

# Have more or...

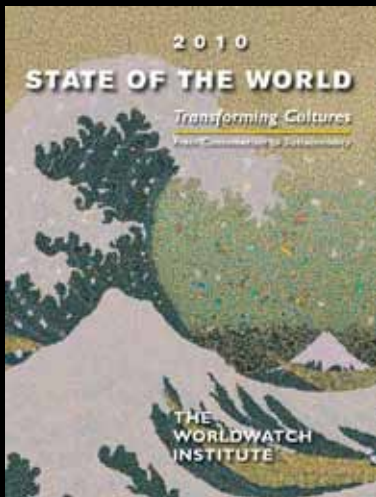


## live better ?

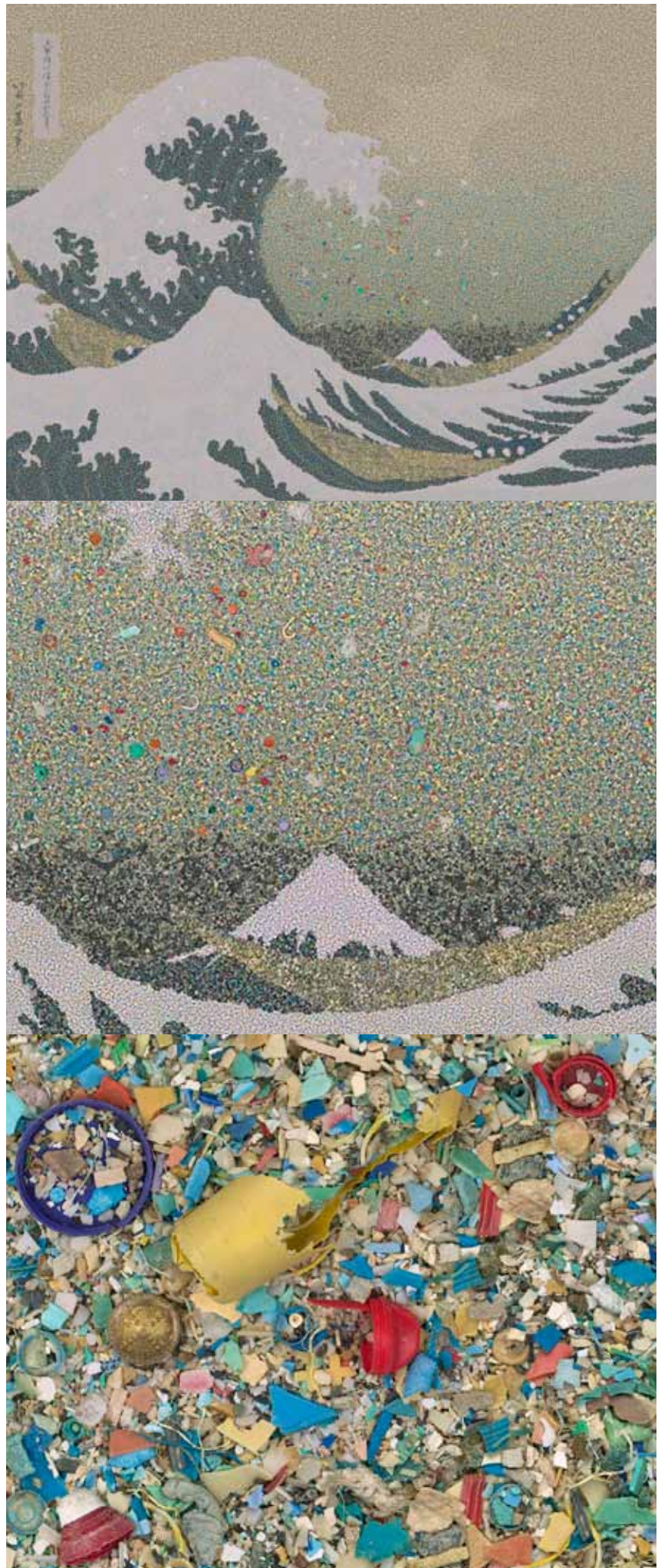
WE'RE NOT NERDS, WE'RE PIONEERS !



This journal is based on the book *The State of the World. Transforming Cultures. From Consumerism to Sustainability*. This is a report of the World Watch Institute about progress toward a sustainable society. The chapters of this book demonstrate that a change of such magnitude is possible if we reflect on our supposed necessities of modern life, from how businesses are run and what is taught in schools to how weddings are celebrated and how cities are organized.



The cover of *The State of the World 2010* is Chris Jordan's 8- by 11-foot reincarnation of the famous 1820s woodblock print, *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai. This work, *Gyre*, is made up of 2.4 million bits of plastic portraying the several million pounds of plastic that enter the world's oceans every hour.







**Beware!** You are in possession of some very dangerous material, a **subversive** document. ¿What does subversive mean? It means, capable of destroying the established order. Cool, right? You are invited on a trip through one of the greatest and most daring proposals for change imaginable: moving from a culture of **consumerism** to a culture of **sustainability**.

Why? Because when a culture doesn't allow the growth of its people, it is a dead culture and belongs in a museum, not in society.

Lets stop and think for a moment: what side effects does this culture of consumerism provoke? Doubt, stress, dissatisfaction, uncertainty, competitiveness, health problems, injustice, helplessness, environmental crisis...

**stop the wagon!**

We can escape the downward spiral by pushing the cultural values **“restart”** button. Would you like to board the creative wagon in which thousands of people all over the world have already pushed “restart”? Do you want to be a **cultural pioneer?**

**Let's go...**

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Cover: picture of one of Edina Tokodi's green graffiti's made with moss. See: <http://antidepressivo.net/2012/03/29/moss-graffiti-graffiti-ecologico-utilizando-musgo-y-las-obras-de-edina-tokodi/>



# 1. Consumer culture...

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO THE MATRIX

Have you seen The Matrix? Well, now we are going to do a little simulation of what happens in the movie.

If you take the red pill, you will see the world how they want you to see it: Western society as a wonderful place where anyone can become whatever they want and can have whatever they need, as long as they try hard enough. If you attend college, you will get a good job that will allow you to earn lots of money and buy whatever you want. You will be happy because you will have a gigantic plasma television and a bigger car than your neighbor.... And, you will be able to buy organic products and in this way contribute to maintaining our planet green and healthy.

If you take the blue pill, you will see another reality. People and their needs are not as important as markets and profits. No matter how much you study, the possibility remains that you may not find work, or, that the work you do find is not well paid; even so, you will feel the necessity to consume and consume because this is what the whole world does and TV and advertisements continuously promote this. You won't be able to buy everything you want and this will lead to dissatisfaction, anger and helplessness. Moreover, what you are able to buy won't satisfy you but only for a moment, because if it did satisfy you completely, you would quit consuming and the markets would lose profits.

### CONSUMPTION VS. CONSUMERISM

“¿What are you saying, that consumption is bad?” Well, no. Consumption is natural. All living beings must consume in order to survive. What is not natural is consumerism, which is the current tendency that leads people to search for meaning in life and acceptance by others, principally through consumption.



**Culture is the sum of all the social processes that make things artificial or manufactured by humans seem natural.**



Consumerism has taken root in our culture over the past fifty years. It is not natural, but rather a human invention. This is a phenomenon that has been brewing over the past few centuries, thanks to the persistent efforts of merchants and traders who have promoted cultural change by means of various tricks, such as new types of propaganda like the so-called “hook” products, consumer research and the promoting of fashion. During the second half of the last century, many innovations including the television, sophisticated advertisement techniques, multi-national corporations and the Internet, have implanted consumerism all over the planet. Now it is necessary to make a great effort, in the opposite direction, to banish it from our culture.



# in the spotlight



**Because of all the dissatisfaction, exploitation and health problems that it causes:**

- ☛ Studies show that more consumption does not necessarily translate to a better individual quality of life.
- ☛ An elevated level of consumerism causes negative side effects such as increased work-related stress, debt, increased susceptibility to illness and risk of death.
- ☛ Currently, there are 1.6 billion people in the world who suffer weight problems and obesity.
- ☛ Close relationships, a meaningful life and good health are the most important elements that contribute to individual welfare.



If everyone in the world consumed as much as the average person in the USA, we would need 5 planet Earth's in order to support the current world population.



Counter-publicity campaign by Ecologistas en acción (ecologists in action) i Consumehastamorir.com (consumption to death.com)

## WHY END CONSUMERISM?

**Because it is leading to ecological collapse:**

- ☛ Human society is growing faster than the capacity of nature to support us. As a consequence, we are degrading the environment at such a rate that we can no longer be sure that the earth's ecosystems will be able to support future generations.
- ☛ World consumption of resources has increased 50 percent over the past 30 years.
- ☛ Climatic change and its grave consequences are also strongly related to this consumerist lifestyle.



Heap of appliances. © Josef Lehmkuhl

## WHAT DO WE REALLY NEED?

In the 1970's the Japanese considered the electric fan, the washing machine and the rice cooker basic necessities for a satisfactory level of comfort in life. After a while, they added to the list of "basic" items, the automobile, air conditioning and color TV.

During the French Revolution, Parisians asked for candles, coffee, soap and sugar as "necessities", when only 100 years prior, apart from candles, all these items were considered a luxury.

