

Beyond Green Technologies: The People Factor

by Françoise Ducroz

They say the people of Ireland, the emerald island, are able to identify more than 100 shades of green. Likewise, the indigenous people of the Arctic have more words to describe "snow" than any other. It makes a lot of sense; we are deeply affected by our landscapes and our geography. In our time of climate change and peak oil, a new global culture is emerging – one that claims a multitude of shades of green. From barely green to dark forest hues, green has become the new color and a marketing tool.

There is nothing wrong with branding green names and marketing. New technologies in ecological housing, water treatment, alternative energy production, organic agriculture and land use, and transit and transport are taking a firmer hold. The green marketplace is beginning to buzz. Citizens are demanding of their representatives, the political will to change the "business as usual." That is all-important, significant, and timely.

And yet, it would be short-sighted to stop at the technologies and not ask the tougher question: How green are we, you and me, on a daily basis? What choice do we make, or still postpone making? How green are we willing to be to secure a legacy? Being green goes beyond green technologies. The technologies support our choices, but we are the ones making those choices.

What is the people factor in our brave new green world? As a yoga practitioner, I am often reminded of the need for balance. I have learned that an outer expression of balance begins with an inner sense of it. Green goes with elegant simplicity, with chosen sobriety, with doing with less, and with a rich community life that supports sustainable options such as car sharing or carpooling.

A leader in the field of Environmental Studies and Politics, David Orr, professor at Oberlin states, "The skills and attitudes that were

necessary to industrialize the earth are not the same as those needed to heal it or to build durable economies and good communities." I would add that what is needed is nothing less than a change in consciousness.

Consider a current issue that illustrates a serious lack of balance: the obesity crisis our abundant society faces. We consume and waste vast amounts of food, and yet we are less nourished. The food we eat, the way we produce and consume, is out of balance. We eat plenty and are left wanting more. "Slow food," a new term but certainly not a new concept, has been introduced in an attempt to balance the fast-food craze. If a meal at the local

grease spot can be an occasional family treat, does it have to be the norm? Is it really less expensive in actual health and environmental costs even if it appears to be a bargain?

Now, let us imagine a child sitting at the table to eat a wholesome meal he has helped prepare. The TV is off; the distractions are minimal. He will eat either in silence or in good conversation. The child is learning to eat in mindfulness, in awareness, listening to his body, perceiving what feels nourishing, what feels less so, knowing when he had enough, learning to trust his felt sense of contentment, appreciating what has gone into making the food... from his parent's loving preparation to the farmer, the soil, the rainwater, the worms. I confess that I do not eat all of my meals with such reverence, but I do intend to more often than not.

I love the color of green, leafy vegetables and what they have come to represent to my global eco-village.

It is a statement of intention, a badge of honor, a cry of rally, and it is the new hope.

For inspiration and information, I would like to recommend: Peter Menzel's splendid book of eloquent photos, *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* (www.menzelphoto.com/hungryplanet), and Annie Leonard's website, *The Story of Stuff* at www.storyofstuff.com ("From its extraction through sale, use, and disposal, all the stuff in our lives affects communities at home and abroad, yet most of this is hidden from view. *The Story of Stuff* is a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns. It exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world.").

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