Sustainment and Design Futuring:
Notes on the evolution of sustainable process, practice and project

"We rise above ourselves or fall" (Nietzsche)

"…Sustainment. As will be seen, what this names is not an extension of the modern world, or an utopian return to a fictionalised idyllic past, but a project that confronts the destruction of productivism, the unsustainability of 'our' anthropocentric 'nature' and the need to deal with what it has brought into being. Sustainment affirms that now, to have time, to have a future, it has to be made, not assumed as given." (Fry, 2011)

In order to develop futures of Sustainment, sustainability science and governance need substantial and logical pedagogical foundations. The philosophically unfounded axiom of "ensuring inter-generational equity" in sustainable practices must be transcended with process, practice, and projects of a viable and poetic now. The conception of this compelling practice might be in the idea of design futuring that evolves from a true change in mind-set and lends post-Enlightenment thinking to the project:

"Unsustainability is a condition that is reducible to a damaged global environment and its ecologies. It is equally: a notion of economy based on perpetual growth; war as a machine able to deliver the total destruction of human and animal populations; a mode of social being disarticulated from any enduring means to sustain it; a breakdown of that interdependence upon others we call community; and a way of seeing 'need' based entirely upon self-interest. In all respects, sustainability has arrived as a structural condition – and by design- via: technologies and systems that knowingly or unwittingly generate negative environmental impacts; an unrestrained use of natural resources; the deliberate destruction of tradition, ritual, systems of belief and the sacred in order to impose 'the modern'; forms of development that break up the social fabric; and the transformation of culture into a commodity vista of objects and images that project the realization of unrestrained desires as the basis of a meaningful life." (Fry, 2011)

"There are three fundamentals that Sustainment rests upon:

The creation of, and movement to, a new economic paradigm that abandons the notion of continual quantitative growth.
The retrofitting of the material world as made so far (the actual scope of this task is huge and currently obscured by the ongoing creation of ever more things, including "green

things" such as buildings and products).
Recognition that structural unsustainability is an ontology, which means that causally and essentially the unsustainable has become elemental to existing and extending modernized human being" (Fry, 2011)

A case study in Sustainment is the "Gold Coast Two" project in response to existing coastal erosion, flood plain siting, and climate change. The three key elements of this plan are: 1. The creation of a satellite city with a link corridor to the residual Gold Coast City; 2. City reconfiguration: elements of the abandoned city above the 4 meter line could be transformed, and be a strong symbolic dimension, with fish and urban farming; and 3. Creation of a floating suburb associated with the formation of a new industry.

Fry concludes:

> "Notwithstanding talk of the undecidability of universal rights, the challenges to reason's designation of 'the universal' and the problem of claiming democracy as a politics of global freedom, the questioning of the 'nature' of the human and anthropocentrism still remains un-confronted. Humanism has become the dominant means to transport the idea of being human from one epoch to another. Yet this centering of human interests (from the limited horizon of the 'species' self-interests) has its hubris in the manner in which the question of Sustainment and what is to be sustained, arrives. Across cultural and technologically induced difference, as a circumscribed singularity and a monistic being, 'the human' acts as if it were possible to be independent from all else in being. Its 'nature' remains, in summa, the will to anthropos- a condition putting our being and much else, at risk."

References

Fry, Tony 2011, Design as Politics