In the United States, in 2006, 83% of the population considered the dryer a necessity.





"Before it's too late" Campaign by WWF to stop desertification

Before it's too late. wwf.org



## If we want humans to prosper

as a species in the future, a radical change is necessary throughout the various facets of society (like social movements, means of communication, governments, educational institutions and religious communities) and among its cultures. Institutions must work towards sustainability and equality. In other words, voluntary change towards a cultural model in which norms, symbols, values and traditions:

- **Encourage** a level of consumption JUST ENOUGH to satisfy human well-being (all of us, not just a few)
- **Abandon** the belief that nature is a store of resources destined to exploitation by humans (Humans are not separate from nature, we are part of it!!)
- **Reincorporate** the perception that natural resources are FINITE and that we must respect their limits.

## Sure, but how?

In short, we must achieve that living sustainably tomorrow comes just as natural to us as consumerism does today.

If changing a global culture seems like a job of enormous proportions or even perhaps impossible, know that there are more and more CULTURAL PIONEERS that are convincing many people that the natural world must be saved, that everyone has the right to live a dignified life and that it should be guaranteed that future generations can live as well or better that we do currently.

Business workers, professors, religious leaders, publicists, lawyers, musicians, homemakers (in all case both men and women) can make cultural changes that contribute to sustainability. This change has already begun. In an era of global limits, a new generation is growing up. The YOUTH are a potent cultural force and a good indicator of the direction that culture is taking.







Some participants of the International Conference of Young People to care for the planet (CONFINT). More information: [http://www.xesc.cat/xesc/confint\\_2011\\_12.html](http://www.xesc.cat/xesc/confint_2011_12.html)

Changing cultural systems is a long process that takes not just years, but decades. It is good to be aware of it, but we shouldn't be discouraged if we don't see immediate results.



Although pioneers of sustainability are still relatively small in number, their voices are becoming heard more and more often. The good thing is that the process has already begun (as you will see in the pages to come). Pioneers inspire the people around them. If you pay attention, surely you will find one or two nearby. They can inspire you. **You too can become a cultural pioneer and inspire those around you, making change contagious.**

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” (Margaret Mead, pioneer anthropologist, 1901-1978)

# 2. Innovative...



## RENEW OR DIE...

Easter Island, photo: <http://visions-of-earth.com/2010/12/23/satellite-image-of-easter-island-chile/>

Although often we are not aware of it, many decisions that we make in our lives are driven by traditions, whether religious, ritual or learned from grandparents and other family members. We can take advantage of these traditions, redirecting them to reinforce sustainable ways of living.

Or not. If not, just ask the Rapanui of Easter Island. The population of the island was growing and so they cleared the forests to make room for agriculture and used the wood to build boats and maois (giant ritual statues); however, the immense pressure of the increased population on the island led to the collapse of the Rapanui society and the destruction of their natural environment. The population declined drastically until only a small number of persons remained that the island could support with its damaged ecosystems.

Currently we are 7 billion people in the world and it is calculated that by the year 2050 we will be 3 billion more. The ecological ecosystems on which humanity depends will be put under immense pressure.



The Tikopians figured out how to reinvent themselves and overcame the ecological crisis that confronted them.



Tikopia Island, Solomon Islands archipelago. Photo from: [http://www.satelliteeye.dk/weeklyimages/week51/week51\\_2006\\_2\\_uk.htm](http://www.satelliteeye.dk/weeklyimages/week51/week51_2006_2_uk.htm)



© David Martin and Eric Matson. <http://www.tallshipstales.de/Restoring-Tikopia-lagoon.php>

On the other hand, the Tikopians, who live on a small island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean, have been more realistic. When they saw the dangers that confronted them as pressure on their ecosystems increased, they introduced drastic changes in the social roles related to family planning and even in nutrition. For example, they quit raising pigs because it required intensive use of resources. Because of such changes, their population stabilized and today they continue to be a prospering society.



# traditions?

Various recent initiatives are being converted in customs that are celebrated in many countries at the same time. For example, “World Car Free Day”, “Ride Your Bike to Work Day”, “Buy Nothing Day” or “Earth Hour” (which consists of turning off the lights during a specific hour).



European Mobility Week. <http://www.mobilityweek.eu>



The most expensive wedding cake in the world, worth 1.65 million dollars, is covered in diamonds and sapphires. From: <http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-most-expensive-desserts.php/>

## CUSTOMS, RITUALS AND TABOOS

If you look closely, you will notice that rituals and taboos surround us. The rituals, let's not be mistaken, are not just religious. By ritual, we mean an act that is repeated with regularity and has profound meaning for the community (for example, Muslim Halal food and Jewish Kosher products, the fact that a soccer team sings the national anthem with their hand on the heart).

In cultures of consumption, rituals often assist in disseminating the values of consumerism. For example, think about weddings, Christmas, Valentine's Day and even funerals. Do you know how much money people spend on ceremonies and gifts? An unthinkable sum. We should ask ourselves whether we don't have other authentic ways of demonstrating profound feelings like sadness and love. Many people have already done this. You too can be creative in these and other celebrations in order to escape consumerism. **POWER TO THE IMAGINATION!**

And taboos? What are they? A taboo is an unwritten cultural prohibition regarding specific actions or products (for example pork for Muslims or the fact that in some countries men kiss each other as a greeting). Diverse taboos contribute to the conservation of the environment and sustainability. For example, the Pingo of Ghana don't hunt turtles; they protect them because they are considered gods. **Can you imagine how things could change if superfluous consumption became taboo?**



### A little bit of divine help

Did you know that 86% of the people that inhabit this planet say that they belong to a religion? The religious organizations that cultivate many of humanity's deepest beliefs can be of great help in promoting sustainability and distancing us from consumerism.

Do you belong to a religious community? If so, you could talk to your spiritual leader or fellow community members and try to make them aware of:

- © The importance of distancing ourselves from materialism and seeking meaning in other aspects of life such as simplicity, altruism and relationships with the people we love.
- © How to make the activities and facilities within our communities greener.

If you don't belong to a religious community, you can do exactly the same thing by talking with your friends, family and neighbors.

**Today we need more than ever for the religions of the world to help people rediscover the idea (that comes from thousands of years ago and is present in the wisdom and writings of all religions) that a higher level of satisfaction can be achieved via personal relationships than with material possessions and that simplicity rather than the accumulation of stuff, can lead to a more meaningful life.**



# How we have children

Have you ever thought about whether or not you will have children, when and how? Have you ever stopped to think about what and who influenced you at the time of making this important decision? Do you have all of the information you need? Do you have access to birth control methods? In short, do you have the freedom to decide?

Many people do not have the information or the freedom to consciously make these decisions. This fact, apart from being unjust, is precisely the root of a large part of the world's over-population problem. We know that the human population is too large for the resources that we have available on this planet, and moreover, it continues to grow. Is it possible to make the world population stop growing or even decline?

The answer is yes, and the key is entirely deliberate motherhood. That is, it is necessary to make an impact on the influence of families, religious teachings and social pressures to allow women to control their own bodies and their fertility and ensure that they have the same opportunities as men, both in terms of access to education and employment. How? Through education, the media and the work of politicians.



One of the Infobus's that have been in circulation between schools in the region of Essonne (France) since 2002.



Approximately 2 out of every 5 pregnancies are neither planned nor desired by the women who have become pregnant.



Women in Japan and Austria have an average of 1.4 children while women in Afghanistan and Uganda have on average more than 6 children.

In order to reduce fertility, access to contraception and childhood education is fundamental. All countries that offer mothers and their partners contraceptive methods and access to abortion in good conditions, have a level of fertility sufficient to stop or reduce the growth of the population.

Relationship between education and fertility among women

Level of Education	Average Number of Children per Woman
Women who have not attended school	4,5
Women with primary education	3
Women who have finished at least one year of secondary education	1,9
Women who have completed 1-2 years of University studies	1,7

## The Elderly

"When an elder in Africa dies it's as if a whole library had burnt down." Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Malian philosopher.



Because of consumerism, its glorification to the young and the rejection of tradition that has spread around the globe, respect of elders, which has always existed within communities, is being lost. Also, their role as leaders of knowledge and engines of community norms is being lost.

Recognizing the power of the elderly and taking advantage of their knowledge can be an important tool in creating traditions that reinforce sustainability. Have you ever asked your grandparents or an elder how many cloths they had when they were your age? What they ate? How they bought food when plastic and carton containers didn't exist? Have they told you how much water they used in their houses and how?







Projects that involve the elderly, as many countries have experimented, can promote intergenerational learning (children, adolescents and adults at the same time) and contribute to the creation of positive and sustainable changes in nutrition, health and education while at the same time stopping the spread of consumerism.

Photo: Intergenerational Dialogue program session, developed by UNESCO center of Catalunya and the Obra Social de Caixa Catalunya.

# How do we produce our food?

Where did that apple that you ate today come from? What does it mean for a product to be “organic”? Do you know what “genetically modified” means? All these questions may seem trivial; however, they have implications not only for your health, but also for the health of the planet. Moreover, they are directly related to the justice or injustice of the world economic order.



