

A GUIDE TO GREEN ISSUES

Since the 1960's environmentalists have raised awareness of many issues, of which Climate Change is but the latest. There is now an urgency in addressing these issues that are so complex and confounding:

Resources

Obtaining materials degrades the natural environment and depletes resources that cannot be replaced.

Pollution

Making materials and products creates chemicals and by-products that pollute the earth, water and air.

Peak Oil

Oil drives the world's economy, transport + manufacturing, but half the resources have already been used.

Climate Change

Coal + petroleum produce greenhouses gases (CO₂, CH₄) that lead to global warming + climate change.

All these problems will be exacerbated by future population increase (from 6.5 to level out at 9 billion in 2050). Currently the world is trying to address these issues in 4 ways:

Materials

Better materials, with lower impacts, should be used in all industries, with or without incentives (but aren't),

Water

Alternative sources and better use of water should be developed for both the city and the bush (not).

Energy

Reductions in emissions through worldwide caps and emissions trading schemes should be developed.

Footprint

Changes in lifestyle to reduce the footprint of rich western cultures should be promoted (but are ignored).

For lots of reasons, mostly selfish, it is highly unlikely that the world will address these issues quickly enough to make the necessary changes. A different approach is needed where we operate on lots of small-scale issues, to make "design changes", looking for better solutions in our lives (the 4 layers that we inhabit).

Our houses

All of our buildings have to be better designed to conserve energy and water, and use better materials.

Our transport, particularly cars

We will never develop public transport as good as cars, so we need radical, dramatically better, cars.

Our clothes

The materials, the making, the transport, the durability and recycling of clothes can all be improved.

Our own bodies

Food has always been the biggest unsolved world issue, even before it was a quarter of greenhouse gases.

Each of these designs has to respond to a 4-part cycle:

Creating it

Sourcing ingredients / materials safely and responsibly, minimising energy and water, eliminating waste.

Delivering it

Minimising and using sensible packaging, reducing transport energy, eliminating waste.

Using it

Making sure it is the most effective way of addressing the issues for which it is designed.

Recycling it

Ensuring that all of the materials can recycled (not downcycled) or biodegraded.

Many claim to be green at each stage, but this is often hard to establish, leading to "greenwash". Accreditation schemes such as "Cradle to Cradle" are vital.