Maximizing Community Action: An Internship with Be The Change

Rachel Rosenbaum
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Maximizing Community Action:
An Internship with Be The Change

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ISP Ethics Review

This ISP paper by _______Rachel Rosenbaum____ (student) has
been reviewed by _______Peter Brennan____________________ (Academic Director)
and does/does not* conform to the ethical standards of the local community and the
ethical and academic standards outlined in the SIT student and AD handbooks.

*This paper does not conform to standards for the following reasons:

Academic Director: Peter Brennan

Signature: 

Program: Australia: Sustainability and Environmental Action

Date: May 9th, 2013
Abstract

From 3 April 2013 to 28 April 2013, I interned with the Brisbane branch of Be The Change, an organization that promotes ecological, social and spiritual sustainability through their empowering symposiums, in Australia. I focused on creating a tool to help symposium participants take community action after the event. My goal was to create a resource for Be The Change to use across Australia to further its impact, attend a symposium and implement sustainable actions in my everyday life.

In the 140 total hours of work I completed, I helped plan a symposium, participated in workshops and events within the Brisbane sustainability community, conducted extensive research on community organization, compiled web and print resources for an action guide and observed the work of Be The Change. To gather data I used participant observation and conducted four interviews: three with Be The Change facilitators and one with the founders of Food Connect. I also had the opportunity to present my final action guide to participants at a symposium on April 27th.

Within the context of a disconnected world, it is difficult for people to feel empowered enough to take action; they need the support of like-minded individuals and organizations. Many organizations understand this and thus provide their members with tools to engage with one another and the local, sustainable community. Currently, Be The Change does not have the infrastructure to provide this. However, I observed that the mission of Be The Change is extremely powerful and the symposiums, moving. Their role, in educating and helping participants see potential solutions within themselves, is an important one. By uniting with other local sustainable organizations, both parties would greatly benefit.

Working alongside Fiona Leiper, a Be The Change facilitator, I experienced the importance of communication, organization, commitment and the significance of a physical space for creating community. Above all I learned about embodying one’s vision, rather than simply acting on it.

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Robert and Emma Pekin, my home-stay parents, were extremely welcoming and an incredible resource throughout the ISP period. Their connection with the local, sustainable food community is unmatched and inspiring. They serve as a role model for West End, Brisbane and Australian community by truly exemplifying the words they teach. I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to stay in their home, get to know their family and employees and learn more than I could imagine about the food industry, health and life.

Throughout the ISP period, I talked to many facilitators of the ATD Symposium and was never once let down. Each individual was excited to listen and gave genuine advice based on their experiences. They helped me realize where to focus my project and were also a constant delight to talk to. My only wish would be to have met these dedicated individuals in person. Thank you Mark Spain, Jane Monk and Thomas Whitelake.

Finally, I would like to thank Peter Brennan. I could not have imagined a more fulfilling, educational and fun semester abroad. Reflecting on the number of Australian individuals we met who are really making a difference in the sustainability world just goes to show how connected and dedicated Peter is to providing us with the best experience he can. I cannot begin to put into words what this semester has meant to me and who it has inspired me to be.
# Table of Contents

Ethics Review........................................................................................................ii
Abstract..................................................................................................................iii
Acknowledgements.................................................................................................iv

1 Introduction/Literature Review..............................................................................1
   1.1 Be The Change Australia..............................................................................1
      1.1.1 Sustainability Defined...........................................................................1
      1.1.2 History and Mission.............................................................................1
      1.1.3 Awakening The Dreamer Symposium.....................................................2
      1.1.4 Be The Change’s Role Internationally, Nationally and Locally..............2
   1.2 Moving Beyond Inspiration and Education.....................................................4
      1.2.1 Components Necessary To Create Action............................................4
      1.2.2 The Importance of Connectedness.......................................................5
      1.2.3 Supporting Individuals in Making Lifestyle Changes.........................6
   1.3 Focus..............................................................................................................7
      1.3.1 Developing a Resource for Action.......................................................7
      1.3.2 Relevance to Sustainability.................................................................7
   1.4 Goals..............................................................................................................7

2 My Internship.........................................................................................................8
   2.1 General Structure of Each Day.................................................................8
   2.2 Internship Tasks............................................................................................8
      2.2.1 Planning the ATD Symposium.............................................................8
      2.2.2 Researching Community Action and Value-Adding to the BTC Website .................................................................................................................................9
      2.2.3 Observing Players in the Brisbane Sustainability Movement.................10
         2.2.3.1 Food Connect..................................................................................10
         2.2.3.2 Northey Street City Farm (NSCF)..................................................10
         2.2.3.3 Fair Food Festival Meeting...........................................................10
         2.2.3.4 Energy Audit Workshop with Luke Reade.................................11
      2.2.4 Participating in the Symposium..............................................................11
   2.3 Focus Project..................................................................................................11
      2.3.1 Background Research on Existing Action Tools and Resources
      2.3.2 Contacting Symposium Participants....................................................12
      2.3.3 The Be The Change Earth Alliance Action Guide: Australian Version .................................................................................................................................12
2.3.4 Final Product…………………………………………………………….13
  2.3.4.1 Creating a Mini Action Guide: “I, The Dreamer, Am
      Awake. And I am ready for Action.”………………….13
  2.3.4.2 Getting Feedback from Facilitators and Fiona…….16
  2.3.4.3 Putting the Resource to Use………………………….16

3 Observations and Impressions……………………………………………………..17
  3.1 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis……………………………………….17
      3.1.1 Participant Observation……………………………….17
      3.1.2 Interviews………………………………………….17
      3.1.3 Analysis of Data…………………………………….17

  3.2 Be The Change as an Organization……………………………………….18
      3.2.1 Structure…………………………………………….18
      3.2.2 Distinguishing Between the ATD Symposium and BTC……….18
      3.2.3 An Overwhelming Willingness to Help……………………19
      3.2.4 Evaluation of Current Impact………………………….19
          3.2.4.1 As an Organization………………………….19
          3.2.4.2 The ATD Symposium………………………20

  3.3 The Brisbane Sustainability Community…………………………….20
      3.3.1 Food Connect…………………………………….20
          3.3.1.1 Atmosphere and Attitudes…………………….20
          3.3.1.2 Website………………………………….21
          3.3.1.3 Connection to Customers and Farmers………21
          3.3.1.4 From the Business Perspective……………21
      3.3.2 Northey Street City Farm……………………………22
          3.3.2.1 Atmosphere………………………………….22
          3.3.2.2 Employee and Volunteer Attitudes……………22
          3.3.2.3 Website………………………………….22
          3.3.2.4 Hub for Events and Workshops……………23

  3.3.3 A Comparison of Approaches………………………….24

  3.4 Further Needs of Symposium Participants…………………………….24
      3.4.1 Action Circles…………………………………….25
      3.4.2 Mini Action Guide to Fill the Gaps………………25

4 Conclusions and Application for the Future…………………………………….26
  4.1 The Power of an Individual Within the Context of a Connected Society…….26
  4.2 The Importance of Organization and a Commitment to a Defined Mission…26
  4.3 Without Communication, All Else Fails………………………………….26
  4.4 Potential for Future Projects………………………………………………27
1. Introduction and Literature Review

1.0 1.1 Be The Change Australia

1.1.1 Definition of Sustainability

Though sustainability was first addressed by the United Nations in 1987 in the report, *Our Common Future*, its principles have been exercised for thousands of years. In 1995, the Iroquois Confederacy made a statement to the United Nations: “In making any law, our chiefs always consider three things: the effect of the decision on peace; the effect on the natural world; and the effect on seven generations in the future” (The Six Nations to the UN, cited by The Pachamama Alliance 2009, p. 7). It is clear that the Iroquois people, along with many other indigenous peoples, have not only lived by the principles of sustainability for generations, it continues to serve as the foundation for their Law.