Photo: Tractor spraying a field with pesticide. © PI77, Wikimedia Commons

**“Conventional” agricultural system**  
mechanization  
monoculture  
synthetic fertilizers  
chemical pesticides

**Sustainable agricultural system**  
diversity of species  
organic fertilizers  
natural pest control  
work for people

Before the middle of the twentieth century, the majority of crops were produced without using chemical products.



Combined cultivation of coffee and tomatoes. © Niel Palmer at Wikimedia Commons

Agriculture is an ancient tradition that has undergone drastic changes over recent generations. The dominant agricultural system that is used today in the world, called “conventional agriculture” is unsustainable because it destroys the natural resources upon which we depend (de-

pletes the soil, pollutes the air and water, requires immense quantities of water, is highly dependent on oil and contributes to climate change).

It is necessary (and possible, because many farmers are already doing it) to change the way that we produce our food. We know that it is

possible to do it sustainably, which means: increasing soil fertility (without using chemicals) by using the carbon already present in the atmosphere, which would in turn protect ecological services of the ecosystem without consuming as much water while creating jobs.

Moreover, food norms were mostly determined by culture. The consumerist model encourages us to eat in a way that is both unhealthy and unsustainable. Today 1.6 billion people are overweight or obese.



Sure, but I’m not a farmer! What can I do? Well, at least two things. First of all, **EDUCATE YOURSELF!** Before you buy a product, ask where it comes from. It is always better to buy fresh products, without packaging that are organic and locally produced. Avoid excessive consumption of meat (if we don’t eat it every day, our health and our planet will thank us!). And secondly, **PLANT A GARDEN!** Even in the city if possible. Have you heard of vertical gardens or balcony gardens?



The cattle that are raised to satisfy the increasing demand of meat, produces 18% of greenhouse gases.



# 3. TRANSFORM EDUCATION!

Do you know the song and video **ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL** by Pink Floyd? Surely some of us too have dreamed of being the students in the video clip, rebelling against a school that teaches us to be docile lambs without the ability to think critically and with only the minimal skills necessary in order to become another piece of the economic machine: the perfect worker and consumer. Lets change schools! Education is our biggest hope for moving from a culture of consumerism to a culture of sustainability.

If we want the change to happen that can move us away from consumerism, every aspect of education, from the cafeteria to the playground, from class work to the walk back home, needs to be oriented towards sustainability.

## PRIMARY EDUCATION

During childhood, many customs, values and preferences are learned. In this stage, school should help us acquire the courage, integrity, critical thinking skills and responsibility needed in order to face an unknown future.



Composting in the Farigola school, el Clot (Catalonia, Spain).

Children that are given the opportunity to overcome challenges, make mistakes and have fun while looking for solutions are more prepared to confront life and its complicated issues regarding sustainable development.

Education during the first stages of life, as well as fostering love and respect for the environment and creating consciousness regarding the problems that result from unsustainable lifestyles, should stimulate basic skills and perspectives that allow children to act with responsibility. Childhood education should be focused on seven **R's**:

**1=REDUCE**: This includes reduction in the consumption of food, materials and resources. Problem: Advertisement promotes unlimited consumption; so even the help of families is needed in order to learn how to be critical of advertisements.

**2=RE-USE**: We must demonstrate that different materials can be used many times for different objectives.

**3=RECYCLE**: We must separate organic materials for composting as well as garbage for recycling.

**4=RESPECT**: We must learn to love nature and try to alter its processes as little as possible.

**5=REFLECT**: It is a habit and technique that we must encourage so that education may allow us to be critical thinking individuals.

**6=REPAIR**: No more throwing away! We must return to the old ways of repairing items (cloths, shoes, toys, appliances...) and continue to use them as long as possible.

**7=RESPONSIBILITY**: From a young age we should be given chores and responsibilities that we can handle. No more overprotection or considering us useless!



Teaching by word is not as effective as teaching by example. From a young age we should be able to rely on models that we can follow (more than theories that we can learn). We need to be able to see "live" the values of sustainability in schools, at home, in the media etc. Families, therefore, have a very important role in sustainability.



There are already many examples that demonstrate that this is possible. Take a look around and you will see that there are many schools that incorporate these kinds of ideas.

For example, in Australia children work in mini-projects, like meals with fewer waste products, responsible cleaning, re-utilization and recycling of items, planting gardens, recording native plants, efficient use of resources or building a raft. The teacher plans the activities based on the interests of the children.



[http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental\\_management/waste/public\\_place\\_recycling/schools\\_project.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/waste/public_place_recycling/schools_project.html)



School garden at La Pau school in Sant Sadurní.  
Photo: <http://sadurnhortescolar.blogspot.com.es/>

## The commercial spirit in the lives of children

Do you know on average how many ads per day were broadcasted in Spain in 2011 According to the Zenith Index developed by Zenith-media? 22,6141!

Advertisement focused on children is a powerful vehicle for instilling capitalistic values. Companies are entirely conscious of this fact and therefore invest millions of dollars annually in this kind of advertising practice.

The message that the majority of advertisements transmit, regardless of the product for sale, is that

things make us happier. Instilling in children the idea that material goods are essential for personal fulfillment promotes the acquisition of materialist values. This is associated with a host of health and social problems among children today: depression, low self esteem, childhood obesity, eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia, violence among youth, etc.

One of the most disturbing consequences of corporate marketing is that toys and creative activities are in danger of extinction. Technological advances (cable televi-

sion, internet and mobile phones, for example) have increased the means by which marketing reaches children. Because of this, children are losing essential skills learned via toys and games, such as curiosity, reasoning, empathy, sharing, collaboration, a sense of competition and the belief that a person can influence the world.

We must rescue children from consumerism (and ourselves too!) by giving them free time to be creative without boundaries. We must not promote the values and desires of consumerism.



An international study carried out in 16 countries revealed that only 27% of children played imaginative games and that only 15% of parents considered play to be an essential factor in the health of their children.

According to the United Nations (1989 Convention), play, is recognized as a children's right because it is considered to be key to their development.

In the United States, children spend more hours in front of the TV than any other activity, besides sleeping: 40 hours a week outside of school.



In Quebec, Canada, Television advertisements directed toward children younger than thirteen are prohibited.





# REVOLUTION IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA!



Mobilization of the parents' association "Change the cafeteria" in Marseille, France. Photo by Christine Kristof. More information: <http://cantinemarseille.canalblog.com/>

If someone were to ask you why you eat what you eat and not something else, what would you say? If you've never stopped to think about it, you might not have an answer. In reality, our eating habits are the result of what we learn from our family and friends at home as well as at school.

It is very important that the values and attitudes related to healthy eating are present throughout the school environment: in the classroom, the cafeteria, the vending machines,

the playground, etc. This is crucial not only to create new generations of informed citizen-consumers, but also because it has great potential to transform the rest of the community (it may favor small farms, the local economy and even families).

For example, in Scotland many schools participate in a program that involves small, regional providers who supply them with fresh, quality, organic, local products. The schools invite the providers to explain how

they produce their foods. Also, parents participate in a series of demonstrations that propose "advice for healthy cooking". This program has reduced by 70% the distance that food must travel in order to reach the cafeteria and waste from food packaging has notably decreased. Not only have new opportunities been provided to local farmers, but also a new network has been created within the community and most importantly, the boys and girls enjoy their meals more!



One of the countries that can be considered a pioneer in the school food revolution is Scotland.



The most important ingredient for a sustainable school cafeteria: informed consumers who care about the origins of the food they eat.

If the food revolution expanded, the results in all the public sector could be spectacular: hospitals, retirement homes, schools, universities, jails, and government agencies...





Brigham Young University Campus, Utah, USA. Photo: [www.byu.edu](http://www.byu.edu)

# THE UNIVERSITY

Do you want to go to college? ¿Do you already know what you want to study? What is the purpose of the university and what should its purpose be? Clearly it should allow the young as well as the not so young to approach the global issues that are becoming ever more alarming and complex.

In the current situation of crisis, many young people think that it's not worth making an effort because no matter what they do, there is no future. In the anguish, desperation and nihilism that the dire news and grave economic and social problems generate among the youth, it is critical that education about sustainability becomes a practical exercise in hope. Colleges should teach the

techniques, aptitudes, analytic methods and creativity necessary to dream, direct and act in a way never before seen.

Fortunately this has already begun to be put into practice. More and more universities are offering specific programs in environmental science and more and more departments are adding to their undergraduate and graduate programs, a vision of sustainability (for example agricultural schools that teach sustainable practices, medical departments and ecological laborites, or business administration and management schools that actively incorporate concepts of sustainability).

Besides the curriculum, changing the design of campuses to be more efficient by reducing carbon emissions and waste, introducing recycling programs, and constructing high performance buildings, is also of high priority.



The Department of Economics at the University of Melbourne (Australia), known as "the spot", is the first building to be awarded 5 green stars by the Green Building Council of Australia. More information: <http://www.gbca.org.au/green-star/green-building-case-studies/>



The Loyola Marymount University in California has three Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certified buildings. See: [http://www.lmu.edu/sites/Community\\_home/green/The\\_Campus/Built\\_Environment.htm](http://www.lmu.edu/sites/Community_home/green/The_Campus/Built_Environment.htm)



Although there are already examples of innovative changes in universities, we still have a long way to go. We must reclaim our rights. We want to be the change in the world! (Not prolong the agony of a failing society.)



