

[music](#) | [philosophy](#) | [photos](#) | [videos](#) | [thoughts](#) | [news](#) | [contact](#) |

## Sharing could be the answer

Look at any of today's big issues - financial or political instability, pollution and energy depletion, water and food shortages, the excessive [concentration of wealth](#) and power, war.

Can any of these damaging trends be reversed by other nations adopting our western way of life?

Think...

What happens to the atmosphere when 1.25 billion Chinese start owning 745 vehicles per 1000 people, like in the USA?

What happens to financial trust when all administrations start to sit nonchalantly on a trade deficit of \$50bn a month and national debt of \$9 trillion?

What happens when everyone demands that 10 times bigger portion of meat that the West enjoys?

What happens when the ruling class in developing countries buys into the American dream? It's not all good.

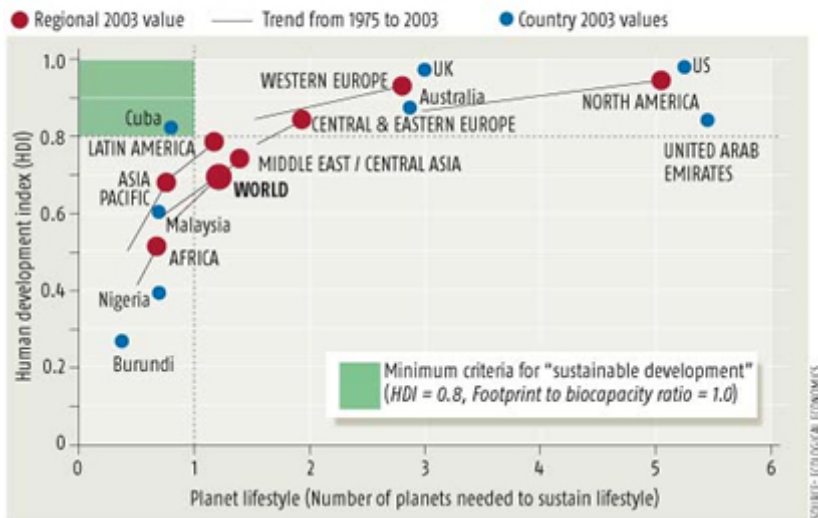
People got thirstier when Coca Cola took the real thing to India. 200,000 people lost their livelihoods thanks to Indian dam projects financed by the World Bank. Carbon sinks (ie. Rainforests) are getting bulldozed to make way for biofuel.

It's going to be a hard thing for us to concede that our western way of life is not exemplary. But exemplary is not. If it were exemplary, everybody on the planet could live this way. But, this *really* is a dream. Because, for everyone to live this way, we are presently 4 earth's short of the natural resources required.



**ROAD TO ECOLOGICAL RUIN?**

Only Cuba provides a decent standard of living for its people without consuming more than its fair share of resources



Graph: The New Scientist estimates that, for everyone to live like Brits, 3 planets are required, or to live like North Americans, 5 planets.

So, for all our clever green washing chatter about corporate responsibility and stewardship of the planet, it is obvious that we are the least qualified to lead on sustainability. We are the ones who are out of touch, not the illiterate farmers and fishermen we routinely bulldoze out of the way.

Our response is to turn on the TV and cross our fingers that our pensions will look after us in our old age. Meanwhile our sons ride the tentacles of the oil junky as it strikes out with every greater urgency to wherever in the world cheap energy can be cornered.

Some of us sigh, because we have observed the never ending cycle of violence required to 'open up markets'. Millions protested the violence. I marched peacefully with Muslims in Marrakesh, and in the UK, where London's loudest ever public demonstration fell on deaf ears. Western 'democracy', I then understood, is as inflexible as prison visiting times.

'The hidden hand of the market will never work without the [hidden fist](#). McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas... ' writes economist Thomas Friedman\*1

Financiers demand. Economists prescribe. Politicians promise. The military attack.

The logic is inescapable.

At any given moment, the earth's wealth is finite. When ownership of that wealth gets concentrated into fewer hands (especially at the barrel of a gun), it is correspondingly denied to others.

When, by wealth, we mean essentials like fresh water, fertile land and a home, it turns people hitherto living sustainably into slum dwelling dependents.

This is not progress. It is as if America never tired of killing indians.

Meanwhile, closer to home, the same private profit-seeking erodes free healthcare, education, the work/play life balance and support for those who can't care for themselves.