A sustainable world comprises of communities connected to one another, to nature and the universe and act according to a more natural law. Currently, humans dominate the planet, its species and one another. As population and consumption increase exponentially, resources are further depleted and habitats are destroyed, it becomes evermore important to change the current paradigm. These issues go beyond environmental destruction; they cause social injustice and create a society based on the importance of owning things, rather than an appreciation for fulfilling relationships. In addressing the climate crisis, it is necessary to simultaneously address the deteriorating social and spiritual states of the world.

1.1.2 History and Mission

Be The Change Australia (BTC) is a not-for-profit organization that works to “bring forth an environmentally sustainable, socially just and spiritually fulfilling human presence on this planet” (Be The Change 2013), thus promoting an all-encompassing vision of sustainability. With the intention of inspiring communities and organizations around Australia to adapt a more sustainable lifestyle, BTC uses education as a tool to encourage all people to question their current worldview and take action in changing this view. Their hope is to reach more than 1% of the Australian population by 2014 (Be The Change 2013). Through large symposiums and workshops, the organization engages attendees in hands on activities, speeches, media and thought-provoking discussions to empower them to “reclaim their future” (Be The Change 2013). Individuals throughout Australia are trained to spread this mission and expand its impact through BTC’s comprehensive facilitator training sessions.

Any person and organization can become a member of BTC by paying a yearly membership fee. Paying this fee enables the individual or organization to vote at the Annual Body Meeting and makes them eligible to be a part of the Guardianship Council (Be The Change 2013). This Council is made up of eight volunteers from across Australia, all with a
common dream of making the world more livable and sustainable. Each state also has a community contact that coordinates events and serves as a support for BTC volunteers in that area (Be The Change 2013).

BTC offers four workshops that each focus on educating a different age group through activities and invigorating discussion. These include the Awakening The Dreamer (ATD) symposium, Generation Waking Up Youth workshops, Jump Up Primary School programs and Getting Into Action workshops (Be The Change 2013). In addition, BTC offers training for facilitators who can then run these programs, enabling them to further catalyze change. As the website clearly advertises, facilitators not only have the chance to further their own leadership skills, but also the opportunity to build strong relationships, hope and connection in their communities (Be The Change 2013).

1.1.3 The Awakening The Dreamer Symposium

In 2006, at the BTC Conference, the first Awakening The Dreamer (ATD) symposium was introduced to the organization and it quickly became the new agent for maximizing change. The symposium, which was created by the Pachamama Alliance, is generally a four to five hour-long gathering meant to be “thought-provoking, challenging and deeply moving” (The Pachamama Alliance 2013). Included are a variety of reflection periods and educational movies that tie indigenous knowledge together with modern-day science to portray the current crisis humans face. The hope is that people will leave the symposium with insight into their own passions, how they can act on these passions and also connect with others to change the path the world is currently on.

The Achuar people of the Amazon rainforest first inspired this message and the resulting organization, The Pachamama Alliance, in the 1990s. Facing demise by the oil industry and realizing that global development was not sustainable, the Achuar people issued a request for western people to, “change the dream of the modern world” (The Pachamama Alliance 2013). As described by the website, after Bill and Lynne Twist traveled to the Amazon rainforest in response to the invitation by the Achuar people, they vowed to make an effort to protect the rainforest, its people and in effect, the rest of the planet. Upon their return to the United States the ATD symposium and the Pachamama Alliance were born (The Pachamama Alliance 2013).

1.1.4 Be The Change’s International, National and Local Role

BTC’s concentrates on educating and inspiring individuals who not currently involved with sustainability while also instilling new hope in those who are already knowledgeable about the state of the planet. The organization’s role is analogous to a funnel. First, they bring together a group of diverse individuals and pose the problems. Then, throughout the day, the symposium helps each participant discover his or her passions and encourages personal action in the future. BTC gets participants excited about joining in on the
struggle to change the path of the modern world. However, they do not specialize in providing a place to become more involved in the movement. Rather, the organization is designed to open the participants’ minds to the opportunities and possibilities that exist. Their work is extremely powerful in eliciting a strong emotional response to the information presented and thus is a great educational tool.

Nationally, BTC is a loose organization of facilitators who hold symposiums and live its mission by getting involved in a plethora of projects within their own communities (Be The Change 2013). It is the responsibility of these facilitators to take initiative in connecting participants with organizations and individuals that can support their interests and skills. Mainly, the national organization serves as a cyber-hub for the four workshops it sponsors and provides facilitators with the resources they need to host symposiums. On the global scale, sister organizations like Be The Change Earth Alliance (BTCEA) in Vancouver and Be The Change Initiative (BTCI) in the United Kingdom are taking similar approaches to create momentum. These two organizations are role models for the Australian branch as they have added to the initial work of the Pachamama Alliance by creating Community Circles, Seasonal Gatherings and Resource Libraries for their participants (Be The Change Initiative 2013).

Because the power of facilitators lies mainly in the local community in which they live, the focus of this project will be in Brisbane, Australia with facilitator and life coach, Fiona Leiper. In Brisbane, there is a very diverse set of organizations working towards sustainability. These vary from renewable energy, to food, community and socially oriented groups. However, according to Robert Pekin, founder of Food Connect, these groups are not largely united. Of these organizations, BTC mainly operates within a strong local, organic food community. Companies and non-profits such as Food Connect and Northey Street City Farm act as strong drivers of sustainable change in the city. Though these two organizations are mainly focused on food, their work aims at achieving a much more inclusive definition of sustainability. They exemplify BTC’s mission to create a world that is not only more environmentally friendly, but also socially just and spiritually fulfilling (Be The Change 2013).

Food Connect is a social enterprise whose goal is to provide “local, seasonal, ecological food direct from your farmer” (Food Connect Brisbane 2013). Beyond just being a company devoted to fresh food distribution, Food Connect is an avid promoter of fair wages for farmers across the world, maintaining a low footprint, and providing an enjoyable workplace for employees. Food Connect collects fresh food from their farmers, packages boxes of the food and groceries at their warehouse and then delivers these boxes to “City Cousins,” which serve as pickup locations for all subscribers. The company prides itself on the fact that its food travels an average of 140 km over 27 hours as opposed to the 4327 km
grocery store food travels over an average of 127 days (Food Connect 2013). They also educate their subscribers through newsletters and tours of partner farms.

Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) is a community permaculture garden in the center of Brisbane. Their mission is “to create a working model of a cooperative, community based urban permaculture farm which demonstrates, promotes, educates and advocates for environmental and economic sustainability in a healthy, diverse and supportive community” (Northey Street City Farm 2013). They provide a place for community members to volunteer, learn about gardening, participate in a diverse set of workshops and also host the only organic farmer’s market in Brisbane.

1.2 Moving Beyond Inspiration and Education

1.2.1 Components Necessary to Create Action

For change to occur, there first needs to be awareness that change is actually necessary. Then, it takes effort. An individual cannot and will not change if the benefits of putting forth this effort are not clear. During the ATD Symposium, this consciousness is stirred with the evaluation of unexamined assumptions. Participants are asked to think about current cultural norms, their worldview, and question its validity and origin. The Symposium Presenter’s Kit: Additional Information and Wisdom describes how detrimental having a narrow outlook on the world can be: “It’s kind of like a helmet we have on, that restricts what we can see, but we’ve had the helmet on so long, we don’t even remember anymore” (The Pachamama Alliance 2011, p. 15). The description goes on to explain how our actions stem directly from our worldview, “…you and I always take actions that seem appropriate given our understanding of the world” (The Pachamama Alliance 2011, p. 15). Understanding the concept of worldview and learning to question it is the first step in building a more sustainable world.

Once there is an understanding, people need to be motivated to act. Although awareness of a problem may be enough to motivate some individuals, it is not realistic to think that mass change will occur by simply educating. Like BTC, many organizations worldwide rely on educating and empowering individuals to spread their ideals and thus, maximize change. Though environmental education is growing as a discipline in schools, it is difficult to affect change in a solely theoretical way. Doug Mckenzie-Mohr and William Smith address this issue in their book, Fostering Sustainable Behavior (1999). They cite many examples in history when educational campaigns across disciplines failed after millions of dollars were spent in advertisements. They accredit this failure to the lack of an action plan following the campaign (Mckenzie-Mohr and Smith 1999, p. 9).