# 4.

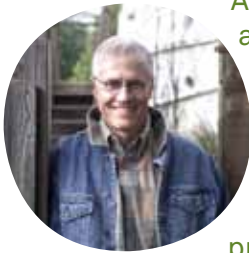
And businesses? Do they have a role to play in the paradigm of change that is currently taking place in the world?

Corporate activity is not only one of the basic components of the world economy; it is also one of the main drivers of society, culture and even the imagination. Although business currently dictates a cultural vision that revolves around consumerism, this vision could just as well be changed to center around new management priorities.

If we change these priorities by favoring companies that really work to improve the quality of life of people, the economy could avert catastrophe. It could be the beginning of a golden age of sustainability.

## The role of business in the global economy

Since 2005, the Port of Shanghai has had the largest traffic volume in the world  
Photo by reb42 at Creative Commons.



“At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product.” Paul

Hawken, entrepreneur and environmentalist



Growth vs. degrowth. Illustration by Colcanopa for the newspaper "Le Monde" (15/11/2009).



Brittany Jackson's vision of greed

What we really need is to offer a satisfactory life that requires less economic activity, raw materials, energy and labor.

## Change of direction

The main priority is to understand that continuous growth IS NOT possible because the ecological capacity of the Earth was surpassed over 20 years ago. We've already said this before, but to expect that as a rule, the economy should grow, is not even desirable because it doesn't make us live better.

When material consumption surpasses what is strictly necessary, general well-being is reduced, creating an insatiable desire to always have more. Does this mean that the goal is not economic growth, but rather economic decline? Well, the answer is neither yes, nor no. We shall see...

To begin, the central purpose of an economy should be to improve human well-being and quality of life, not the maximization of economic growth.

In order for this to be possible, in some parts of the world the economy can still grow (in less-developed countries). Still, however, such economic growth in and of itself is not the objective; rather, it is the means to reach the main goal: improving the welfare of the inhabitants of that country.

On the other hand, in order to reach the same goal, industrialized economies cannot continue growing. In order to free up resources for the functioning of the Earth and to allow developing countries to meet the needs of their populations, the economies of the most developed countries must shrink considerably. We must set new goals and rules and create tools and institutions that make this possible. Economic growth is NOT NECESSARY.



Who can take the lead in the no-growth initiative? Some experts say that Scandinavia, with its small population, good education, and wealth of resources, could be a leader in demonstrating the viability of a stable economy: less work hours, fewer consumer goods, more time for family and friends as well as to carry out civic duties and enjoy leisure activities.



Countries like Norway or Switzerland could be pioneers of an economy that does not seek growth, but rather the welfare of its population.

Many economists have been thinking this way for years. From the green economy to the economy for the common good, many models and practical proposals already exist; we only need to put them into use. Now is the time for people, not big money, to decide what kind of economy we want: one that allows only a few to have much or one that allows everyone to live better?



Hannah Dahl, MEP, votes in plenary session of the Parliament, 2009  
REUTERS

## SUSTAINABLE WORK SCHEDULES FOR ALL

Imagine that you work for a company. Thanks to improved processes that are more efficient and produce in less time, the company asks you to choose between working the same hours (produce more and earn a little more) or working less (to produce the same as before and earn the same, but have more free time) what would you choose?

In the transition towards sustainable economies and cultures, the population must adapt itself to new schedules and working patterns. The culture of long work days and constantly being busy, characteristic of many developed countries, should be substituted for more sustainable models in reference to the distribution of time. Although this change wears a price tag, a slower, more human rhythm of life carries with it social benefits for the collective as well as individual well being.

People who are short on time (who work too much) tend to adopt lifestyles that consume more resources: their journeys emit more carbon, they eat more often, they have bigger houses which therefore consume more energy; likewise, stress limits their participation in low impact activities that require more time, like planting vegetables, DIY activities (or being with their kids!)

An increase in income has a beneficial effect on people living in poverty, but upon reaching the middle class, additional welfare obtained is surprisingly limited.

Right now many people work too many hours, earn too much money and convert their earnings in an increase in consumption, even when many others remain unemployed. Dividing work hours better would not only remedy the unemployment problem, it would also provide many people with the necessary means to obtain a basic standard of living, allowing for more free time to enjoy life outside of the workplace.



<http://www.geo.fr/> © Fancy/Neer/Corbis



Long work hours are stressful, harm relationships with close ones and cause physical illness and emotional disorders.

## Changing corporate cultures from within

What can businesses do to change things? Businesses face the challenge of making a profound change within their organizational cultures: they must explore new world views and discard old, defective ones while promoting personal reflection and a new dialogue regarding the purpose and responsibility of corporate activity (What do we do? What is the purpose of what we do? What needs of the community does our activity support? Who does it help and whom does it endanger? What effect does it have on the environment?). They should propose



a daring perspective (one that leaves us speechless!) and make sustainability a defining element, central to all decisions: a strategic and exciting change that enhances the company from the ground up.

More and more businesses are turning to sustainability as a source of comparative advantage. Many, however, get stuck because they don't understand the challenge; they only see it as a set of technical problems to be resolved or they think that they can come up with an intelligent green marketing campaign.

On the other hand, companies willing to confront change at a deeper cultural level, embracing a new paradigm built on the values of sustainability, will reap the benefits of being the first while at the same time fostering the acceleration of fundamental social change.



Maybe companies can make green products even if they are not dedicated exclusively to this field?

In the social sphere, corporate and personal, understanding and adopting sustainable practices are not so much limited by technical innovations as by the inability of people to doubt old methods and exchange them for current ones.

## SOCIAL ENTERPRISES: INNOVATE TO BE SUSTAINABLE

Beyond the corporate system there is the opportunity to reinvent the purpose of business activity from the ground up. This activity should not consist solely of profit; rather, it should provide a means to fund a broader social mission. The so-called social enterprises are engaged in addressing urgent social problems, from poverty to environmental degradation, and they even make a profit.

Social entrepreneurship is the label designated to the initiatives that are actively working to solve social and environmental problems by providing a product or service that

directly or indirectly catalyzes social change. The social entrepreneurs utilize diverse organizational forms from cooperatives and social enterprises to nonprofit organizations or charities. They all have something in common: the innovative use and combination of resources to take advantage of opportunities to accelerate change.

One of the most powerful ways that social entrepreneurs can bring about change is by questioning the accepted way of doing things and demonstrating the validity of alternatives: an significant contribution to erode the status quo.



Artwork done with pills and expired condoms on exposition at the restaurant Cabbages and Condoms in Bangkok (Thailand) to promote health, safety and condom use in a fun and entertaining way while generating revenue for a Thai non-profit organization. Photo: <http://thepleasureproject.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/cc1.JPG>





Micro-finance information session. Photo: <http://microeconomia.org/guillermopereyra/>

Grameen Bank is a good example of an entrepreneurial pioneer: In the late 1970s it began offering loans to the poorest of the poor in rural Bangladesh without borrowers having to submit collateral to get loans.



In Bangladesh, in 2009, nearly 8 million people had received micro loans from the entrepreneur Grameen Bank. Ninety-seven percent were women



The founder of Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus wins Nobel Peace Prize, 2006

## Relocalizing Businesses

Why do we talk about the relocalization of businesses? Because of the process of economic globalization that we have experienced in recent decades, it is more likely that the products and services we consume have been produced in another part of the world, rather than close to home.

And why do we want companies to work locally rather than in other countries? This is a more sustainable model because, for example,

companies tend to use local materials and sell their products in local markets, their production methods and products require less transportation time, less consumption of energy and emit fewer pollutants including green house gasses. If the economy of a region were made up of local businesses, the authorities could enforce more rigorous environmental standards with the confidence that companies would adapt rather than flee to other locations

where environmental legislation is more permissive or where labor is cheaper.

Local business are beginning to emerge. The population is creating local alternatives, from supermarkets and restaurants to farms and renewable energy companies. In contrast to multinationals, these companies have better environmental performance, treat their employees better and offer healthier and more diverse products.



The Coldiretti Association, which unites close to 50% of farmers in Italy, has successfully initiated the "Km Zero, Campagna Amica" campaign. [http://www.gastroteca.cat/ca/noticies/fitxa-afons/quilometre\\_zero:\\_la\\_proximitat\\_en\\_valor/](http://www.gastroteca.cat/ca/noticies/fitxa-afons/quilometre_zero:_la_proximitat_en_valor/)

Despite the advantages of local business, they are met with formidable barriers, like the avalanche of billions of dollars in global advertisement viewed by consumers who often are unconscious of the important benefits of local goods and services.



Trademarks logo by Jacob Cass. <http://logodesignerblog.com/free-logo-copy-right-poster/>

The brand "Produkte Local" was created with the intention of supporting farming and fisheries in the Balearic Islands and maintaining their social and economic fabric. Photo: <http://cpsantbartomeu13.blogspot.com.es/2012/02/taller-de-productes-locales.html>



# 5.

## The Role of the Government



And what about governments? Clearly, governments also have a lot to say and do in order to contribute to the building of a sustainable society. Governments that establish laws, set social priorities and plan cities and towns where people live must firmly commit by taking action and implementing initiatives (not just giving speeches, as is often the case).

