeholders hopefully some stable grounds to better understand each other and frame a particular view of sustainability that supports the goals of the collaboration. It might help them comprehend the divergent views and opinions expressed during the process and constructively come to some basic agreement on few critical issues that need to be addressed at the initial stages. However, it is realistic to expect that during the dialogue some fundamental issues and questions on sustainable development, which can create a great deal of confusion among stakeholders and cause ambiguities in the process, will likely emerge.

Moreover, not only might stakeholders be encouraged to agree and commit to the goals of the collaboration, they might also simultaneously be given opportunities to understand each other's perspectives and expectations on it as they pursue the goals of the collaboration. As the collaboration proceeds it could be constantly evaluated based on milestones achieved and timelines followed. Regular feedback from stakeholders on issues such as: (a) whether their expectations are being met or not; (b) how the process could be further improved; (c) what collective successes and failures did stakeholders perceive as their collaboration progressed; and (d) how effectively the time was being utilised, would likely prove helpful in enhancing communicative understanding (Gadamer, 1989; Habermas, 1984) among stakeholders. Admittedly, taking care of these aspects and the ones that follow will take skill and time.

And while finding out stakeholders' expectations from the process and what they can commit to the process, it is also important for conveners to recognise and assess stakeholders' emotional needs from such processes. It might be useful if dialogue could be planned in a manner that stakeholders are encouraged to express their emotional concerns related to collaborating with others, and also with respect to sustainability. Stakeholders might also be encouraged to freely express their grievances as well as satisfaction, and share the negative emotions which are affecting their collaborative engagement and the process, and the positive emotions they derive from the process. Such an outlook could enhance the level of emotional understanding among stakeholders as they rationally plan the collaboration and implement it to meet the set goals. However, I also note that such a focus on emotions might be discomforting and even off-putting to some. Careful judgments about how, where and the extent to which emotions are openly discussed would need to be made.

It is also important for conveners to keep a track of developments like which stakeholders are playing a dormant role in the process, which stakeholders have decided to exit, and why. Insights on these issues could aid understanding of some of the critical problems confronting such processes, and help conveners develop solutions to hopefully avoid some of those problems in future. If greater clarity around all various issues that are highlighted in this sub-section is achieved in the initial stages then there is a greater likelihood that lesser differences will emerge at a later stage. And even if differences emerge, stakeholders will at least have some bases that they can use to resolve those ideological differences and enhance the possibility of having a successful collaboration.

Therefore, for dialogic collaborations to have positive implications on sustainable development, I contend that such collaborations might ideally be effectively designed and efficiently organised in the first place. At the very least, it is important that conveners –

designated or emergent – intuitively or deliberately come to an understanding that the issues that I raise here are consequential. If dialogic collaborations are not effective and efficient, they may put some stakeholders off collective engagement, and thus negatively impact movement towards sustainability. We also need to recognise that by engaging in ineffective and inefficient collaborations, stakeholders could be potentially supposing that they are contributing to sustainability, when their impacts are possibly very limited or even counter-productive. However, considering the various hurdles involved, some of which I exposed in my analyses, I acknowledge that achieving effectiveness and efficiency of dialogic collaborations is not going to be easy either. As I discussed in the previous chapter, coercive mechanisms like regulations can play a significant role in making those processes and stakeholders more accountable and efficient, and ultimately more meaningful for sustainability.

11.2.3 Effectiveness and efficiency of dialogic collaborations for sustainability?

I recognise that there exists a circular relationship between understanding among stakeholders and dialogic collaborations for sustainability. On the one hand, the success of such processes, and for sustainability, is dependent upon the nature and level of collective understanding stakeholders have achieved. Such an understanding is not only connected with sustainability, it is also connected with how well stakeholders understand each other and the process. It is associated with how open and ready stakeholders are to accept and tolerate differences of opinions emerging during the process because of divergent expectations, commitments and different individual and organisational personalities and identities. They also need to be able to constructively build on that diversity. On the other hand, stakeholders cannot develop such relationships and level of understanding among themselves unless they are given opportunities and platforms to socially engage with each other, and with respect to sustainability. Moreover, one cannot realistically expect them to achieve great success in relationships and radically create a sustainable society at the initial

outset of their involvement in such processes. Such processes need time to be effectively developed, provide optimal conditions that facilitate communicative understanding among stakeholders, and of course, be multiply constructed and embedded or linked with other sustainable development mechanisms.