In Australia, organizations such as the Center for Environmental Education (CEE), the Australian Education for Sustainability Alliance (AESA), and hundreds of Environmental Education centers are working hard to increase the focus of environmental awareness in
school curriculums. Proof of their work is evident in a Photo Book of sustainability education in schools published by AESA (AESA 2012). These organizations are important players in the movement towards a more sustainable world, but unless the educational principles they teach are practiced and paired with a more tangible plan, much effort will go to waste.

In *Start Questioning Man*, by Fran Peavey, she discusses the significance of change coming from within a person for it to be truly sustainable. She says, “when a change doesn’t come from within a person but from direct advice, they don’t own it and thus are not invested in change” (Peavey 1995, p. 8). According to Peavey, a crucial component of change is supporting people to take action as a result of a their own desire to do so. BTC hopes to convey this message in the Getting Into Action (GIA) workshop. Participants are first asked to take part in an activity called “What Makes Me Come Alive” where they identify what things they love most in the world on one side of a piece of paper. Then, on the other side of the paper, they identify what they believe is missing from the world. The participants are asked to draw lines between the two columns where they believe their passions and desires for the world connect (BTC Wiki 2012). By guiding the participants through a process that can help them realize that they can be the change, rather than a recipient of it, GIA, couples awareness with a plan for action.

Another crucial component of creating change is commitment. It is easy for people to talk of their desire to take action or the possibility of change. However, when they become accountable for actually making change, it is much more likely to happen. The American Society for Training and Development calls this concept “Peer Accountability” (ASTD, cited in Action Circle Handbook, p. 6). A chart depicts the probability of action based on how specific a goal is. For example, coming up with an idea to achieve something generally results in a 10% likelihood that it will occur. This percentage increases substantially if the goal setter makes a deadline for achieving the goal. However, by committing the goal to another person and making a “specific accountability time” to achieve the goal, the success rate reaches 95% (ASTD, cited in Action Circle Handbook, p. 6). There is great power in taking responsibility and ownership of a goal. Not only does it increase the likelihood that the goal will be reached, it makes the path for getting there much clearer.

1.2.2 The Importance of Connectedness

Action within the context of a disconnected world is like swimming upstream. Rather than focusing on the goal, the person enacting change must waste energy moving against the current. However, rather than giving up, it is important for these individuals to come together to create momentum and achieve a common goal. Not only is it more efficient, but more satisfying to work in a community of people.

Countries of the world are more dependent on one another’s resources than they have ever been; yet humans have never been so isolated. In “What is Mindfulness,” Thich
Naht Hanh, teaches “you need other people in order to be…you have to inter-be with everyone and everything else” (What Is Mindfulness 2011). He so eloquently summarizes the potential of self in a connected world. The interconnectedness of humans, the natural world and other species has been lost in the modern world. More and more, it is characterized by a culture of spending, living on top of, instead of with the earth, and always wanting and doing more. The justification for this paradigm is that more stuff, means more happiness. Richard Layard shows that although GDP almost tripled from the 1940s to the 1990s, the number of people who consider themselves “very happy,” has actually decreased (Layard 2003). The facts he presents on the state of happiness are appalling, yet understandable when thinking about the message Thich Naht Hanh, and thousands of others working to create a better world, instruct. Layard goes on to say that “happiness is basic to human motivation” (Layard 2003). By connecting Layard’s words with the understanding that connection is also basic to happiness, it becomes clear that great change can occur by reconnecting with self, nature and others.

1.2.3 Supporting Individuals in Making Lifestyle Changes

While feeling connected is important in inspiring change, support for making these changes is a major factor in ensuring its permanence. Without the structure in place to maintain change, the actions will likely fade to yesterday. In Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots, David Beckwith frankly states, “endless discussion will inevitably fade—people need a group to lead to action or victory” (Center for Community Connection 2009). Although his quote relates more directly to achieving organizational change, the principle can be applied to making lifestyle changes, as well. A group helps support an individual’s purpose and provide the backbone needed to overcome obstacles.

While support can come from a multitude of sources, including family and friends, as it relates to taking sustainable action in one’s own life, research has shown being involved with a community of people and working towards a common goal is advantageous (Be The Change Action Guide 2012). There have been innumerable stories in history where unlikely change has occurred as a result of communities coming together and dedicating themselves to a common cause. One example in Australia is the creation of a World Heritage Site along the Gordon River in Tasmania, preserving its beauty, biodiversity and stopping the development of the area, would not have been possible without the organization of citizens supporting one another and refusing to have their beloved river, destroyed. For the residents of the area, the dam-free river is a constant reminder that change is possible.

While studying the effects of the ATD symposium, Luke Terrell found that while 72% of participants surveyed felt empowered to be an agent of change after the symposium, only 42% reported actually making a lifestyle change (Terrell 2012). Beyond recommending website links to learn more about the topics covered at the symposium and some
organizations to get involved with, BTC does not provide support for participants. Terrell’s research is evidence of how necessary community organization and support is in committing individuals to sustainable action.

1.3 Focus

1.3.1 Developing a Resource For Action

As an intern, I will focus on creating a resource for Be The Change that will help symposium attendees put their ideas into action and become more embedded in their communities. Using Brisbane as a pilot for this tool, I will compile a guide that is an attractive and readable resource. The information included will be relevant to the local people and likely include contacts for leading sustainability organizations in the Brisbane community, along with useful website links for further learning. Throughout my internship I will research and engage with some of these local organizations, conduct online research and interviews in order to refine the tool to reflect the needs of this community.

1.3.2 Relevance to Sustainability

This tool will hopefully help further BTC’s mission after the symposium occurs. By providing participants with a guide made specifically with the intention of educating, motivating and connecting them with community, this tool will hopefully move empowered individuals to action. It is so important to give symposium attendees an outlet to express their newfound inspiration and desire to change, as well as the infrastructure to change others. If people are passionate about the environment and their communities, but don’t know how to express this passion and act on it, the emotion will be wasted.

1.4 Goals

Through this internship, I have ambitious goals that I hope to fulfill for the organization, academically and personally. Firstly, I want to create a tool that provides symposium participants with the resources they need to get involved with their community and make lifestyle changes. My aim is to create an easy to use, attractive compilation of sustainability organizations and information websites in Brisbane and hope other Be The Change communities in Australia will adopt the resource. In addition, I want to actively think and implement sustainable actions in my daily life such that when I return home, I am ready to live a simpler, less consumptive life. By getting involved with the local community, I hope to find a support in doing so. Finally, I want to help plan and attend a successful symposium to better understand the work that Be The Change does.
2. My Internship

2.1 General Structure of Each Day

Be The Change is an organization directed mainly by their website; although a national organization, there is not a physical meeting place where individuals work together on a day-to-day basis. Rather, facilitators and volunteers who work around their own schedules drive the work almost entirely. In working with Fiona Leiper, a BTC facilitator and life coach, my internship hours were based around her schedule—including business meetings, community engagements and everyday jobs. Sometimes, I would attend these meetings with her in order to observe the Brisbane sustainability community and get to know individuals she felt would further my project. As a result of this non-traditional internship style, my independent project was very focused on developing my final product. This required a lot of research and creative development that was done when not working with Fiona. Ultimately, the internship and my focus project became one in the same, in order to create a product that would be useful for symposium participants.

I worked every weekday from April 3rd to April 26th, April 27-28th and a few hours each weekend, as well. The work on weekends included advertising at farmer’s markets, researching links for the Action Guide and attending workshops. In general, one weekday consisted of work from 8a.m.—11a.m., 1p.m.—5p.m. and one to two hours at night, depending upon whether I met with Fiona later in the day or ended earlier. In addition, when visiting local organizations, the hours varied depending upon their availability. For the last week of the project, a new development in my focus required working about nine hours a day. I completed one or two extra hours at night to ensure the project was finished on time.