There are some things that governments can do to promote cultural change:

A meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Photo: Candice Imbert © Council of Europe



### ELIMINATE UNSUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOR

One of the functions that governments can exercise is the elimination of unsustainable choices. What does this mean? It means that governments can make consumption options unavailable that they know are detrimental to the environment and public health. For example, they can discourage use of certain products by applying high tax rates (so that people would choose not to use such products) or by funding sustainable alternatives.

Some examples of initiatives that are heading in this direction include: the ban on plastic bags in Rwanda, the phasing out of incandescent bulbs in Canada, high carbon taxes in Sweden and subsidies for solar energy in China.

These measures make people live more sustainably while requiring little effort. But we might ask ourselves: Who decides what I buy and what I don't buy? Shouldn't the consumer be free to decide?

Before you respond it is important to know that the consumer has never been able to freely decide. After the Second World War, a strategy to rebuild the economy based on mass consumption was introduced: options that required more energy and resources while generating more consumption were presented as logical and inevitable. Sustainable options were dismissed and became more and more difficult to find until eventually they ended up disappearing. So, why not use this same strategy

(the elimination of the unsustainable choice) in order to transform consumerism into a sustainable phenomenon.



The Australian government was the first to ban incandescent light bulbs in favor of low-power LEDs. If the whole world did this, the reduction in energy use would allow for the closing of 270 coal power plants.



The unsustainable growth of cultures was favored by the elimination of sustainable choices by the elite, which changed the range of options available to consumers, in favor of excessive and unsustainable consumption ...





# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY NATIONAL SECURITY?

What is it that makes people feel safe or unsafe? In what should the State invest in order to improve national security? Weapons? Renewable energy?

When governments talk about national security, they generally refer to armies and police forces. But that must change, because



now the biggest threats to national security are not foreign armies or terrorist attacks, but rather the poor condition our planet is in.

We must understand that national security depends mainly on economic, demographic and environmental factors (which armies cannot solve). When we talk about security we must discuss:



The use and abuse of non-renewable resources (like fossil fuels, metals and minerals). The extraction of these types of resources has led to serious human rights violations, corrupt government systems and even civil wars and rivalries among countries throughout history and even today

Photo: <http://www.protegeonslaterre.com/energie-fossile.html>



The use and abuse of renewable resources (like water, forests, farmland and fisheries). Disputes over distribution of resources can be further exacerbated by depletion, pollution, population growth and the impacts of climate change.

Soybean cultivation in the Amazon. <http://jadonceld.blogspot.com.es>



Unemployment. When large numbers of adults and young people have poor economic prospects and salaries are not sufficient to settle down and raise a family, discontent can translate into social unrest.

March against unemployment and social cutbacks in the Basque Country. Photo: <http://www.cgt-lkn.org/bizkaia/?m=201106>



Natural disasters, which are increasingly more frequent and devastating, can harm human security, aggravating poverty and deepening inequality, unrest and political crises.

A "tsunami" invades the Japanese city of Miyako, 11 March 2011. Photo: Mainichi Shimbun/Reuters



Population movements. More and more people worldwide are being forced off their land because of war, persecution, natural disasters, environmental degradation and economic problems. Refugees and immigrants can be seen as rivals in the struggle for land, water, jobs and social services, which can lead to episodes of social unrest and violence.

Ethiopian and Somali refugee camp in Al Kharaz, Yemen. Photo by Rocco Nuri on <http://blog.mondediplo.net/2010-12-20-Migrants-oublies-du-Yemen>

So, wouldn't it be better to take the 1.5 billion dollars a year destined to military spending and invest it in solving environmental and social problems? This change would better protect people than the biggest nuclear arsenal could, and also it would create new economic opportunities as well as opportunities to improve diplomatic relations between countries.

Pursuing policies that promote equality and/or prevent human rights violations is a smart way to invest in homeland security. By doing this, social conflict, crime and instability can be avoided.



# Cities of the future

Imagine a city that only uses renewable energy...where the majority of journeys are made by electric light rail, on bicycle or on foot...where a building powered by solar energy is full of green businesses, where local farmers sell their fresh organic produce in the local market ...where fathers and mothers meet in parks and gardens while their children play without fear because there are no cars in the street...Does this sound like a dream? Actually, this city really exists: its called Vauban and its located in Freiburg, Germany.



Vauban, Germany is a new eco-city with 5,000 inhabitants.

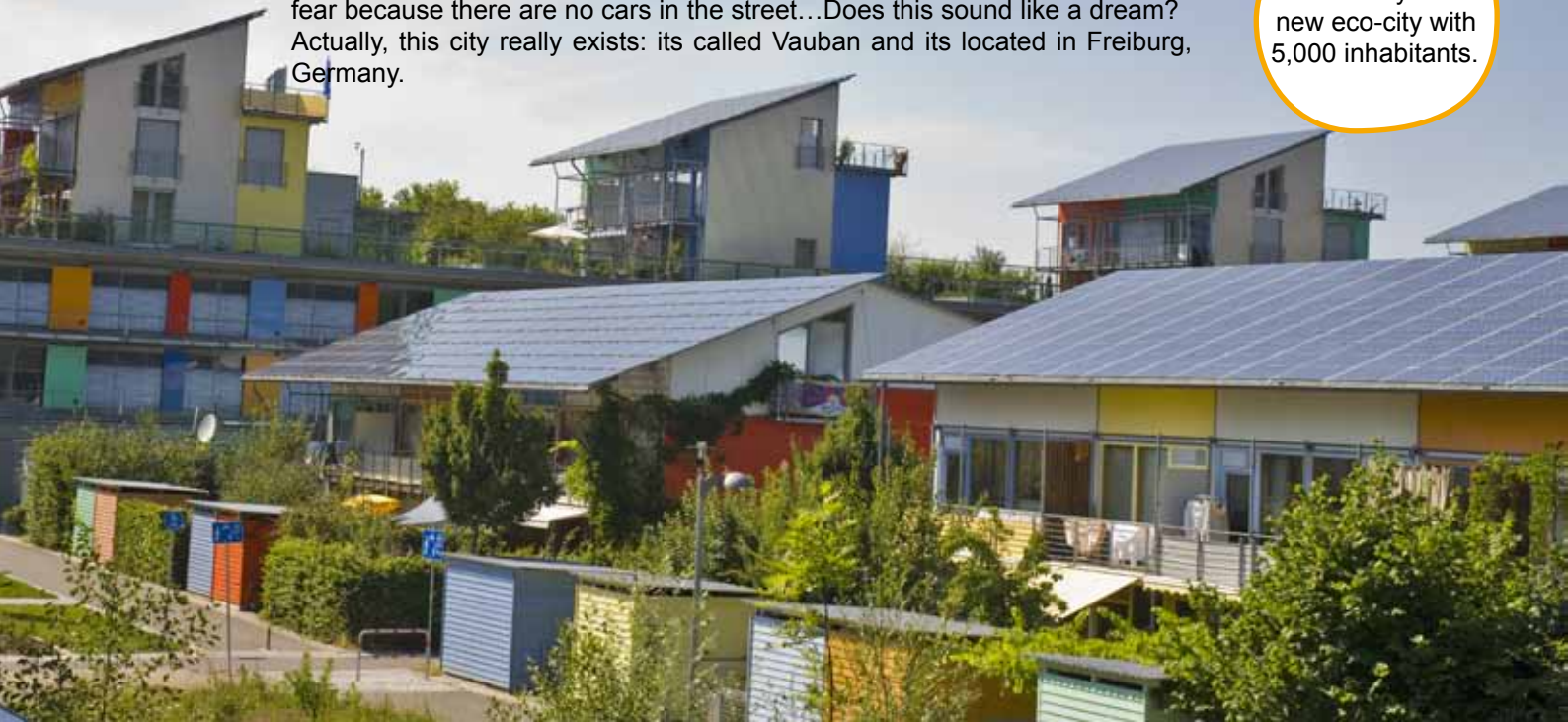


Photo: <http://www.iclei-europe.org>

If we want to improve things, cars should disappear from cities and instead, cities could produce a large part of the energy they need and even grow most of their food by taking advantage of parks and green spaces to install solar panels, wind farms and gardens.

It's possible! It's necessary! Let's redesign our neighborhoods so that it is easier to live sustainably. Let our cities and people leave smaller or zero ecological footprints!



Photo: <http://www.livingsmart.org.au>

Various government policies could help cities to take the road towards sustainability (from regulations, tax incentives, investment in innovation, research and development, proper planning, training of the population, etc.). Policies to discourage car use are the best example. Many countries are implementing pro-

grams such as this one. For example, in Perth, Australia, families that participate in the LivingSmart program are making instant, radical changes (like substituting inefficient light bulbs, installing solar panels, solar hot water systems and gray water recycling systems).



With the LivingSmart program in Perth, Australia, each family prevents the emission of 1.5 tons of carbon dioxide and saves up to 10% on gas, electricity, water and gasoline bills.



