



photo: © Tate, London 2004

The Stack

Tony Cragg
artist

'If you live on the land, you know an awful amount about the fabric and the texture of living on the land... Just because we live in a man produced environment why on earth shouldn't we avail ourselves of that depth of knowledge? That fine focus on the microcosm that the things in materials are? I find that part of the richness of living...'

SEEING THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

It's not every day that professional foresters, large retailers and timber companies sit down with indigenous forest dwellers, environmentalists and human rights activists to discuss the fate of forests and timber.

But in 1993 in Toronto, Canada, that is exactly what happened. All present stood to gain. Sustainable forest management is in everyone's interest, because well-managed forests provide livelihoods and resources far into the future.

Instead of depending on cut-and-run, short-term operations, businesses can produce, manufacture and sell products on a sustainable and long-term basis. Local peoples can retain traditional lifestyles of living off the land; workers are well treated; and environmentalists rejoice that forests are given a chance.

Setting standards

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) – an internationally recognized body that sets standards for sustainable forestry – grew out of that meeting. FSC authorizes timber labelling from forests managed according to criteria encompassing human, environmental and economic needs. FSC's standards are not just concerned with the felling and replanting of trees; they extend to ensuring that labourers are treated with dignity and that foresters and timber companies can make profits at the same time as preserving natural resources. Sort of making sure that no one cuts off the bough they are sitting on!



FSC's check-and-tree logo only goes on goods that meet strict requirements at every step of production.

Customers can trace the origins of all its certified products from forest floor to shop shelf.

Global force

With partners from the IKEA furniture chain – now a company larger even than Microsoft – to the World Bank, FSC has grown from a tiny organization into a global force.

Major stores worldwide now stock more than 20,000 FSC-certified products from building timber to pencils, tables, doors, other furniture and even lavatory paper.

Dr Chris Elliott of WWF, the conservation organization, who

chaired that first meeting in Canada in 1993 explains: 'At that time there were no certified forests. Ten years on, nearly 50 million hectares – an area larger than Spain – in 62 countries are certified by independent bodies accredited by the FSC.'

Widespread results

The results are seen all over the world. While Amazonian youth craft hand-made instruments from FSC-certified wood, American students manage university arboretums according to FSC guidelines. South African plantations have adopted FSC models of social and ecological management, and Spanish towns are installing certified benches in public parks.

photo: Christian Stanel/UNEP/Topham

BAMBOO – NOT JUST FOR PANDAS

Across Africa, Asia and Latin America, bamboo – technically a woody grass – is a valued source of food and construction materials. In China, it's known as 'the friend of the people', in Viet Nam, as 'brother'.

Bamboo shoots, low in calories and rich in fibre, are great to eat either raw or cooked. Bamboo branches are made into paper and furniture. Nearly three-quarters of the people of Bangladesh live in houses made from it. Skyscrapers in Tokyo and Hong Kong are built and repaired using bamboo scaffolding. And,



photo: Tino Tran/www.bearsuitworld.com/vietnam

in Java, Indonesia, musicians fashion percussion, wind and stringed instruments out of it.

Bamboo is prized not just for its strength but for its rapid regeneration: while it takes 60 years to replace an 18-metre tree after it is cut down, a bamboo

of the same size grows back in only 59 days. Branches can be removed ready to use without slowing this growth. It is no surprise that bamboo is becoming popular around the world as a natural alternative to wood and other expensive, or rapidly depleting, materials.

TUNZA answers YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: I believe in reducing my personal consumption of valuable resources, but I don't see how I can make much of a difference by myself. What is the point, if most people carry on as normal?

CÉCILE BORDIER, FRANCE

A: You have already taken the first step – being aware of the need to reduce your consumption. The next step is to use this awareness in your daily life. If you follow it through with action then people will see the difference you are making in your community, and by setting such an example, you will inspire those around you to change.

Q: What are governments doing now to address the problem of resource inequality? Does the United Nations have a programme in place to help coordinate their efforts?

JEN SCHOFIELD, UK

A: Resource inequality is linked to access to food, water and clean air. Unfortunately, half the world lacks access to such basic necessities. To address this the United Nations, in partnership with other organizations, is mobilizing a global campaign to fight and reduce the level of poverty, improve lives, ensure sustainable development and create a better world by the year 2015.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Q: Even if I turn off lights and taps when I'm not using them, how does that help someone living half a world away? How can the energy being saved benefit them? ORSZI IHÁSZ, HUNGARY

A: It may sound rather presumptuous to assume that the action of one person can affect the state of the global environment. But the action you take at home will have an impact in your immediate environment. If enough of us do our part, even in small ways, we can have a significant effect. The message is simple: 'Think global, act local!'

