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**Sustainable Lifestyle and It's Impact on New Zealand Society**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree  
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## Abstract

Sustainable lifestyles are based on the belief that people in developed countries (predominantly) need to start making lifestyle decisions on the basis of the impact of those decisions upon the people and environment of the world. It is a lifestyle that thinks about the future and future generations and recognises that people and countries around the world are interconnected. As a term 'sustainable lifestyles' is not original to this thesis. Many writings have alluded to actions such as 'sustainable livelihoods' and 'living simply' and 'world citizens' but few have acknowledged the term sustainable lifestyles and its workings to any major degree. This thesis seeks to give parameters to the term 'sustainable lifestyle' and to evaluate to what degree sustainable lifestyle values and actions are impacting the way New Zealanders live.

Chapter one will introduce the purpose and methodologies of the thesis while chapter two sets out how the concept of sustainable lifestyles evolved and what exactly a sustainable lifestyle is. From a basis of sustainable development that focused on the environmental impacts of development in the developing world, wider aspects of development arose. The social, economic and cultural aspects of development began to take higher precedence. The focus also shifted from the developing world to include the developed world and the role the developed world played in bringing equitable and sustainable development.

Chapters three to seven will focus on five areas of New Zealand society. These chapters will seek to determine to what degree sustainable lifestyle is impacting New Zealand society. These areas are production and consumption and policies, economics, environment, values, and education. Each of these is used because they provide a form of measurement in determining the impact of sustainable values. They are also key aspects that contribute to New Zealand functioning well as a society.

Chapter eight will evaluate a Sustainable Lifestyle survey that was carried out among 50 people. The purpose of the survey was to determine the understanding and actions of individual New Zealanders in the area of sustainable lifestyles. This survey revealed a general understanding that sustainable lifestyle was about the need for people to live in way that others can also share in that lifestyle. However many responses focused on being able to provide for oneself and to be able to maintain one's present lifestyle. It also revealed that most people had no practical outworking of sustainability in their lives. Chapter nine will draw all the conclusions and evaluations together to provide an overall sense to what degree sustainable lifestyles are understood and enacted in New Zealand society.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The effect of present day lifestyles upon people, social structures and the environment in the developing world is more clearly understood than at any other time in history. The effect of issues such as unemployment, deforestation, poverty, and hunger in the developing world are becoming increasingly evident to people in the developed world. The growing inequality between the world's rich and poor is causing a focus on meeting basic needs on a global scale. The lifestyle choices of people in the developing world are directly impacted by the lifestyle choices of people in the developed world.

The ability for New Zealand to maintain its present lifestyle is based on this country receiving more than its fair share of resources and opportunities. This awareness of our connectedness to the world has led to the development of lifestyle choices that seek to lessen our impact upon the world and the resources and people in it. Ideas about global culture, holistic lifestyles, ecology, and the environment movement have risen in prominence in recent decades. These ideas and actions can be grouped under the term 'Sustainable Lifestyles'. The term 'sustainable lifestyle' is not unique to this thesis as it has been alluded to my other writings but often this is the form of other terms similar in nature. This thesis uses the term 'sustainable lifestyle' as it incorporates the sense that it is the whole of a person's life (their lifestyle) that must be made sustainable for the sake of other people and the environment.

To have a sustainable lifestyle in New Zealand will require a reduction in the amount of producing and consuming that occurs. This will require a change in our lifestyle. This new lifestyle is about helping people to become self-reliant rather than dependent, about conserving rather than wasting, about long-term profits rather than short-term gains but mostly about recognising the value of people and the wider world. A sustainable lifestyle is not one that just seeks to preserve the environment and to have 'green consumerism' but it is about challenging the way that people live. Lifestyles cannot be maintained that rely on a socio-economic system that is based on growth and affluence. Lifestyles must be adopted that work at basic actions (i.e.: recycling, reducing traffic, green consumerism, shared housing, better use of waste) and at complex actions (i.e.: simpler lifestyles, self-sufficient local economies, reducing greenhouse gas emissions) (Trainer 1995: 9).

This thesis will evaluate the impact of Sustainable Lifestyle in New Zealand society. It will identify to what level New Zealand society has understood and is practicing sustainability lifestyles. This thesis will propose that New Zealand society has sustainable lifestyle values and actions in many of its historical, cultural and political structures. However sustainable lifestyles are only impacting the fringes of today's society. For this lifestyle to become cemented in the general population may require that perimeters and identity be established. As people gain understanding of what a sustainable lifestyle is, this then allows them to identify with that lifestyle. It then also creates a sense of ownership and participation.

To give an overall analysis on the level of impact sustainable lifestyles are having in New Zealand five areas of society will be evaluated. These areas are:

- Economics
- Production, Consumption and Policy
- Environment
- Values
- Education

These parts of society will be chosen because they are identified by Denis Goulet (Trzyna and Osborne 1995: 51) and David Reid (Reid 1995: Chapter 8) as necessary aspects for sustainable lifestyle to occur. Goulet and Reid acknowledge the need for an economic component. This includes the concept of progress, the goods and services that we produce and consume, and the concept of wealth. They also refer to a political dimension and a focus on ecological soundness and the natural world. A chapter on values encompasses the need for the respect for humans and the valuation of human potential while the chapter on education helps reflect the dominant social values.

The methodologies used to help evaluate the impact of sustainable lifestyle values in these five areas of New Zealand will be:

- An analysis of appropriate New Zealand literature of the last thirty years
- An analysis of articles appearing in newspapers and magazines in the last thirty years
- An analysis of literature on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles
- Evaluation of central and local government policies
- Use of statistics
- The interviewing and evaluation of New Zealand organisations working towards sustainability issues

This thesis will also highlight the research carried out by the writer to practically determine the way sustainable values are impacting the lives of individuals in New Zealand. This research involved a survey about people's awareness and involvement in sustainable lifestyle issues. This survey is titled the ' Sustainable Lifestyle Survey' and was carried out on 50 people. The key responses and trends from the survey will be evaluated. A full list of the answers is given at the end of the thesis in the appendices.