# Reinvent health care

You've heard the saying: Prevention is the cure. This is applicable to the whole health care system. The response to the health problems of society has been centered on alleviating symptoms and curing diseases. It is undeniable that advances in this regard have been crucial and that the discovery of antibiotics and antiseptic (disease prevention) have saved humanity from historically persistent diseases and have allowed for the notable increase in the life expectancy of individuals.

However, during the past sixty years new infections have emerged that are not caused by bacteria, viruses or other microorganisms, but rather by environmental pollution and life style factors like poor diet and lack of exercise.



©sdmania, freedigitalphotos.net

The two classic cures (surgery and drugs) do not solve the new problems of aging and lifestyle. These must be treated by means of prevention, that is, by making lifestyle changes from improving our diets and exercising to making an effort to decrease tobacco and alcohol intake.



©Grant Cochrane, freedigitalphotos.net

Most of the major factors that are contributing to global mortality can be avoided. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that child and maternal malnutrition cause an annual loss of 200 million "life years", followed by physical inactivity and obesity (150 million life years), unsafe sex (80 million years) and snuff (50 million years).

In the United States, if the epidemic of obesity continues, the children of today will be the first generation in the history of the country to not live as long as their parents.



In Cuba, rates of diabetes and obesity fell sharply after the U.S. imposed a trade embargo in the 1960s. The cause was limited access to both caloric, unhealthy foods and mechanized transport



Childhood obesity, one of the top 10 current health problems faced by youth. Photo: <http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-issues-facing-our-youth-today.php/childhood-obesity>



In many countries, obesity has become the "norm", leading to diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and arthritis.

Why aren't more resources dedicated to making an effort to change lifestyles in order to prevent people from getting sick? It may be because from a financial perspective, unlike the disease, prevention is not very profitable.

Social services play an important

role in disease prevention. Fortunately, in both developing and industrialized countries, new, more effective and efficient social programs are being implemented; like for example, programs such as social agriculture or "conditional cash transfer". In the final chapter of this magazine you will learn more about what these and other programs entail.

The global health budget should include a greater commitment to health education. In terms of health, it is also worth noting that illiteracy is the main factor of death worldwide.



# EARTH JURISPRUDENCE

Should the constitution of all countries recognize the rights of the Earth? Can the law help promote beneficial relationships between humans and the rest of nature?

Today, legal systems hardly integrate the rights of Earth systems. This is a basic cause of environmental destruction as the current legal systems are designed to perpetuate the human domination over nature, rather than promoting a mutually beneficial relationship.

But lawmakers are beginning to recognize that human welfare is the result of the well-being of the Earth systems that sustain us. Currently, one of the most fascinating recent developments in law is the rise in several continents of initiatives that foster a fundamental change in human legal systems. All these initiatives advocate an approach known as Earth jurisprudence. According to this

philosophy, human societies and progress will only be viable if they are regulated as part of a wider community of the earth and do so in a manner consistent with the law or with the fundamental principles governing the operation of the universe.



The new Constitution of Ecuador recognizes that nature has rights that the law should uphold. It situates well-being in harmony with nature (the good life or *sumak kawsay*) as the primary objective of society.



Yasuni National Park, declared Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1989. Photo: <http://ecuadorecuadoriano.blogspot.com.es/2011/08/parque-nacional-yasuni-ecuador.html>

Legal systems do not protect the community of the Earth, partly because they reflect the underlying belief that humans are superior and separated from the other members of the planet and that the basic function of the Earth is to provide natural resources for human consumption.





# 6.

# The Media

Have you ever stopped to wonder if the Media affects what you think, believe or desire? Truthfully, it is very likely that it has because the Media is a very effective tool for shaping cultures by influencing the behavior and ideals of individuals. The Media have been used to spread a consumerist cultural model. **What if we turn the tables?**

## Social Marketing

If sixty years ago experts in marketing could redirect mass values and behaviors in a relatively short period of time, why can't we do the same today? We could use their principles; but, rather than selling a product we could promote a new set of values, new sustainable lifestyles, major political changes, etc.

According to some experts, social marketing should be based on people and human stories rather than on facts and objective information. This is because it seems that what makes us change the way we are, our identity or our behavior, is not based on information (reasons and arguments) but rather on the influence of stories that affect us emotionally.

In recent years, this approach has been used in the field of public health by means of radio drama and soap operas with a success much higher than other forms of public health education.



In 2008, spending on advertising in the world exceeded 643,000 million. Today, only 1 dollar out of every 1,000 that is used for marketing is dedicated to the broadcast of commercials that promote the public good, and only a fraction of that dollar goes to issues of sustainability.



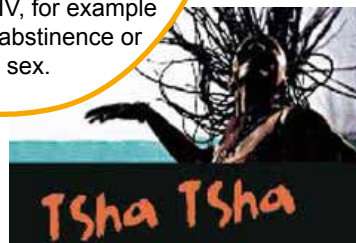
Mt. Vinson, Antarctica. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/350org>

The lesson of social marketing has not yet been properly implemented for the purpose of addressing the most pressing environmental issues. Currently, efforts are still only dedicated to providing data. We must go beyond the facts and information, and move to emotional appeal, because when it comes to action, people are not often governed by rational criteria.

Think about yourself. Is it not true that you have lots of information at your fingertips about the negative effects of climate change? Has this made you change your behavior in any way? Perhaps, but in most cases it has not.

However, let's look at a popular initiative like 350.org through which a few people began to organize creative actions (skiers skiing down a glacier in the process of melting, divers participating in underwater demonstrations...). In addition to persuading some political leaders of their message (reduce carbon emissions by 80% before 2050), this idea has inspired thousands of people around

In South Africa, the series Tsha-Tsha has attracted 1.8 million viewers. Those who watched the program took more precautions to avoid contracting HIV, for example by choosing abstinence or safe sex.



In Tanzania, 40 percent of new users of family planning services at public clinics came because they had learned about it on the radio show "Twenda na Wakata".

the world to unite and commit to act against climate change.

Through the website 350.org, the team has expanded to include young people from all around the world. On October 24th, 2009, they led more than 5200 actions in 181 countries. According to the TV channel CNN, "it was the greatest day of political action in the history of humanity".

The advantage that we have now with respect to the 1950's when television was still a novelty and only a few players dominated the audiovisual landscape is that we have entered the era of social networking. It is an era where connectivity is growing exponentially; a time characterized by the free flow of information with dramatically low distribution costs. If we combine the key marketing lessons of the past with the opportunities of the current media revolution, we have the potential to provoke immense change and push the world toward a sustainable future.



# Media Literacy

Are you already immunized against the false promises implied by advertisements? Do you know how to read between the lines of the hidden messages that tempt us with their perfectly choreographed, airbrushed images? Do you see where they want to trick us and how they do it?

Consumers generally are not conscious of the fact that images have been digitally re-touched; they don't tend to stop and think why it's so difficult to make reality all the emotional gratifications promised to us by ads in the consumerism industry. Immunization against the persuasion methods of the advertising industry is an important step on the path towards sustainable cultural practices. It is essential to see television, magazines, movies, and the Internet with a critical



Counter-publicity by consumehastamorir.com (Consumption to death) and Ecologists in Action.

eye, as an uncontrolled, audiovisual landscape that is dominated by the advertising industry. This is what is called, media literacy.

Images have immense power of persuasion, more so than words. If an ad were to say, "those who drink Coke are thin, popular and always happy", it would not seem very credible. However, an ad where a group of gorgeous young people are drinking coke and having a great time produces a much greater impact on society because it creates a feeling of group

identity and belonging. Our subconscious captures the messages: "I want to be like them, I need to drink Coke!"

Not only is it important to be critical of the advertising industry, but also of the news. At first glance it appears to be objective, but really it has enormous power of manipulation. Let's take for example a program televised in 2006 by WTOK-11 in Mississippi) in which two "leading" scientists, a meteorologist and an oceanographer affirm that the connection between the recent hurricane season and climate change was "just talk"; what they don't say is that the program was funded by the oil company Exxon Mobil. Few viewers would recognize that the program contained no scientific argument but rather was designed to serve the political and economic interests of the oil lobbyists who wrote and financed it. Beware of the economic interests that may be behind the news!



Counter-publicity by consumehastamorir.com (Consumption to death) and Ecologists in Action.

All around the world a dynamic movement in favor of audiovisual literacy is developing. It includes community activists, professionals, Media reformers and educators.



Two images of the photomontage showing the process of makeup and retouching with Photoshop used in ads. "Dove campaign for real beauty" for the Dove Self-Esteem Fund. : <http://youtu.be/qhib8XiDc9Y>

Why not take it a step further? More than just being critical and not swallowing the hundreds of hooks that the Media constantly throw at us...as the audiovisual teacher Deedee Halleck says "Do not watch the TV. Make it! »

If we understand that the media are the means by which people communicate, sharing knowledge and creativity with a global public, then everyone can be a means of communication! Use your camera or make a presentation. Take advantage of

YouTube and the viral power of social networks. Each one of us can promote messages, human stories, and imaginative counter-narratives that can serve as powerful antidotes to consumerism in order to take the path towards sustainability.



# Music for Change

Music is very powerful because it excites us; because of this, music has great capacity to promote social participation. Historically, the communicative power of music has created connections and helped unite people around an identity and a common goal. Music is still used as a way to connect the values, heritage and cultural preferences of a population in order to produce behavioral change.