2.2 Internship Tasks

2.2.1 Planning an ATD Symposium

As the symposium is the focal point of the BTC program, Fiona and I decided it was crucial for me to experience a symposium during my internship. In order to make this happen, I first found a venue for the event. The most important considerations in this process were location, price, atmosphere, AV setup and arrangement of the room. To find the venue I researched available public spaces online and made phone calls to each of these places. Because the symposium was only 4 weeks away, many of the places in our price range were already booked. Fiona and I visited the West End Uniting Church, located in West End, Brisbane and choose it for a venue.

The next step was advertising for the symposium. I created a flyer using Adobe InDesign as well as Microsoft Word to combat a few technological issues we ran into (See Appendix A). Once printed, I distributed the flyers to cafes and meeting places around West End. In addition, I contacted professors from the Environmental Studies Departments at the
University of Queensland and Queensland University of Technology asking if they would distribute the information through their list serves. I also sent the information and flyers to Food Connect, the Brisbane Transition Town network, local churches and farmer’s markets hoping they would forward the information to their members. Finally, I created a Facebook group for the event with information about location, price and updates. This group also served as a way to monitor the number of people coming so as to plan accordingly.

As Fiona and I decided the symposium would be more heavily focused on action rather than education, I helped her develop new tools to use. Often, this took the form of brainstorming ideas together based on processes each of us had used in the past. Fiona would put these processes into the context of the symposium and then, I would act as her participant. She also tested Life Coaching processes such as the GROW model; this involves a series of questions aimed at helping the participant choose an action, brainstorm obstacles, how to overcome them and a timeline for this action. After each process I would provide Fiona with feedback on how the process felt and if I would change anything.

As the symposium drew nearer, the planning turned to logistical tasks. I created a checklist for the things we needed for the day of, helped gather all of these materials and finally, set them up at the church on April 27th.

2.2.2 Researching Community Action and Value-Adding to the BTC Website

In order to better understand the key components of community action, I conducted extensive research of tools for community action and activist education. By reading and analyzing these documents, I found important descriptions of how and why community action is possible and examples of past successes and failures. Many of the articles I read were theses written by individuals who went on to have a great impact within organizations in Australia. Others were processes used by organizations like BTCEA, OzGreen and Getting Into Action Workshops to enable action within their participants.

The purpose of this research was to ensure that the tool I created for BTC was as effective as possible. Because so many resources already exist, Fiona and I decided it was not worth it to reinvent the wheel. Rather, compiling existing resources and learning from published material would have the greatest impact for BTC. Many organizations that carry out similar work to BTC in Australia, have a developed section of their website dedicated to educational tools and articles. The BTC website lacks these links. Fiona thought it would be a great idea to compile these documents and add them to the website.

2.2.3 Observing Players in the Brisbane Sustainability Movement

2.2.3.1 Food Connect

In order to get a more full understanding and first hand account of the major players in the Brisbane sustainability community, I visited the Food Connect warehouse. My first visit on April 8th consisted of a tour of the warehouse with Robert Pekin, the founder of Food
Connect. I also helped fix a broken bench, and observed the general flow of their work. I sat for an hour with the office employees learning about why they worked at Food Connect, where they were from, what other organizations they were members of and a more detailed description of each of their jobs. They also provided me with a plethora of documents from their archive to analyze including newsletters, pamphlets, posters and farm letters, which are sent weekly to subscribers. I promoted the symposium to all of the employees and made plans to return to help recreate their logos.

On April 22nd, I returned to the warehouse to help develop new graphics for the e-news and farm letter. I also sat in on a weekly update meeting. As BTC encourages participants to get involved with organizations like Food Connect, I felt it was important to volunteer my time as much as possible. This helped round my understanding of BTC’s mission.

2.2.3.2 Northey Street City Farm (NSCF)

I visited NSCF on two separate occasions. On April 6th, Fiona and I attended the NSCF Organic Market. There, I talked with the Wilderness Society members about the symposium and observed the atmosphere through participant observation. On April 17th, I returned to the farm to volunteer and get a better feel for the types of people that use the farm, how they work and the programs it offers. Amanda Vandenburg, an intern at the farm, gave me a tour and introduced me to many full time employees and volunteers. I helped make lunch that was cooked after picking food from the farm and chiseled wood for farm decorations. Simply being present at the farm gave me a great feel for the work they do and the pride they have in it. The sense of community could be felt simply by observing the way they worked.

2.2.3.3 Fair Food Festival Meeting

In August, a group of passionate individuals and organizations in Brisbane are putting on a Fair Food Festival. Fiona, Food Connect and NSCF are all involved with this festival, which will comprise of events ranging from potlucks to movie screenings, farm tours and speakers. The festival is aimed at educating individuals about the loaded term “Fair Food” and why it needs to replace the current system. The meeting took place on April 11th at Fiona’s house in West End. About eight individuals attended and the main focus was on branding the festival and marketing campaigns. I mainly listened for Brisbane organizations that were discussed to explore for my project. I also helped write taglines and served tea and coffee while observing the meeting.

2.2.3.4 Energy Auditing Library Workshop with Luke Reade

Luke Reade, a West End resident and founder of Energetic Communities, invited me to help him give a presentation on energy auditing and sustainability on April 20th at Wynnum Library. I met Luke while volunteering at NSCF and he is also a good friend of Fiona’s. His
startup company, Energetic Communities, is a hub for Community Owned Renewable Energy. At the library, he promoted NSCF, spoke about lighting and home auditing and then gave the audience hands on activities to do. I helped set up the room, hand out papers and offered experience I had with green design and sustainability.

2.2.4 Participating in the Symposium

I participated in the ATD symposium that took place on April 27\textsuperscript{th}. I immersed myself in the workshop and acted as though I had no more connection to the organization than any of the other participants. From the start, I knew that in order to get a full understanding of BTC, I had to experience a symposium as a participant and observe where the power of its work truly lies. At the symposium I took part in discussions, watched all of the videos, listened to the worldviews of the other participants and created my own action plan for carrying out a tree-planting project this summer. I also had the opportunity to network with the other participants who worked in a wide variety of fields. All had something interesting to contribute and added to the symposium with their insights. At the end of the symposium I had the opportunity to hand out my mini action guide to all of the participants.

2.3 Focus Project

2.3.1 Background Research on Existing Action Tools and Resources

The first week of my internship was heavily based in background research on what resources exist to help guide Australian citizens towards making sustainable change in their everyday lives. Questions I asked myself and further researched included: how accessible are these resources, what format do they exist in and how effective have they been so far? The majority of research was done online, but also included document analysis on topics such as community engagement and activist education, watching the symposium video, and many other informational videos recommended on YouTube.

To further inform my understanding of the needs of the organization I contacted Mark Spain, Jane Monk and Thomas Whitelake, facilitators and individuals dedicated to furthering the mission of BTC. I asked questions that prompted them to look into past experiences they had with BTC and then offer advice for new developments in the future. They also provided me with documents summarizing feedback from symposium participants, which I used to focus my project.

2.3.2 Contacting Symposium Participants

In order to get different perspectives on my focus project, Fiona and I went through the Queensland Database of BTC members and choose thirty people to call. We selected them if Fiona recognized their name and she knew they still lived in Brisbane. I called the individuals using Skype Call between April 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th}. The main point of the call was to find out if they still wanted to be a part of the database; felt anything was missing from the symposium that would help them take action after participating; had any suggestions for a
way to fill this gap. I kept logs of our conversation in my ISP journal. Many people did not answer the phone and others did not have much to offer, so after the initial thirty calls, I decided to move on.

2.3.3 The Be The Change Earth Alliance’s Action Guide: Australian Version

After contacting BTCEA to ask for permission to reference its Action Guide for my own paper, my project’s focus changed a little bit. The Action Guide is a comprehensive 146 page interactive book aimed at leading individuals through a nine-week cycle in which they learn and act upon seven different values. Values include things like: “Reduce Material Consumption,” “Increase Well-Being” and “Reconnect with Self” (Action Guide 2012). It is meant to be a guidebook for groups of individuals who meet on a weekly basis to support one another in taking sustainable action. Within each value are intentions and actions. This categorization is based on the idea that it is easy to hold values and have intentions, but unless we choose a date and time to act, we will not succeed in our action. At the end of each section of intentions, there are exploration links. These links are relevant to Vancouver, Canada, as that is where it was published.

