

WHAT IS NEXT?

TEXT STARTED 20 04 07

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As an extension to my world of Architecture and Urban Planning, I have worked with the Environment and Human Relations since the mid 1970's - since the time when the terms 'Sustainability' and 'Facilitation' were barely known.

I have seen it as a personal task to open eyes to the understanding that the skills and techniques of 'Human Relations' are an essential key to working with the environment and people in the environment. I now feel that in the circles in which I have had influence, that this is now understood and practised - but - it has taken a long time.

Our precious planet and all in it are in rapidly increasing peril from the actions of we humans and we can forecast that many, many of our fellow creatures (let alone those of other species) are already doomed to much increased communal and individual suffering.

The pace of change towards 'pollution' continues to increase, the global pace of change towards 'conservation' is far too slow to keep pace with that change. This is despite the recent popular realisation in the developed world of the dangers of Global Warming.

I ask myself as I did all those years ago "what do I do on Monday?" Meaning, having got this far and having learned something - what do I do differently from what I have done before.

Good people, working on themselves and with others believe that to change, self change comes first - this is far too slow.

Good people, committing to demonstration of sustainability by doing, using low tech, in remote and lovely places showed a way but - this also is far too slow and technically backward.

Good people, evolving ways of working together, locally, consensually, co-operatively, and are showing how living might be. This again is far too slow and cannot address the huge problems which cross boundaries and extend to the whole planet.

Good people, advocating peer learning, peer working, peer communicating, showing the possibilities of a new way of living and of business, but in a Globalised, Multi National, Corporate world, also far too slow and seen as too threatening, too free, too empowering.

Human Relations skills since the 60's and 70's have evolved from crisis therapies, through counselling, facilitation to the present broad spectrum of people, institutions and professions. Many ideas and skills have been based on the practice of self examination and change, acknowledging peers, working in groups and working 'locally'.

The underlying ideas have evolved but not responded to a rapidly changing world. Perhaps these ideas now even approaching dogma? 'Greenism', 'Localism', 'Participation', 'Consensus' are not keeping pace with the destructive forces corrupting our beloved planet.

We who are privileged to be able to make choices and have almost religiously adhered to our beliefs, will not be thanked by the starving, drought stricken, flooded and oppressed for our slowness and perhaps covert unwillingness to develop our ideas to respond to escalating change.

The originator of 'Gaia', James Lovelock has said that unless we take some pragmatic steps - nuclear!!!!, we are doomed. Now that is equivalent to Gallileo's heresy against the Mediaeval church, and greeted with similar horror by those who had been inspired by him.

My much respected colleagues in 'Oasis', a devoted peer working organisation are now working on Globally Responsible LEADERSHIP, with all the introspection and contradictions of practise which that demands.

To be truly Green, the responses to problems of Global Warming, Pollution, congestion, and shortage are becoming more and more 'High Tech'. This in turns suggest greater involvement of experts, specialists, professionals and scientists. People who have custody of a less common sense.

The issues of regulation and effective implementation of environmental conservation are becoming community, city, regional, national, and international and not just local. (Local + local + local does not add up to a whole planet.)

All these concepts - 'leadership', 'technical specialism', 'global' and urgency are not being addressed by the traditional credos of 'Human Relations' approaches so far.

The concept of Sustainability has been helpful to encapsulate a family of ideas to enable the planet and its inhabitants to survive. But now we may have to consider further - Sustainability where? Sustainability when? Sustainability uniformly all over the planet? Is the concept of 'Sustainability' at all useful now? Maybe it is more appropriate to look at the implications of wholism at a Global scale.

'Think and act Globally - Think and Act Locally'

So to me what is next, is to explore these issues, certainly not as a revolution or reaction against work evolved so far, but as an extension to it.

Something which worries me is the current focus on Global Warming. This is of course very serious - but is not the only issue by any means. Other pollutions, scarcities, inequalities, congestions, health, destruction of environments and species and so on and on, all are corrupting our planet. Just think, if all vehicles were hydrogen fuelled, we would still have traffic jams of hydrogen cars!

I do expect a sharp reaction to this question of mine - but I would ask that you do give it some serious consideration and ask 'what is next' from your position. It is hard to summarise these big ideas into a few words and I apologise for my crudity. I do not wish to be critical of older ideas and their practitioners, but please try to see beyond these and beyond the inadequacies of my expression.

Bill Berrett 05 04 07

PS I first drafted this before publication of the latest UN IPCC report on climate change, this report only emphasises my concern.

PPS A good example of the rapid changes taking place are the proposed changes to Planning Law recently announced. These changes suggest a Planning Commission to determine major national infrastructural projects. To respond to the global and local crises, radical and speedy decisions are necessary. Much energy is going to be expended by environmentally concerned people who will oppose this measure, yet to achieve environmental measures in time, such rapid and balanced decisions are essential which are unachievable within current participation practises.

To educate the experts and decision makers would be a far more effective way of

safeguarding the environment. Creating awareness, knowledge, understanding and responsibility amongst business players, scientists, engineers, accountants and experts of all kinds, is something we can do.