Recognising the potential of dialogic collaborations for sustainability, and simultaneously discovering the various challenges, uncertainties, paradoxes and messiness involved, I have not critiqued the outcomes of the three cases I investigated, in terms of pure successes or failures. Considering the fluid and boundary-less character of dialogue (Bohm, 1998; Freire, 1972; Ross, 1998), social movements (della Porta, & Diani, 1999; Gusfield, 1994; Tarrow, 1996) and human relationships (Gadamer, 1989), my research provokes me to challenge the very notion of what do we mean by, and how do we define 'success' of dialogic collaborations? Is it really possible and fair to limit consideration on outcomes of such processes to tangible successes and failures, and 'measure' those? Is it fair to discount or discredit the failures involved in stakeholder engagement for sustainability? Is it not important to also consider the outcomes of such processes in terms of the intangible dialogic effects of relationships and learnings they generate? But with those dialogic effects permeating across organisational boundaries can those really be tracked or measured within a particular time frame? I also wonder how stakeholders can improve their relationships when they don't acknowledge where the problems might lie in those relationships, and if they don't encounter problems, make mistakes and 'win' and 'lose' during the process (see Calton, & Payne, 2003). So even if some of these processes 'fail', in the objective and instrumental sense of the word, I don't recognise those attempts as real failures or totally wasted efforts in the sustainability movement. I regard that even negative experiences can come with silver linings and have some positive value for the processes, for the stakeholders, and even potentially for sustainability.

My critique has thus been based on faith and suspicion (Prasad, 2002; Prasad, 2005; Ricoeur, 1991). I have expressed faith in, and optimism from these processes. My faith, however, is not just confined to successes but also to its failures. I have raised several questions, and in doing so I have expressed my doubts regarding the real potential and practicality of such processes. I also stress that the real impact of such processes should not be merely assessed on instrumental ‘means to end’ criteria and confined to measuring the number and kinds of successes achieved. I am in fact doubtful that pure black and white answers indicating tangible successes and failures attained are even correct or should stand as absolute representations of the real outcomes of such processes.

In the following section, I highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions of my Ph.D. research.

11.3 Intellectual contributions

Through my Ph.D. research, I have attempted to fill some of the gaps in, and further expand scholarship in organisation studies, stakeholder theory, collaboration and sustainable development. I have highlighted the gaps at various points in Chapters 1, 3, and 6 of the dissertation. I have also contributed to expanding the methodological application of critical hermeneutics. I discuss my intellectual contributions on the following pages in this section.

As discussed earlier, recent organisational scholarship has been inviting and encouraging research that integrates the two traditionally disassociated theoretical frameworks of institutional theory and social movements theory (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005; Lounsbury, 2005; Schneiberg, Smith, & King, 2005). My research is a step in this direction. Such a cross-fertilisation enabled me to take a ‘process-based’ view of collaboration within

the broader institutional context of sustainable development. I recognised the drive to achieve sustainability as a prominent new social movement of the 21st century and revealed how the institutional changes in society promoting the sustainability movement influence stakeholder behaviours. I have exposed the dynamic and inherent connection among the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive institutions on sustainable development, and how those influence the development of multi-stakeholder collaborations and may impact the institutionalisation of sustainable development.

My research also contributes to that new school of thought in stakeholder literature which encourages, and advocates taking a relational, dialogic and process-based approach to understanding stakeholder engagement (see Andriof, & Waddock, 2002; Crane, & Livesey, 2003; Hart, & Sharma, 2004; Lawrence, 2002; Payne, & Calton, 2002). I have investigated three processes of non-mainstream and democratic forms of organisations: two top-down local government and one bottom-up civil society collaborative organising, existing in inter-organisational/multi-party domains, an area which has been understudied (Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997; Taylor et. al, 2001). Moreover, I have gone beyond studying collaborations focused within a single organisation (Gray, 1989) by focusing on collaborations at field levels. And while trying to understand those micro processes of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations at local field levels I have taken a macro-institutional focus on sustainable development.