After speaking with Maureen Jack-LaCroix, the editor and publisher of the Action Guide, Fiona and I decided this was the perfect tool for BTC to use in the future. Maureen suggested that I replace all of the Canadian links with Australian ones. I agreed on the understanding that this tool, which was already published in Canada, was having a huge impact. Creating an Australian Version would then greatly help BTC.

As much as possible, I found links that were focused in Brisbane, though some were relevant to all of Australia and others, the whole world. Through extensive Internet research and talking with individuals I met while volunteering, I created a document full of website links, movies, books and Youtube videos to fill the Action Guide. For each link, I had to check that it was still functioning and make sure it was credible. I did so based on the wording used, credibility given by other organizations, layout and design of the website. In addition, I stayed away from government issued information as much as possible to avoid bias. I watched all video links from start to finish to make sure the information was relevant and understandable. I also tried to make sure it was recommended by multitude of sources. Some exploration references provided in the Action Guide were extremely useful, so I did not replace them.

The ultimate goal is to print this adopted version in Brisbane as a pilot and then if successful, the rest of Australia. However, because of an emergency with the contact in Canada, I was not able to get the necessary access to the editable version of the Action Guide in time. As soon as I do, I will create a document that can augment the current Action Guide and can be printed in conjunction with it. For now, all links are compiled in a Microsoft Word document on Fiona’s computer and mine.
2.3.4 The Final Product


As the end of the project period drew near, the importance of having a final product that reflected my work and allowed creative freedom became the most important task. Fiona and I both wanted to offer participants at the symposium a tangible guide to at least begin the action process since the Action Guide was not complete. Furthermore, after much reflection, we decided the resource had to be a smaller guide and connect participants to local organizations. Otherwise, the desire to act would likely fade as a result of a lack of community support and not enough time to read a long list of resources. After sifting through the research I completed for the Action Guide, I chose eight intentions from the list that really exemplified BTC’s mission and role in the Brisbane community. These intentions were put into categories and given a catchy name to introduce their importance. The eight included: “Let’s Eat,” “Live Simply,” “Let’s Grow,” “Shop Smart,” “Cut It Out,” “Use Renewables,” “Reconnect,” and “Be The Change.”

Using Adobe InDesign I made these eight topics into 10 cm x 10 cm cards (See Appendix C). The front side of the card included the topic heading with a simple icon that illustrated the theme. In addition, a statement expanded on the topic heading, meant to spark further interest in the topic. For example, the “Let’s Eat” card also included the statement: “food that is fair, just, healthy and ecological” (Image 1). On the back of each card is a listing of links and organizations for the user to explore. Each has a description of the link and how it should be used. The cards are illustrated with a monochromatic color scheme—using a green CMYK color, C=75, M=5, Y=100.
Also included in the cards are a few tools I created throughout the ISP period. These tools were made in response to conversations and feedback from facilitators about how to connect symposium participants after the workshop. Both were created in Adobe Illustrator. The first, a “Typical vs. Ethical Grocery List Comparison”, is tied directly to the website links on the “Shop Smart” card. The tool has spaces for a person to write their typical grocery list and brands they currently buy. The other half of the sheet has spaces for the person to write down ethical brands they find using the provided links (Image 2). The hope is that this activity will not only give them the knowledge to question their current purchases and brands they buy, but give them an easy place to keep track of brands that are socially, ethically and ecologically sustainable.
The other tool included is an illustration of a phone tree. Typically, a phone tree is used to send information to a large group of people without putting the responsibility on one individual. The purpose of this phone tree is to encourage participants to stay in touch with their communities—whether this is family, friends or neighbors—without having to create a formal club or meeting place (Image 3). Often, a simple, inspirational conversation can be enough to commit an individual to action or pass this inspiration on to another individual. By choosing a day out of the week for one member to initiate the chain, every member commits to call only one other person. However, they have the potential to create a ripple of positive action as a result.
2.3.4.1 Getting Feedback from Facilitators and Fiona

Before finishing the mini action guide, I sent the rough draft to a few of the facilitators, the Food Connect founders and Fiona. From them, I got feedback on small things like taking out full stops and more important things like adding an action process card (See Appendix C). Taking into account all of the feedback, I edited the guide until I was happy that the final product reflected my vision, the needs of the organization and the Brisbane sustainability community.

When I went to print the guide, the most important things to consider were size, type of paper and cost. Fiona and I decided 10 cm x 10 cm was a large enough size to still be considered a card while also being readable, since the exploration links were rather small on the computer version. I had the cards printed on 100% recycled cardstock at World Wide Printing, a company that is fairly dedicated to sustainable printing.

2.3.4.2 Putting the Guide to Use

I introduced the cards at the end of the symposium. After all the participants, including myself, completed a reflection and action planning process, each individual presented their plan. Then, I handed out the cards. It was incredible to see how well the cards fit into the needs of the participants. Everyone got their own pack of cards and I also offered them the electronic, editable version so that they could put their own links in the “Explore” sections (See Appendix C). That way, based on their field of work or place of residence, the
cards would still be relevant. This version exists as a PowerPoint, as it is difficult to edit a PDF.

3. Observations and Impressions

3.1 Methods of Observation and Data Collection

3.1.1 Participant Observation

I used participant observation as my main method of data collection throughout my project. I was trying to analyze the community as a member of it, so I engaged myself in the work that that particular organization was doing in hopes of understanding it from a local’s perspective. This was especially useful at NSCF, Food Connect, the Fair Food Meeting, Luke Reade’s Workshop, and the final symposium. I paid close attention to the work atmosphere, attitudes of individuals, workspace and engaging in as much conversation as possible. In addition, because I was working beside Fiona most of the time, I found the best way to analyze the impact of BTC and the work it does through spontaneous conversations and observing how she promotes BTC.

3.1.2 Interviews

To add value to my visits at NSCF, Food Connect and experience with BTC, I carried out a few informal interviews with different members of each organization. Within BTC I conducted phone interviews on two occasions with Mark Spain, facilitator; Jane Monk, training leader; and Thomas Whitelake, who is conducting research for BTC (See Appendix B1). For the first interview, I prepared questions to ask, while the second time, I let them dictate the conversation based on their response to the progression of my focus project. I also conducted a face-to-face interview with Robert Pekin and Emma Kate Rose of Food Connect. This interview consisted of five questions (See Appendix B2). Though I never formally interviewed Fiona Leiper, she served as my main source of insight into BTC, the Brisbane community and connected me with many of these individuals.

3.1.3 Analysis of Data

After each observation, conversation or interview, I recorded my data in my ISP journal. For participant observations, I reflected on the day, focusing heavily on the atmosphere of the organization, employee attitudes, how they approached sustainability and how effective their work seemed. I also made sure I engaged with individuals with different job titles to create a better understanding of the organization. By observing person-to-person interactions, and how different people approached their work, I gathered a diverse set of data to analyze. I used qualitative analysis to analyze the data.

For interviews, I first analyzed the individual’s potential biases based on their position within the organization and experiences I was aware of that could dictate their responses. Then, I conducted qualitative analysis on our conversation, summarizing the main
points and what it meant in relation to my project. This helped inform my final product, analysis of BTC’s role, NSCF and Food Connects roles, and work of BTC in general.

3.2 Be The Change as an Organization

3.2.1 Structure

As a national organization, Be The Change is mainly just an administrative portal for individual facilitators to get the resources they need to put on symposiums. This structure allows facilitators to educate and inspire, but not much beyond that. All other work is completely up to the individual. BTC’s goal is to give as many symposiums as possible, but the infrastructure to measure this change and regulate it is not there. Because the infrastructure does not currently exist to compare the mission to the impact, it is difficult to know whether their work is having an impact in quantitative terms. Because the mission is so powerful and the symposium elicits such strong emotions, those drawn to become facilitators are generally those who have turned the message into a lifestyle. Most are extremely involved and leaders within their own local communities. This is a tradeoff for the national organization however, as these individuals have less time to make a commitment to growing the BTC community.