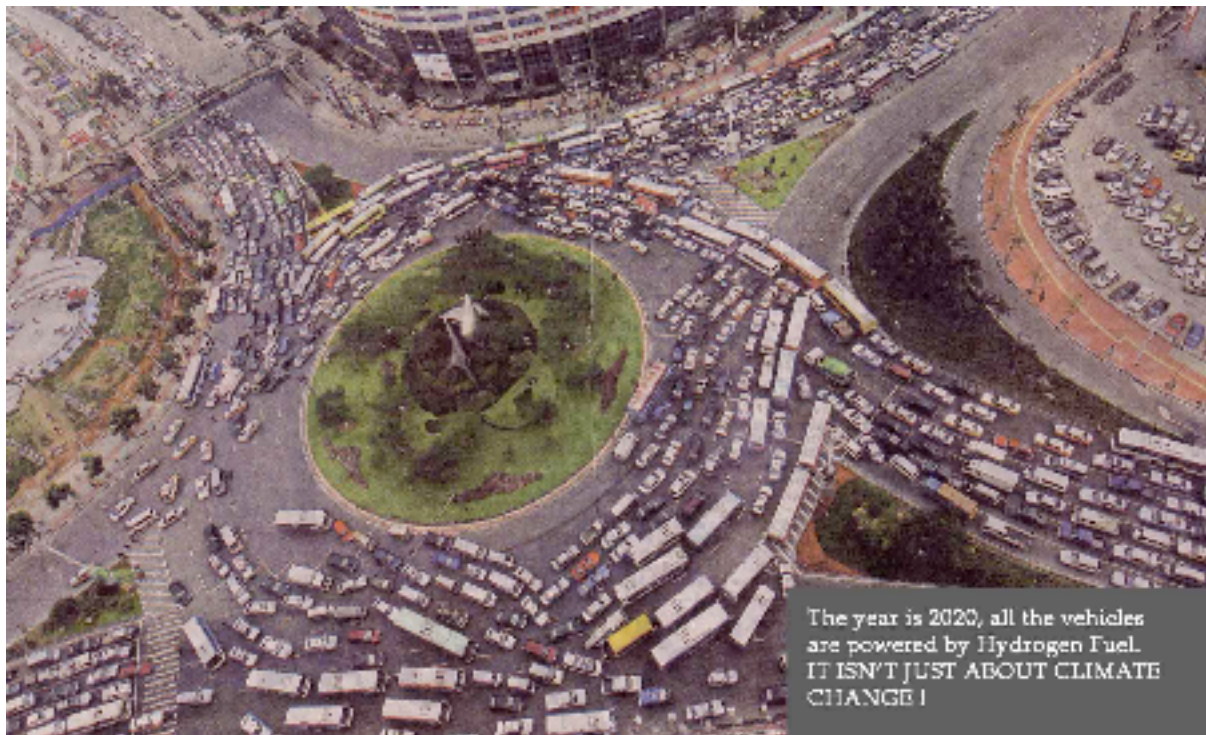
PPPS. The major problems of the Global Financial System have since joined with others matters such as the issue of Bio Fuels to remind us of something else which has always been present - Food Shortage. Consequences of this human suffering, conflict and money competition, reinforce what I have put forward above. The United Nations General Secretary yesterday warned about the consequences of a Food Crisis. We environmentalist must update ourselves or we become part of the problem.

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PPPPS. Now into 2009 with major crises that Environmentalists have long foretold, one now hopes that notions of Global Governance may become seen as being relevant. One hopes the opportunities now presented by the exposure of the greed and criminality of the financial system will be taken. Gordon Brown in UK and Obama in US plus the European Union have already indicated how this perhaps a one-off chance for change to take place. We are seeing that the major opportunities for re building our planet for sustainable and fulfilled living by humanity in harmony with 'Nature' is an increasingly high tech one. To me this means that it is even more important for the specialist to become at the same time a 'holist'. That is a job for us who are already of that view to explain, to advocate, to teach and to practise. The giving of information and the enabling of all to understand why sustainability is essential remains an even more important task for us. But we must review and develop our philosophy and practise too, and to do that at a pace which exceeds the pace of degradation. Alas in my view we are not doing this and are stuck in the past - let us each ask ourselves, are we responding to the changes going on around us?

BB 12 01 09

NOT JUST GLOBAL WARMING



It is wonderful that some of our World has at last realised that what we are doing to our Planet is creating a situation in which the climates experienced in all their cycles are being modified by the activities of humankind.

This is a crisis issue and has existed and has been understood to exist for many years. We must learn from that, the understanding of these issues by people at large is far too slow.

What is even more difficult is that having Governments, Corporations, and particularly the Media in picking up on Global Warming and Climate Change, focussing on it and emphasising its problems may well be misleading us from the total issue and maybe consuming much misplaced personal energy.

Global Warming arises from a particular pollution - Atmospheric Pollution. Many see it as a problem of mobility or transport, particularly of cars. The response to this is so often placed in the context of a technical fix. A case in point being the possibility of fuelling vehicles on 'non polluting' Hydrogen fuel. But a traffic jam of hydrogen fuelled vehicles is still a traffic jam with all the problems of congestion that implies. In fact the evolution of a new fuel for vehicles may increase the problems of congestion.

Let us see this not as a specific but as an example. There are many pollutions, not only many pollutions within Global Warming, but many pollutions within climate change let alone pollution of the Oceans etc.

Just consider that even if over time Climate Change could be checked, halted and even reversed. There would still be problems of scarcity of resources of many kinds from water, through food, to land and many many many shortages to human needs.

Should we be able to create resources in the middle term, there would still be massive inequalities between classes of people, areas of the globe and groups of people defined by gender, religion, culture, colour or location.

If we could do something about distribution of resources, there would remain inequalities of life expectancy, health, disease, genetics and vulnerability.

My point is that we must address all these together. Sustainability, which has been a watchword around the world for such a process (and a useful term to enwrap such big ideas to be intellectually handlable) may no longer be a suitable concept.

Please join me in the debate, it is serious and urgent - be ready to respect and emulate those pioneers in the work of the Human Potential movement radically to take things further.