My theory of multi-stakeholder theory of organising for sustainability is thus a relational and process-based theory of human relationships developing and evolving at field levels (see DiMaggio, 1991; Fligstein, 1991; Scott, 2003) in order to contribute towards the sustainability movement. It unmask the emergent and dynamic character of human relationships (Gadamer, 1989) and the idiosyncratic texture of such processes (Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997). I have focused on how dialogue as an organisational

communication phenomenon constitutes such processes at field levels and in the context of sustainable development. I have drawn on the philosophies of Gadamer and Habermas to explain that the dialogic relationships within such processes are based on communicative understanding and communicative action. To my knowledge, an ontological approach like the one I have taken has not been previously adopted in literature on stakeholder collaboration for sustainability. Moreover, by taking a process approach (Weick, 1979, 2003; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), I have also contributed towards filling some gaps in collaboration literature (Gray, 1989), as noted below.

My theory also highlights the problematic of human emotions, temporal considerations and understanding related to stakeholders, collaboration and sustainability. I have applied a temporal as well as an emotional lens to understand and explain stakeholder engagement for sustainability. To date research with a similar focus appears not to have been widely published. I have integrated various emergent themes on: (1) **(mis)understanding** [which include sub-themes (a) *(mis)understanding sustainability*; (b) *(mis)understanding institutions for sustainability*; (c) *(mis)understanding collaborations for sustainability*; (d) *understanding institutional change towards sustainability*]; (2) **emotions around sustainability** [found only in URRSO and which include sub-themes (a) *excitement*; (b) *empathy*; (c) *hope*; (d) *fear*; (e) *pride*; (f) *frustration*; and (g) *stress*]; (3) **emotions for others and the process** [which include sub-themes (a) *confusion and frustration*; (b) *mistrust and suspicion*; (c) *fear and nervousness*; (d) *anger*; (e) *hope and satisfaction*; (f) *pessimism and disillusionment*; (g) *stress*]; and (4) **time** [which include sub-themes (a) *time and sustainability*; (b) *time and collaboration*; (c) *time and politics*]. In so doing, I have exposed the inherent and dynamic interconnection among emotionality, temporality, understandings and misunderstandings during such processes.

Moreover, by integrating institutional theory and social movements theory, I developed a comprehensive theoretical framework which helped me simultaneously explore and

generate insights into the problematic of emotions, time and understanding, beyond these micro processes of stakeholder engagement, and expose their wider and macro level implications on the sustainability movement and institutionalisation of sustainable development. I have not as yet come across a theory on multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability that integrates literature on emotions, time, dialogue, communication, stakeholder engagement and sustainable development with the theoretical framework on institutional theory and social movements theory, as I do here in this dissertation.

In addition, I also drew on epistemological and methodological aspects of critical hermeneutics. Together, such a theoretical and methodological cross-fertilisation enabled me to reveal the intricate ‘dynamics’ and interdependence of those micro processes of stakeholder collaborations with that of the macro institutional context of sustainable development. Using the principles of hermeneutic circle and hermeneutic horizon, I tried to constantly analyse and critique the ‘texts’ of multi-stakeholder collaborations with that of their ‘context’ of sustainable development, and vice versa. By analysing and exposing the dynamic influence of various institutions and the complex fusion of stakeholders’ emotions, understandings, misunderstandings and temporal concerns related to the collaborations, others involved in the collaboration and sustainability, I have explained how those dynamics influenced the collaborations, and may impact the sustainability movement. Thus, I have demonstrated how critical hermeneutics can be employed as a methodological tool in organisational research, including institutional and social movement analysis. By taking a hermeneutic approach to understanding stakeholders’ participation in the sustainability movement, I have also addressed one of the methodological gaps in social movements research (Melucci, 1996).