3.2.2 Distinguishing Between the ATD Symposium and BTC

One major obstacle I observed in building BTC as a community is the lack of distinction between BTC as an organization and the role of the ATD symposium. While calling members of the Queensland Database I often began by saying I was doing an internship for BTC and asked to confirm that they had attended a symposium. As soon as I said “Be The Change,” the individual, who had indeed signed himself or herself up to be a part of the database, immediately asked for clarification. They responded by saying they had been to some sort of symposium, but it was a little bit different than what I was explaining. After a few calls, I began to refer to the symposium as Awakening The Dreamer, and the confusion dissipated. This same phenomenon occurred while advertising for the symposium. Those who had already attended a symposium were unaware of the national organization and saw the ATD symposium as a one off event with an incredible power to educate and empower. Perhaps, this would not have occurred in another city, depending on the number of facilitators and symposiums given each year. It would be interesting to explore the BTC communities in other Australian cities to make a comparison.

I see the distinction between BTC and the symposium as an extremely important one for the future growth of BTC. There is great opportunity in individuals staying connected to the Australian branch of a worldwide organization. They offer so much more than the ATD symposium including workshops for kids of all ages. One of the most effective means of communication is word-of-mouth and if the word is not marketing BTC, it cannot grow and have a larger impact.
3.2.3 Overwhelming Willingness to Help

Throughout the ISP period, I exchanged emails, had phone and skype conversations with many facilitators and past participants of the symposium. The support and attention I received from these individuals across the board was remarkable. It was so evident how deeply the facilitators believed in the mission of BTC and radiated its energy in every conversation we had. They were always willing to listen to my ideas, give advice based on their own experiences and eager to hear how the project was developing. I was amazed at how appreciative they were of me, simply for taking the time to analyze BTC’s current system and trying to create a means of furthering its impact. Their encouraging words drove my motivation and helped me realize how important the work of BTC truly is. Whether or not they are involved on a regular basis, the themes of the organization have helped ground these individuals in work that is local, sustainable and not always easy. This fact was easily observable in their words and excitement in their voices. Mark Spain, a BTC facilitator in Canberra and an involved community member, summarized this observation extremely well in an interview on 10 March 2013. He said the “connecting story of environmental, social, and spiritual being [that BTC promotes] aligns with my vision for the world and life.” With a life vision so closely tied to that of BTC, it is easy to understand his and others’ excitement when a like-minded individual is looking to begin working for a similar cause.

I have not observed such a warm, welcoming and helpful group of individuals in any organization I have worked with to this day. Hopefully, one day, there will be a means for these individuals to meet on a more frequent basis to inspire one another with their passion.

3.2.4 Evaluation of Current Impact

3.2.4.1 As an Organization

After living and breathing BTC for five weeks, I saw the most powerful element of the organization in living the mission of being rather than just doing. If BTC can take advantage of their power to connect individuals and their communities through an emotional, empowering event, I think they will grow exponentially. After experiencing the symposium and having a better understanding of the true oneness of our world, I could see the potential for lifestyle change not in simply taking action, but embedding oneself in a community of people who are also trying to truly be.

Their website is not extremely comprehensive and could be built up to provide a plethora of resources for individuals after the symposium. In addition, organizing this information in a logical way could continue to support these individuals and encourage them to keep taking small steps towards change.
3.2.4.2 The ATD Symposium

The symposium was an extremely moving experience. Following is an account of the afternoon I wrote in response to the workshop:

The power was in the way Fiona, who was facilitating the symposium, created an environment in which people felt comfortable offering their own insights and passions. It was the careful wording and the diverse movies, the compassion of the participants and the willingness to listen to what others had to say, not just watch their mouth move. It was a shared dream of instilling deep connections within community, rather than the current paradigm of separation. It was the opportunity to take one’s own passions and have a structure to create an action plan. However, it wasn’t just a thought, it was spoken aloud and supported, questioned and developed by the group. I could just see the effect in the faces of the participants, feel the excitement of possibility spreading like wildfire and sense something new emerging.

It was so evident how much possibility unfolded in the minds of the other participants in the way that they spoke of their action plans and so intently listened to others. Even for individuals who had attended many symposiums before, the impact was visible. Robert Pekin, founder of Food Connect, said during a conversation on April 27th after the symposium, “…it was great to be reminded of the importance of ‘Being’ and doing work on solutions.” As someone completely embedded in the sustainability community and a leading change agent, his words are proof of the impact the symposium can have again and again.

3.3 The Brisbane Sustainability Community

3.3.1 Food Connect

3.3.1.1 Atmosphere and Attitudes

After visiting Food Connect multiple times and living with the founders, my lasting impression is of the atmosphere. There was no tension in the air at the warehouse and all worked together in a very laid back style. At the weekly meeting, some stood and some sat on couches, others held coffee and there was much laughter. As the warehouse is connected to the office, it is evident that there is an organic hierarchy, encouraging all employees to give suggestions, take on new projects and also take ownership over their work. In addition, most of the employees are part time and thus many are very involved in a multitude of other projects. My observation was that this kept the employees motivated, as they had time to work in a field they were passionate about, but not take the excitement out of the job.
3.3.1.2 Website

Food Connect’s website plays a large role in the development of the company. It is simple, yet attractive, and extremely organized. It has relevant information for current subscribers, as well as those looking for more information. Their weekly updates and “farmletters” are posted on the main page and there is also an archive of all past updates. An interactive map helps newly interested individuals find the closest pick up location, in case they are considering subscribing.

Additionally, they have testimonials from subscribers and highlight their farmers, showing how dedicated they are to providing a great product to their customers and also. The products they offer are clearly stated and easy to add to a weekly grocery order, the contact details are present with links to their Facebook page, on which they are very active. The Facebook page further connects the farmers, subscribers and fair food promoters. It is constantly updated with exciting news about political progress, enlightening stories and communication between members of the group. This adds to the culture of the business, which is definitely not a traditional model.

3.3.1.3 Connection With Customers and Farmers

Based on my observations, one main reason Food Connect serves as such an important driver of sustainability in the community is because of its connection with its customers. The company is approachable and open to new ideas from anyone willing to take the time to offer them. They continually present themselves in a fun, friendly way to the public with their design style, making the company more than just a socially and ecologically responsible business. Their marketing is also consistently educational, proving their dedication to building a successful business and enlightening their customers with the benefits of being part of Food Connect.

While visiting the NSCF Market on April 21st with Emma Kate Rose, the General Happiness Manager of Food Connect, she caught up with many of the Food Connect farmers, not only talking of business, but also checking up on their families and friends. Emma says their relationship with the farmers is, “too good, they know we love them, so sometimes they take this as a soft spot.” Though this relationship is highly valued, as a business it is important for Food Connect to still serve as a parent to the farmers, to ensure quality for the subscribers. It seems that this balance can sometimes be a struggle to maintain.

3.3.1.4 From the Business’s Perspective

From the administrative perspective, Robert Pekin, the founder of Food Connect shed light on the role they play. On 28 April 2013, he stated that the Brisbane sustainability community needs to be a more united community and that Food Connect is “solution focused, not problem focused.” He also talked about the power of working together as a community of organizations with diverse missions, but ultimately working towards the same goal. “Brisbane
has taken such a long time to realize that working together...is a good thing. There are big advantages in doing things together” (Pekin 2013, pers. comm., 28 April). Despite this fragmented community, Food Connect continues to serve as a model for other local food hubs and is committed to proving how much the current system needs to change. Without it, Brisbane’s sustainable food presence would certainly not be where it is today.