In today's era characterized by the digital

media, there are increasingly more opportunities to record, share and use music to mobilize change. Technology has made access to music easier and this has permitted independent artists to publish their work on the Internet so that fans can share archives and lyrics and gather in virtual communities using social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Music can also play an important role in promoting sustainability through education and entertainment.

Already during the 1980s, musicians had begun to call attention to humanitarian causes by organizing huge shows with lots of publicity. Most recently, the Internet has allowed for such concerts to have a more international reach. In 2007 for example, the Live Earth concert series ran for 24 hours in all continents. Among the artists involved were Madonna, The Police and Snoop Dogg. Since then, Live Earth has become a "annual campaign to drive individuals, corporations and governments to take action to solve the climate crisis."

Another way to educate people is by changing how these large tours are ran, as they can be extremely resource intensive and emit high levels of greenhouse gases. Increasingly, major festivals are trying to minimize their impact on the environment by reducing carbon emissions and waste.



Poster of the 2007 concert . <http://inhabitat.com/live-earth-today/>



In Japan, the children's program Ecogainder has been a success. It is about a group of environmental superheroes that have reinforced their message with a catchy song.

The Glastonbury Festival (England) encourages the use of public transport, planting hedges, waste reduction, and the use of tractors that run on biodiesel and solar power in their events.



Photo: <http://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk>

Although music can be a powerful mobilizing tool, its power resides in the people who create, promote and use an active movement for sustainability. As noted by the Steve Howard, the founder of the campaign Together, "when the music ends, we all have to start acting."



# 7. The Power of Social Movements

If a force exists that is capable of peacefully changing history, it is that of social movements. From the abolition of slavery to women's suffrage and the liberation of colonies, social movements have changed history from the ground up and have stimulated cultural evolution.

It is the people that make the world how it is; there-

fore, we can change it. We can organize and harness the power of social movements to develop the values and behaviors of society. We must be the leaders of this change. In fact, there are already many examples of social movements that are involved in implementing the rejection of consumerism and are committed to sustainability. Let's look at a few:

Demonstration in Plaza Tahir, Cairo, Egypt. The popular revolts of the "Arab Spring" have moved the foundations of diverse authoritarian regimes in North Africa during recent years. Photo: <http://elkioscoblogger.wordpress.com/2011/12/27/recuento-2011-la-primavera-arabe/>

It's important that we realize what is truly important, what "living well" means and ask ourselves what is really the root of happiness.



## LESS IS MORE

What is really important to you in life? What do you think makes you happy? What things are worth the effort? Many people doubt that the most important thing in life, as we are led to believe, is either money or material possessions. In fact, it is proven that there comes a point when more money does not make people happier.

Obviously people need a certain level of income, but the desire to have more makes it so we don't value the important things, like friendship, family and community.

Many people now opt for a different approach; one which leads them to live more simply and more fully at the same time; more leisurely and more intense, more communal and less material. Have you heard of voluntary simplicity?

Voluntary simplicity is an old philosophy that

defends separating ourselves from possessions and greed in order to live a more meaningful existence. It advocates limiting outside wealth for inner richness. Today, voluntary simplicity is a living movement that supports sustainability and happiness in a post-consumerist society.

At the practical level, voluntary simplicity equates consuming less. This helps the people who practice it feel more fulfilled because they have more time to spend in nature and are more satisfied, secure and balanced. In other words, they rid themselves of the superfluous in order to have more time for what really matters.

The voluntary simplicity movement encourages a lifestyle based on relationships, love and the common good. Overcoming the hyper-individualism that consumerism has imposed and which has seriously damaged society, the climate and our private lives, is considered imperative. That's why voluntary simplicity proclaims that strengthening the feeling of community is essential. For example "building community" (as in, strengthening the ties between those who live there), not only empowers the collective and allows us to work together to reach common goals, but also these relationships make us live better by providing us with confidence, friendship and entertainment (or would you prefer to just be alone watching TV?)

Having affectionate relationships is what makes us happy. That's why more than anything, voluntary simplicity means increased security, tranquility, happiness and joy.



Across the world, practices that challenge consumerism and create post-consumerist cultures are developing. The following are a few examples:



The Slow Food movement began in 1986 as a reaction against the opening of a McDonalds in a square in Rome. This fast food restaurant became the physical representation of the aggression against a culture of healthy, sustainable, local food. Since then, Slow Food has become a worldwide movement present in 132 countries with more than 100,000 members. They work to promote "good, clean, fair food" and transform cultures through food.

After Slow Food, new applications began to surface in other areas like sex, health, work, education and leisure, all of which ended up incorporating concepts of the Slow movement.

The culminating expression of the influence of Slow Food, which began in Italy with the goal of combating the frenetic rhythm of life, was exemplified by the so-called Slow Cities (Cittaslow). It has now turned

into an extensive international network. The municipalities that are part of it promise to fight against homogenization, creating spaces that allow slower-paced development. For example, they prefer that people meet in squares and other public places (passing the time playing, chatting, etc); they promote locally produced food and small artisan businesses as well as less use of cars.



The influence of the Slow Food movement has been more notable in Europe than in any other part of the world, although it has extended all over the globe. Slow is possible!

The "transition towns" movement is another related initiative with a different focus. Transition towns are communities that are created intentionally to be socially and economically

resistant to the increasing severity of problems such as scarcity of resources and climate change.

These communities focus on improving the quality of life of its inhabitants while living more sustainably; for example, by reducing petroleum use. How do they do it? By not driving? Well, not just that. Did you know that almost everything we buy requires the use of petroleum products, every aspect from their manufacture to transportation to merchandising? So, there are tons of ways to reduce consumption. In transition towns, for example, neighbors collaborate to buy local products and food; they motivate each other to take part in projects like local currencies, tool exchanges, shared cars, community gardens and agricultural markets. All these projects require the collaboration and cooperation of others, replacing competition and consumer culture.



Demonstration in Barcelona, "Our food or their benefits" (15/10/2011) © hortdignebcn.



Installation of photovoltaic panels in Totnes. Photo: <http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org>

Totnes (England) is one of the most well know transition towns, but there are others in the United Kingdom, Australia, United States, Japan and Chile among other countries.



A purchase is made with local currency in the local market in Totnes. Photo: <http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org>



# ECO VILLAGES

Another similar concept is that of eco villages. Eco villages are like a laboratory for research, education and demonstration that quality of life can be maintained and even improved by a significant reduction in material production and consumption.

There are two types of eco villages. In industrialized countries, they are communities that have been intentionally created based on concrete values and objectives of sustainability. In developing countries, they are towns that have always been sustainable and wish to maintain their traditional values and distinct cultural traits while regaining control over their economic futures in the face of economic globalization. Together, both types form the Global Ecovillage Network.

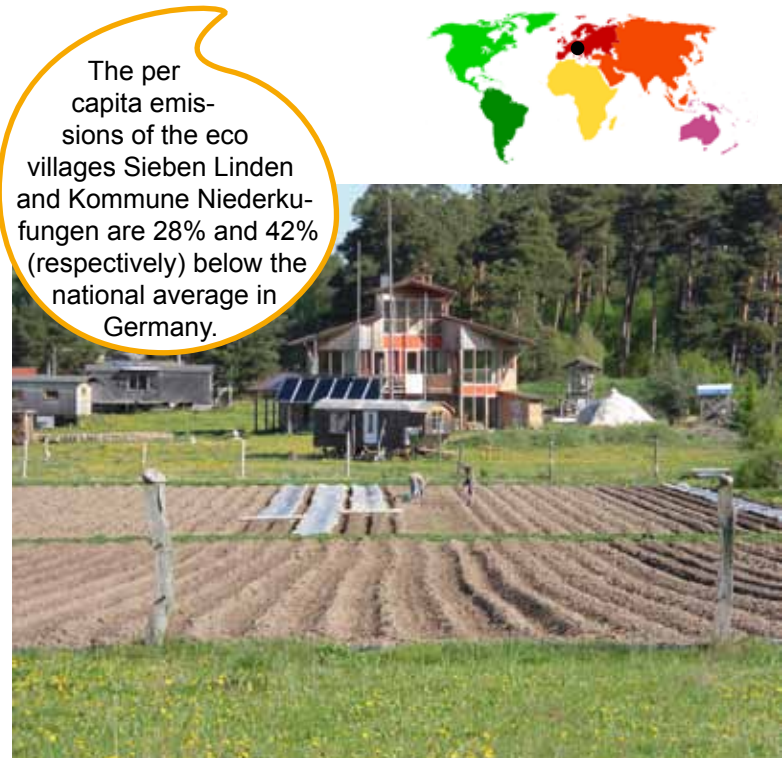
Eco villages understand that the accumulation of material goods does not have anything to do with individual well being. In an eco village, nobody tries to raise their income. In these communities everything is planned and designed with the goal of reducing energy usage and material consumption.

In an eco village, rent is low; however, the quality of life tends to be high...without a doubt much higher than other communities with equally low rent. Why? Well, because they create and value other types of “capital”, more than anything, “social capital”, or, social richness. Some examples of social capital are: strong human relationships, a feeling of belonging and common purpose, and importantly, the fact that work is not just a means to an end, but rather an enjoyable part of life

As the world tries to make the transition towards a rich, diverse and sustainable global society, it is likely that the ecovillage experience is an important source of information and inspiration.