I have also used institutional theory in a non-traditional manner and have gone beyond the popular ‘oversocialised’ (Troast et. al, 2002) trend in institutional analysis. It has been

pointed out that traditionally, institutional scholars have predominantly focussed on historical and macro level processes involving organisations or industries at field levels. In the majority of cases, the aim has been to study the legitimacy of organisations or industries and their practices, or institutionalisation and institutional change phenomena occurring over a period of several years. In this regard, my study is very different. My research is not an historical analysis. I used institutional theory to study 'live' processes, within a short time frame of the life of these processes. I have focused on individuals and their behaviours within those field-level processes with respect to sustainable development. The three processes I have investigated are processes that are too micro to generate major and tangible impacts. So, in my research I have not been able to capture and give evidence that those processes 'directly' contributed towards institutional change favouring sustainability. But, I have used institutional theory to explain how such micro and short lived processes of stakeholder engagement at field levels of society can have both positive and negative implications on sustainable development. I have also explained how, in their own small and subtle but not insignificant ways, they perhaps or potentially contribute to macro-level institutional changes towards sustainability. In doing so, I have expanded and demonstrated the application of institutional theory to study current and micro organisational phenomena occurring at field levels and involving individuals, an area which has been under-investigated in institutional research (Bansal, & Penner, 2002; Galaskiewicz, 1991).

In the following section, I highlight some of my research limitations.

11.4 Limitations and future research

I acknowledge that my research suffered from the following limitations:

1. The findings of my research are limited in terms of their generalisability and applicability to other multi-stakeholder organising processes for sustainability. This limitation, however, is not specific to my research. It concerns all research wherein findings are specific to particular cases and cannot be generalised and extended to other settings because of temporal, spatial, organisational and other contextual differences.
2. Ideally, to study the institutionalisation of sustainable development through multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability, I perhaps should have investigated cases that belonged to the same region. I made efforts in this direction by seeking permission to participate in a local government multi-stakeholder initiative, similar to METROCOP-I and II, in the same region where URRSO was founded. My request, however, was declined by the Steering Committee of that process mainly because of political fears and uncertainties faced by those local government agencies in the new regulatory environment. During my data collection period I also could not find any other case site similar to URRSO in the metropolitan region in which METROCOP-I and II stakeholders were collectively involved. The difference in regions, however, eventually proved helpful for my investigation. I used the regional difference as one of the bases to compare and contrast local government stakeholders' behaviour across the three cases. I was able to recognise and appreciate that as central government's strategic priority changed from one region to another, the institutional expectations and pressures on local government stakeholders also changed. Thus, I associated some of the differences

in their behaviour to different levels of institutional pressures on local government agencies across the two regions.

3. One may also argue that I should have selected three similar cases, i.e. three processes belonging to multi-stakeholder civil society organisations (bottom-up), or three processes belonging to local government multi-stakeholder initiatives (top-down). However, I did not do so because I wanted to study multi-stakeholder organising processes across different organisational domains that represented different levels of institutional hierarchy connected with sustainable development. Interestingly, the conceptual categories of (mis)understandings, emotions for 'others' and the process, and time commonly emerged across the three case studies, which then enabled me to tentatively generalise some of the findings. However, the category of emotions around sustainability was specific to URRSO. Emergence of this difference proved helpful for me to reflect on the potential and challenges of voluntary and civil society collaborative organising, as compared to regulation-driven multi-stakeholder collaborations, and their implications on institutionalisation of sustainable development. As I compared and contrasted stakeholder behaviour in URRSO and METROCOP processes, I attempted to rationalise and explain some of the reasons why URRSO failed to achieve the goals it set out to accomplish in the beginning.
4. The data collection methods for URRSO meetings were different from the METROCOP-I and II meetings. I was not permitted to tape-record the dialogue among stakeholders during METROCOP-I and II processes. I therefore totally depended upon my participant observation field notes and used those to analyse the dialogue among stakeholders during METROCOP-I and II processes. Because of

this difference, I did not have the same richness of data found in tape-recorded transcripts of URRSO meetings, for the METROCOP-I and II meetings.