Q: There are so many environmental groups out there, advocating so many different issues, that it can be very confusing knowing where to start! Which of the problems currently facing our planet should be our top priority?

JINDRICH VODICKA, CZECH REPUBLIC

A: The problems affecting our planet are not tied to one single issue or priority – many interconnected factors contribute to the deterioration of our environment. So it is good to have different organizations with diverse approaches working on environmental issues. In terms of priorities, the first thing to do is look around you and identify for yourself the environmental issue that is affecting your own community the most. Then get involved and do what you can to address it in a way that is relevant to local needs.

Q: Surely people in developing countries need to consume more? What have you got to say to them?

PIERRE JEANMOUGIN, FRANCE

A: If we are to solve the inequalities in the world, increasing overall consumption is not the solution. It is more to do with the fair and appropriate use of available resources to meet basic needs and improve the quality of life. Increased consumption does not necessarily lead to greater happiness or health. For example, more cars on the roads will cause more air pollution, noise and accidents – and make us less fit. What is important is to be aware of what to consume and how.

Q: What can I do in my daily life to help conserve resources? How can I get my family and friends involved as well?

NISRINE KADERBHAY, INDIA

A: We all have to make lifestyle choices and changes. We need to look for changes we can make to reduce the use of resources and look after the environment. Many people say today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but today also belongs to you. You don't have to wait to care for the earth. If you show a sense of good leadership and stewardship in caring for the environment, then your family and friends will follow you.



Do you have questions on environment and development issues that you would like the experts at UNEP to answer?

Please send them to cpiinfo@unep.org, and we will try to answer them in future issues.

Only one planet

**'Save for a rainy day'
goes the old adage.
Yet humanity has done
the opposite, spending
the world's natural
capital faster than it
can replenish itself. We
are digging ourselves
deeper and deeper into
ecological debt.**

Fish and forestry stocks are not infinite. Neither are fossil fuels, arable land or freshwater sources. Of the world's major fishing grounds, 47 per cent are fully fished, 15 per cent are overexploited and 10 per cent are already depleted. Each year, the earth loses fertile land roughly the size of Ireland - eroded through overuse and deforestation. The crisis is rapidly increasing. World population is projected to reach 9 billion by 2050, and the demands

of the affluent minority are growing: the richest 1 per cent of the world's population already consumes as many resources as the poorest 44 per cent.

Treading lightly on the earth has never been more critical. Using the ecological footprint, a modern environmental indicator, we can calculate our natural resource consumption and compare it against the earth's ability to renew itself.

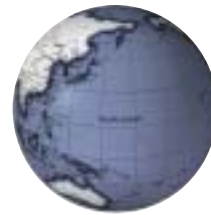
The sum of our individual footprints determines our global ecological footprint, or humankind's total consumption and waste discharge. The latest reports suggest that we are consuming 20 per cent more resources than our planet can provide. At this rate, we will deplete existing stores long before the earth can replace them - and we may run out completely in the next 50 years.

Some see scientific advances in energy and agriculture as the answer. The Green Revolution, which began in Mexico in 1944, dramatically increased crop yields and helped global grain production per hectare to double between 1950 and 1990.

But it often made poverty (and thus hunger) worse, benefiting rich farmers most and driving poorer ones off the land - while the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides caused environmental damage. But other innovations can really help like those, for example, that exploit renewable energy sources, increase the efficiency with which we use energy and water, and conserve the soil.

There is a dilemma. The poor must move out of poverty. But if all the world's people lived as the richest do today, driving cars, flying frequently and living in air-conditioned homes, we would need the equivalent of 5.1 planets to support ourselves. The only answer is to live sustainably, avoiding waste, and using resources more efficiently - living within the capacity of our one planet. Many studies suggest that people in developed countries, and the middle classes in developing ones, could reduce resource use tenfold without sacrificing living standards, making room for everyone to live decently.

You can measure your own ecological footprint by taking a quiz at www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp, and comparing it against national and global averages. There are many simple steps that everyone can take to help reverse current trends and return to 'One Planet Living'.



Shrink your shoe size!

Our ecological footprints are made up of the many decisions everyone makes each day about what and how to consume. One Planet Living doesn't mean giving up everything we enjoy - it simply involves treating the earth as though we intended to stay.

As individuals, we can:

- walk, cycle or take public transport whenever possible
- take a reusable cloth bag or basket when shopping
- eat fresh, locally produced foods
- take holidays closer to home to minimize plane travel
- turn off lights in empty rooms, turn down the thermostat and save energy.

To involve our communities, we can:

- talk to family and friends about sustainable living
- encourage local businesses to consider their effects on the environment
- ask our teachers to incorporate the footprint into the school curriculum
- register to vote and support eco-friendly policies and candidates.