3.3.2 Northey Street City Farm

3.3.2.1 Atmosphere

Both NSCF and the NSCF Organic Market, held every Sunday morning, attract a diverse population of individuals. Both were bustling at all times that I visited, yet no one seemed in rush to leave. The Farm is a beautiful, large piece of land that caters to a wide number of organizations and volunteers. On the day I volunteered, I was immediately overcome by the spontaneous conversation between people of all ages and backgrounds. While eating lunch outside, with food made from the garden, I had the impression that the natural, outdoor space played a large role in creating this atmosphere.

3.3.2.2 Employee and Volunteer Attitudes

While volunteering at the farm on April 17th, I talked to Patricia Cabrera, the Planting for Pizzas Coordinator. She described the farm as a place where, “we try to take tea breaks in between every task” (Cabrera 2013, pers. comm., 17 April). Though in the business world this may be seen as unproductive, for the volunteers and employees at Northey Street, this fact dictates the culture and makes their sense of community stronger. Ray, a volunteer at the farm, comes almost every single day. While watching him carve designs into the trees at the entryway, Ray explained that he tries his best to make it to the farm everyday, as he doesn’t want to miss out. Amanda Vanderburg, an intern at the farm, agreed completely with this statement. The farm clearly provides many people with a sense of place amidst the big buildings and busy streets.

In order to make a more full analysis of the effectiveness of the farm in promoting sustainability, it would be worthy to talk to members of the leadership team. Their work, as I observed while volunteering, comprises much more heavily on managing and paperwork, then actually taking part in the daily activities on the farm. I would expect their insight to be more focused on the organization, number of new members, effectiveness of employees who do work directly with volunteers and obstacles they have had to overcome.

3.3.2.3 Website

Like Food Connect, NSCF’s website is extremely comprehensive. It is also fun and extremely informative. The top third of the website easily captures the plethora of offerings and the purpose of the farm, with the statement “Permaculture in the heart of Brisbane, Australia,” beneath the title and links to everything they offer just below. These include getting involved, classes offered, the markets, the nursery, NSCF cookbook, tours, allotments and
contact information (NSCF 2013). The main screen has postings of updates, while a news feed of events runs down the right side. The design makes it easy to navigate and a great resource for new and old members. Just exploring the website made me want to be a part of the community.

3.3.2.4 Hub for Events and Workshops

Though I didn’t get to experience a workshop or big event at the farm, they advertise for these quite a bit. They offer a plethora of educational workshops that work towards helping Brisbane community members take action in their own lives. These workshops range from permaculture design to communication, chook care and herbal medicine. Because they can cost up to $50 for an afternoon workshop, they inhibit a lot of individuals from participating. However, it seems that NSCF offers so many different options for getting involved, that the cost of the workshops do no hinder their impact. As I observed in the few days I volunteered, simply taking time to help out and learn from the other volunteers is a powerful experience. In addition, they are constantly hosting events and tours, which draw new cohorts of people to the farm, potentially sparking their interest in sustainable food and living.

3.3.3 A Comparison of Approaches

As evident, BTC, Food Connect and NSCF operate on very different scales, with radically different approaches to increasing sustainable action. Because the main goal is to define BTC’s role in this community, I am going to define effectiveness in the context of their mission, which focuses on improving connectivity, ecological living, self-understanding and social justice.

Of the three organizations, BTC promotes this encompassing definition of sustainability most clearly to its participants. Through the symposium reflections and videos, it is difficult to not see the bigger picture. However, in Brisbane, BTC is not the main player in helping individuals actually attack these issues. They educate and ignite hope, but do not currently support the community in taking action. NSCF focuses on hands-on learning and as explored, serves as a hub for like-minded individuals and those trying to learn more. Their teaching approach is different from BTC in that the picture is focused more on increasing skills, with the hope that these skills will develop into a deeper understanding of sustainability.

Food Connect takes the business approach, providing the opportunity to support fair food by serving as the local, ecological and seasonal middleman between farmers and buyers and educating along the way. Without them, it would be much more difficult for people to attain such quality, fair food. In addition, they serve as a model of success for thousands of people looking for proof to support an alternative to the current food system. Because of their dedication to this cause, Food Connect has brought many “foodies” in Brisbane together,
connecting farmers to buyers, and employees to similar companies across Australia. This
serves as more of a network, than a community, however.

Through researching, observing and analyzing these three organizations, I found one
element to be the most important in truly achieving BTC’s mission: a physical place. Without
a space to allow like-minded individuals to learn from one another, support each other and see
what change is possible, it is so easy to be brought down by the current paradigm of
consumption and separateness. A physical, existing meeting place means that no single
individual has to “manage” the community. Rather, a healthy space enables spontaneous
interaction, discussion and relationship building. During the symposium, this space was
certainly present, but only as a direct result of careful planning on the part of the facilitator.
Once all participants are gathered and the symposium is on its way, an energy buzz that is
reminiscent of the NSCF market comes alive. This buzz is likely to exist at the Food Connect
Warehouse after a particularly successful week, the introduction of a new product, or progress
in the national food plan, as well. This energy needs to permeate the greater community to
truly make the greatest impact possible.

If these organizations were united under one umbrella, they could learn and grow
from one another. They are all dedicated to achieving a healthier society, but cannot do it
alone. With better communication between the groups, they could offer services to one
another that the others lack. For example, if BTC had strong relationships with a few
organizations focused on sustainability in Brisbane, it could funnel symposium participants to
these organizations after they were inspired and ready for action. On the other hand, these
organizations could suggest that their volunteers or buyers participate in a symposium to see
the bigger picture.

3.4 Further Needs of the Participants

After talking to many past symposium participants, facilitators and experiencing a
symposium myself, I found there was a common desire for continued guidance on their path
to living a sustainable life. Some facilitators provide a sheet full of links of organizations to
explore while others invite local organizations to the end of the symposium to pitch their
mission. However, this takes an incredible amount of planning on the part of the facilitator
and needs to be constantly updated. In a conversation with Jane Monk, a BTC Training
Leader in Melbourne, on 21 March 2013, she expressed her concern with striking a balance
between overwhelming participants with a document full of information and supporting them
in joining a community. After our discussion it was evident that she was aware that there was
something missing, but she did not have the time to update this document or the computer
skills to make a more attractive document. The facilitators I talked to unanimously talked of
the need to connect participants locally, to existing events or groups. It was only after living
in the Brisbane community for five weeks, attempting to involve myself with such a community that I realized the power of these words.

3.4.1 Action Circle Potential

In Canada and the UK, both BTC communities offer Action Circles, which provide participants with this support system by creating a space for individuals to learn how to take action together. To me, this seems like a brilliant step to take. These groups meet three to four times a month and in Canada, use the *Action Guide* to aid them in this process. Because they are participant driven, the structure exists without a creating a greater strain on the volunteer facilitators. Eventually, it would be great for BTC Australia to offer this opportunity.

3.4.2 Mini Action Guide to Fill the Gaps

In order to have maximum impact I think it is necessary to begin supporting participants as soon as the symposium ends. Otherwise, it is too easy to go back to the grind of everyday responsibilities. Because starting the Action Circles will require a more united BTC administration and time to develop, I created the mini action guide to give participants a visually appealing, simple, and helpful tool to use as soon as they got home. While still excited and full of hope, my aim was to provide the participants with the resources they need to learn more about topics they are passionate about and see the potential in getting involved.

I thought it was important to provide not only educational reading links, but links to videos and interactive websites to appeal to a wider range of people. In addition, the “action card,” grocery list and phone wheel prompt action that does not require too much effort. Though these cards can certainly be refined and include a wider range of topics, they were received very well at the symposium. Based on the interest in an editable version for personal use and within their own organizations, I believe such a tool is essential to provide to participants. BTC currently offers books and guides for purchase, but giving the mini action guide as a gift elicited a different response. Rather than making a decision about whether or not the tool is worth the money, a gift can create a ripple effect. It is a gesture by BTC saying, “we believe so strongly in this mission and your power, that we want to support you in any way we can.” After receiving, the tradition is to give in return. This giving would hopefully be directed towards spreading the power of *being* the change.