5. As my original purpose was not to study stakeholders' emotions and temporal considerations, my interview questions were not designed to specifically investigate those. It is possible to challenge my research by stating that I should have engaged more deeply and done specific interviews in those research domains of emotions and time. Personally, I do not consider this as a strong limitation of this dissertation because it supports and strengthens my application of grounded theory, and because my research was primarily focussed on the overall organising process. However, I highlight this lack of primary focus on time and emotions as future directions for scholars who wish to pursue research in multi-stakeholder organising for sustainability.
6. I acknowledge the difficulties in writing up a dissertation that focuses on micro processes within a macro context. It is difficult to integrate and cover all the three levels – individual, organisational and field – of analysis and present in-depth discussions on each of those within the prescribed word limit.

I recognise that some of the limitations of my research that I have highlighted in this section could be potentially used as future research opportunities by other scholars.

Moreover, I recommend that the questions I have raised in sub-section 11.2.2 with respect to the effectiveness and efficiency of organising multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability, could be pursued by scholars in their future research on collaborations for sustainability. In addition to those specific areas, I invite scholars to investigate the following new lines of inquiry:

1. In-depth qualitative and/or quantitative studies on emotions in multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability;
2. In-depth qualitative and/or quantitative studies on time in multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability;
3. In-depth qualitative studies on identity of multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability; and
4. In-depth case studies of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability, based on similar research questions, organised in other locations, and extending beyond local level to national or global levels.

11.5 Ending the dissertation with a new hermeneutic horizon

I have deliberately titled this chapter as ‘Dissertation Conclusion’. I acknowledge that as I am about to end this dissertation, I have not generated any black and white, right and wrong answers on multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. I am neither surprised nor disappointed with myself as I make this observation mostly because I was not really looking for such answers. What I was looking for were deeper insights into the hidden and complex realities of such processes. At this point, what I have accomplished and presented is a faith and doubt infused account of the dynamic, messy and paradoxical character of multi-stakeholder dialogic collaborations for sustainability. I have explained how such processes occur in local settings. And during the course of this theorising, I have also raised several questions.

So, even though I am about to formally conclude my Ph.D. inquiry with the last few sentences of my dissertation, my theoretical quest to understand human relationships for sustainability continues, as does my passion to contribute towards the sustainability movement. I highlight my Ph.D. research became a life-changing experience for me. My research has further fired my passion for learning and my commitment to the sustainability movement. At the same time, it has also provoked me to start looking at and appreciating human relationships within these processes of multi-stakeholder collaborations for sustainability, and beyond, on a broader landscape, a longer time horizon, and at a deeper level.

As I am ending my Ph.D. research, I am going to next stage of my academic career with a new hermeneutic horizon. I find that I am asking myself different questions about multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaborations for sustainability from those I had been asking myself even before the beginning of my Ph.D. I have highlighted those emerging questions at various points in my dissertation. I am still optimistic about the potential of such processes. But, I have also become more aware of some of the problematics involved. I have become more realistic in my own expectations of such processes, and the wider institutional dependence on them for achieving sustainability. My study has also further reinforced my interest and commitment to understand and facilitate strategic multi-party dialogue and collaborations on sustainable development, including those which address the developed and developing country divide.

At this point of my intellectual journey, and experiencing various successes and failures in life, and the pleasures and pains that came with those, I find myself reflecting that my thinking has evolved considerably. I believe that I have been rewarded with a wealth of intellectual insight into multi-stakeholder engagement for sustainability. Moreover, the knowledge I acquired during the course of my research has fired my spiritual drive and

inclination at a personal level. I feel more deeply connected to the Earth compared to how I felt four and a half years ago. I have also developed an insatiable thirst of wanting to understand and uplift my inner being so that I can more actively contribute to the sustainability movement. I regard the knowledge, insights, passion and experiences I acquired over the last four and a half years as my accomplishments as a doctoral student, and the real qualification that I hope to earn through my Ph.D.

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