(because they make useful things for themselves, the community and their environment) and because the work that individuals do is fairly compensated.

And it's not just that people live well in eco villages; they live sustainably. Various recent studies confirm that the environmental impact of eco villages is much less than that of conventional communities



Sieben Linden currently produces 70% of food consumed locally. Photo: <http://farewellburt.wordpress.com/pilots-pages/95a-sieben-linden-eco-village-germany/>

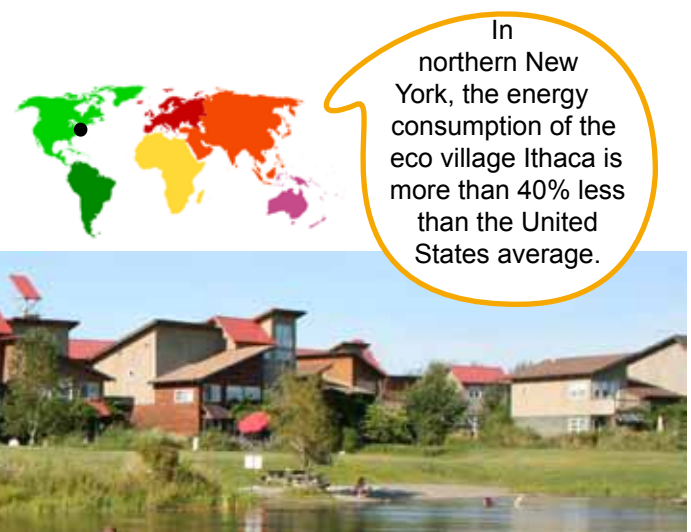


Photo and more information: <http://ecovillageithaca.org/evi/>

Would you like to learn more about eco villages and how they put sustainability to practice? In the past decade eco villages have led numerous educational initiatives. Immersion in these live laboratories can be a profound and life-changing experience for students, as they experience concretely the dynamic relationship between values, lifestyles and community structures.



# Power to the imagination!

You do not want to or cannot go and live in an ecovillage or transition town, but you want to organize with others to act against consumerism and sustainability? Some more or less outlandish, but fun ideas can make you challenge consumerism:

For example, you can participate in the “Buy Nothing Day”. Every year at the end of November, just before the holiday purchasing season starts, the “Buy Nothing Day” is celebrated. It is a day that calls attention to moderation and reflection on purchasing habits. To mark this day cities around the world in more than 65 countries perform acts of awareness and mobilization, the more original the better. You can find more information in the magazine driving the initiative: <http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>

Another imaginative idea that we find in the U.S. is “The Compact”, an initiative in which participants agree to spend a year without buying anything new. Pact members can only buy underwear, food and health and safety items like brake fluid and toilet paper. For a year members of the “Compact” may purchase only in second hand stores. They can also exchange or simply share with others the goods they want. One man’s trash is another’s treasure!

Some people end up following Freeganism, which among other things involves searching the garbage for food and other items that have been pulled, but are in perfect condition. They also engage in collecting leftover crops that farmers do not use, collecting wild foods, making urban gardens or occupying homes in empty buildings.

Don’t have money to travel? Another movement that is specially appealing to youth is that of couch surfing, which allows travel on the cheap thanks to offers of free places to stay found on the Internet. In August 2011 the CouchSurfing movement had 3 million members in 249 countries.

Another similar initiative is that of wwoofing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) where people work on organic farms in exchange for full room and board.



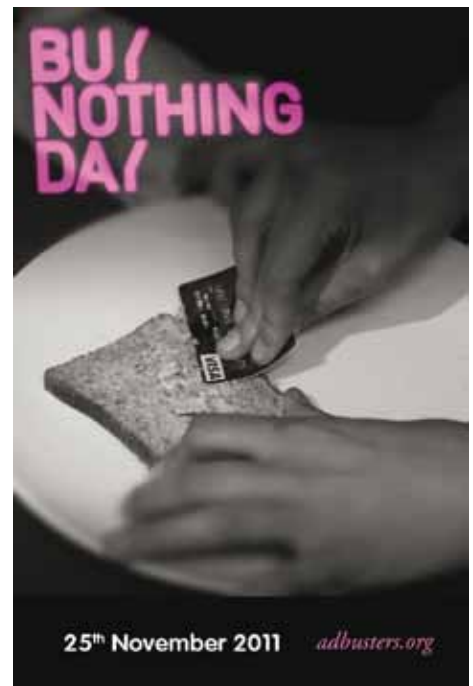
Wwoofing can be done with kids. Photo: <http://www.wwoofinternational.org>

Voluntary simplicity is a practice, philosophy and means for social change that can contribute to transforming consumer culture and helping people learn that less is more.

## Degrowth

All these initiatives can be framed within the so-called “degrowth” movement. This movement seeks a radically different society: a society centered on sustainability and proximity; for example, relocating production and consumption. According to Serge Latouche, one of the ideologues of the movement: “In a world of degrowth, people spend less time working and more time enjoying life. They won’t consume as much, but

the manner in which they consume will be better because it won’t produce as much waste; they will reuse and recycle more because they will understand that the consequences of their actions will leave ecologically sustainable footprints. People will find happiness in human relationships and live in warmth, not under the constant pressure of acquiring more and more consumer goods. All this implies a serious rethinking of



More information about the day and the photo can be found in the magazine that promoted the initiative: <http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>



Food in good condition salvaged from a garbage can in Sussex, England by a “freeganist” activist. Photo: <http://mylionsden.blogspot.com.es/2009/07/freeganism.html>

current ideas that people have about reality, and a great imagination, but surely the changing of ecological realities will provide the inspiration needed to address it.”

A dream?? If we don’t dream, we won’t evolve! We must fight for our dreams. As one of the slogans of Spain’s Indignants movement (Los Indignados or 15M movement) goes: “If you won’t let us dream, we won’t let you sleep!”



# REMEMBER!

Are Homo Sapiens really an intelligent species? We will have to prove it. ... The road is uncertain; we don't have GPS, but changing the course of our lives is possible! (And make no mistake ... it is a must!)

Following are some of the main ideas examined in this magazine. We hope you are catching the rebellion bug: the desire to join the global network of cultural pioneers who are challenging consumerism and experimenting with sustainable solutions.

There are many fronts where we can act. Don't worry, we don't have to take part in everything; any small change, like the little things we do in our daily lives, is valuable. What counts is the sum! Together we can do it!

## Consumerism:

- ☹ has been imposed on us
- ☹ does not make us happy
- ☹ is destroying the planet

## Transforming our diet we can transform the world!

- ☹ It's best to buy fresh, organic, locally produced products without packaging
- ☹ diets heavy in meat are unhealthy and also do great harm to the planet and climate

**We have to "unlearn" many things, including the education system.** We want you to help us by being critical, creative and able to act in an uncertain world that needs reinventing.

**Let's not kid ourselves! Although they want us to believe otherwise, infinite economic growth:**

- ☹ is not possible because the physical capacity of the Earth's ecosystems is limited.
- ☹ is NOT necessary or even desirable, because it does not always make us live better.

**We can live better with less money.** We must reinvent our lives; stop superfluous consumption and cultivate our own food (even on the balcony!). Let's spend our free time on the important things in life that really satiate us like relationships with family and friends, contact with nature, involvement in social movements...

**Voluntary simplicity allows people to live simply** (with few material goods) **but more fully** (more security, more peace, more joy and happiness). Mutual support is more powerful than any insurance.

**We could use some extra divine assistance:** the religions of the world can help people rediscover the benefits of voluntary simplicity.

**Companies can also make a difference.** If they focus their activities on "healing the future", improving the quality of life of individuals and the health of the environment instead of promoting consumerism, then the global economy could help avert catastrophe.

**We are ever more in need of social entrepreneurs** (like corporations, partnerships, cooperatives, etc.) to launch innovative initiatives that address environmental and social problems, offering products or services to society that promote cultural change.

**We must redistribute work,** so there that fewer people will be unemployed and workers will have more free time.

**Our government must be much more brave and innovative.** It is urgently needed for them to work toward achieving:

- ☺ Cities and towns designed for people, not cars!
- ☺ More policies of equality, redistribution of wealth and less war.

☺ Rational and sustainable use of renewable resources (like water, forests, farmland and fisheries) and nonrenewable resources (oil, coal, gas, minerals and metals)

☺ A change in the energy model to make it cleaner and based on renewable sources

☺ Encouraging behavioral changes to improve our health.

**Advertising usually deceives us** in a subtle or sometimes even a blatant way. We must protect ourselves against their false promises.

**We must be critical of everything** we see and hear in the media (or will you let hidden interests manipulate you?)

**Unity is strength.** Get organized to accelerate change!

**Ecovillages, transition towns, 350.org, and the Slow movement are examples of the myriad of creative initiatives** in which people participate individually and collectively around the world to overthrow the regime of consumerism and open the path towards a post-consumerist society that is based on respect for people and the planet Earth.

... ARE YOU WITH US?

With the support of:



Obra Social "la Caixa"



Generalitat de Catalunya