4. Conclusions and Application for the Future
4.1 The Power of an Individual Within the Context of a Connected Society

Many of the videos presented in the symposium feature role models such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa and Gandhi. They show speakers like Joanna Macy, whose writing and teachings have helped us take huge steps towards a different future. These people are highlighted to show the power an individual can have with perseverance, dedication and good intentions. On the contrary, I think the highlight needs to focus on the true power that lies in igniting the leader in every individual, rather than promoting the few who changed history forever.

In a world where separateness is the norm, it is easy to feel disempowered. After all, an individual is only one in seven billion people on the planet. It is not surprising then, that as a society; we value heroes and celebrities so highly. Their purpose is to save us; they represent something that we want to be. What I have realized through this experience and trying to live BTC’s mission, is that with a strong community, the potential to make change becomes local and thus, achievable. We can build the momentum for change only once we learn how to support each other in embodying a more sustainable world, rather than waiting for someone else to impose it.

4.2 The Importance of Organization and Commitment to a Defined Mission

Working with Fiona Leiper, someone who is truly committed to embodying and promoting BTC’s mission, I saw how important it is to have a clear mission to work towards. In so plainly defining their vision of sustainability, BTC does not have to promote a single path to this destination, but encourages all to be flexible in their journey in working towards this common goal. Unfortunately, what they gain in clarity and commitment is partially lost in the lack of organization with the bigger BTC community. Despite whether the number of people committed to achieving an ecologically sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just human presence is actually increasing, there is no measurement of this number. The people working towards the mission are spread across Australia with little knowledge of the impact others are making. Organizing facilitators and volunteers at least once a year, updating them on progress and creating short term goals could begin this process. In addition, it is crucial that each person involved knows their specific role and is kept accountable for achieving this role.

Food Connect and NSCF highlighted the importance of being organized in building a successful, growing organization. Without it, it is impossible to evaluate whether adaptations need to be made to the current strategy.

4.3 Without Communication, All Else Fails

Communication, above all, proved its power to me through this internship. Communication is necessary from human to human, organization to volunteers, in marketing and simply, in being. Coming into the ISP with defined goals and expectations, I learned that
unless I was open about sharing these expectations, it was my own fault if I did not achieve them. Often, my ambitions differed from Fiona’s, and when we were honest and realistic with these ambitions, they grew. In honesty, came the understanding of the other’s thought process. It took me a few weeks to understand this, but once I did, the tides began to turn.

This was an important lesson to learn in promoting BTC’s beliefs to the greater community. People need to hear why BTC’s mission is relevant to them and what they will get out of participating in a symposium. Without explaining what change is necessary, BTC cannot expect people to want be this change. With a clear communication strategy, BTC could capitalize on the power of advertisement through word of mouth. By simply asking symposium participants to spread its impact to their own circle of friends and family, they could build their reputation.

Beyond marketing, communication is key within the personnel of an organization. It is so easy for frustration to build when a person feels as though their voice is not heard. This fact was easily observable within BTC. Many of the facilitators spoke of their dedication waxing and waning as a result of lack of support and consistent communication from the national organization. Furthermore, it is easy to lose faith in a cause without the support of others experiencing similar obstacles. Communication helps build community and creates a more resilient organization as it can portray itself as a united front with members who believe in its power. With such a group of inspiring members, it would be a shame to lose strength as a result of lack of communication.

4.4 The Potential for Future Projects

Because BTC is still building its community and it is a flexible organization, there is much room for creativity to flourish. Even though I was focused in the Brisbane area, it would be great to compare and contrast the different communities across Australia, to get a sense for what directions BTC is headed in. In addition, this could definitely help facilitators, who are not as well supported, learn how to make BTC more present in their area. In addition, it would be interesting to see a student participate in a symposium at the beginning of the project and then follow the participants throughout the ISP period and record their change and involvement. This would be extremely helpful for BTC, as the focus could be in developing a process by which change is measured and recoded.

4.5 Being, Rather than Doing

Going into this internship, I saw BTC as an organization whose main goal was to ignite such a strong spark of empowerment, that all participants would increase their actions toward sustainability. I saw these as simple actions like conserving water, buying local food, decreasing plastic consumption, and supporting organizations that are making bigger change. Though they do hope that participants will take these actions, I could not have been more wrong about BTC’s main intentions.
BTC is not an organization asking people to change the world. Rather, they hope to promote the idea of oneness; the idea that everyone and everything on earth are connected, and thus what we do to ourselves, we do to our world. By being my vision for the future, I can create that future. The steps necessary to achieve my vision will require me, and others who choose to take this path, to act. However, if I understand the interconnectivity of every action I take, it will be much easier to take these actions. This is the truth BTC is trying to convey. By first being, then we can achieve so much.

4.6 A Career that “Makes a Living, Not A Dying”

The first day I arrived in Brisbane, I was introduced to Emma Kate Rose, my homestay mom and General Happiness Manager for Food Connect. One of the first conversations we had was about the importance of working in a field that will fuel life, rather than ultimately lead to your death. This could be relative to anything from following your dreams to working in a place that is healthy and safe. Whichever she meant, it stuck with me. Throughout the five weeks in Brisbane, I found myself analyzing aspects of the different work environments I experienced based on what I would want for my own life. As the weeks passed, it became clearer what making a “living” means for me. In a reflection from 23 April 2013, I made a list of qualities I hope my career can consist of:

- Work in an area where collaboration and interaction are not only feasible but also encouraged
- Constant communication about current standings on projects, ideas and emotions in order to maximize the potential of everyday
- A certain degree of autonomy
- An ever changing landscape
- As active as possible
- Inspiring to others and personally fulfilling
- A positive impact on society

Some of these qualities came directly from something I lacked during my ISP while others are a result of having the extraordinary opportunity to experience work where I could observe the potential for impact. Despite whether they came as a reflection of the former or the latter, I am confident that I got out of this experience, what I went into it hoping to achieve. I learned more about myself and my vision for the future than I could have ever imagined. More importantly, I have a stronger confidence than ever, that change is possible for our society. It starts however, not with society, but within.

5. References (Harvard Style)


The Pachama Alliance 2009, *Awakening the dreamer symposium index for background references*. Available from email: <info@pachama.org> (28 April 2013).

6. Appendices

A: Symposium Advertisement

Have you ever asked yours
Where are we going?
And...
Do you want to do
something about it?

The Be The Change,
Awakening The Dreamer Symposium
is a profound inquiry into a holy void
trying to bring forth an environmentally
sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and
socially just human presence on Earth.

Join us for an afternoon of multimedia
presentations, personal reflections,
engaging interviews and the chance to
connect with some like-minded
communities!

Visit www.bethechange.org.au

WHERE? West End Uniting Church, 11 Yulbury St West End, Brisbane
WHEN? Saturday, April 27th 1:00pm-5:00pm
$30 per person (but no one will be turned away)
RSVP: Fiona Keir Leiper 0419 156 818 or peaceinthemoonpong.com

B: Interview Questions

B1: for Mark Spain, Thomas Whitelake and Jane Monk

- What is your role within Be The Change?
  - When did you get involved?
  - How did you get involved?
- What has been the greatest gain from facilitating symposiums?
  - In being a part of BTC in general?
- In what ways do you think the symposium affects participants?
- Do you think anything is missing from the symposium?
- What do you see as the most effective way of ensuring participants act on
  the knowledge they gain at the symposium?
  - Is there something more BTC could offer them?
- Do you get feedback from participants?
  - If yes, what is the general response to the symposium?
- What do you see as the most important value BTC promotes?

B2: Interview Questions for Robert Pekin and Emma Kate Rose
• What do you see as Food Connect’s main role in the Brisbane sustainability community?
• What role would you like Food Connect to play?
  o Does it currently play this role?
• What is Food Connect’s opinion of the effectiveness of the sustainability community in Brisbane?
• What is your relationship with the farmers?
  o How does this help Food Connect play its role?

C.  C: Mini Action Guide (left side is front of card, right side is back of card)

(First 4 cards)

(Next 4 cards)