So, when is 'progress' NOT about sending someone backwards or holding them in check?

If we, as adults, could stick to the advice we give our kids, perhaps we can get back on the right track.

Sharing could be the answer.

Once upon a time, we shared.

After WWII, it was actually quite difficult to get people out of the habit of sharing and saving and reusing things like jars and aluminium foil.

People had to be reminded repeatedly that they needed new things. In fact, it has taken 50 years of TV advertising for the message to well and truly sink in.

Modern life is, indeed, [rubbish](#). Dumping the used and pumping the new proved more profitable. Waste and inefficiency have been quite deliberately promoted to build repeat sales. Disposable razor anyone?

Products, it turned out, are cheaper to produce when virgin resources are used, but there's more profit in the maxed out Hummer than a light weight saloon. So, to the Director who sits on the board of both the car and the oil company, the Hummer is the ultimate win win.

But how many people are now overspent on all this stuff?

Could sharing start to appeal as we find credit harder to come by?

Think about it. How many cars are sitting idle outside at this very moment? How many 'home cinemas' are without an audience? How many power tools, lawn mowers, barbeques and washing machines are static. How many instruments, computers, toys, books and kitchen appliances long for interaction, how many tents, bicycles and fitness machines are gathering dust.

This is spectacularly inefficient. If we shared we might find ways to get along better consuming less.

What could a Western community of 150 households achieve today if it shared? Could it not equip a library, a gym, a luxury cinema, a vehicle pool, a workshop, a shed full of tools, a dozen guest rooms, a creche for tiny tots...

Sharing would be a start... it might, in fact, feel like progress.

Ends | 4 Dec 2007 | The Leg

[comment](#) | [back to top](#) | [thoughts](#)

#### Notes:

\*1. The Lexus and the Olive Tree by Thomas Friedman

#### Essential Reading:

Waste: Uncovering the global food scandal by Tristram Stuart

The Algebra of Infinite Justice by Arundhati Roy

[We're all living downstream](#)

[The Death of Quality](#)

Prosperity Without Growth Report by Tim Jackson (3MB PDF)

Sustainable Energy without the Hot Air by David MacKay

#### Interesting:

'According to *Advertising Age*, about 75% of commercial network television time is paid for by the 100 largest corporations... The average American who watches five hours of television per day sees approximately 21,000 commercials per year. That's 21,000 repetitions of essentially identical messages about life... all saying, *Buy something - do it now!*...

From *In the Absence of The Sacred* by Jerry Mander, p78-9

US Marketing Consultant, Victor Lebow

Journal of Retailing 1955:

'These commodities and services must be offered to the consumer with a special urgency. We require not only "forced draft" consumption, but "expensive" consumption as well. We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever increasing pace. We need to have people eat, drink, dress, ride, live with ever more complicated and, therefore, constantly more expensive consumption. The home power tools and the whole "do-it-yourself" movement are excellent examples of "expensive" consumption.'

#### Essential Viewing:

ZEITGEIST: MOVING FORWARD | OFFICIAL REL...



## Buy Nothing Day Cowboy 2006



## The Message



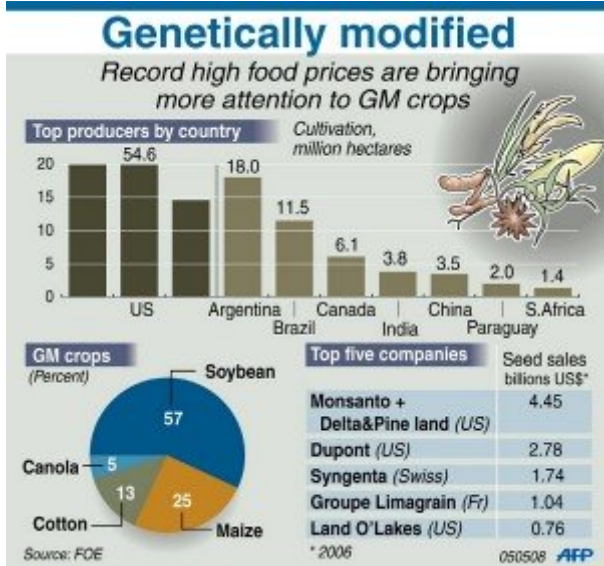
## Tony Benn - excellent bonus interview



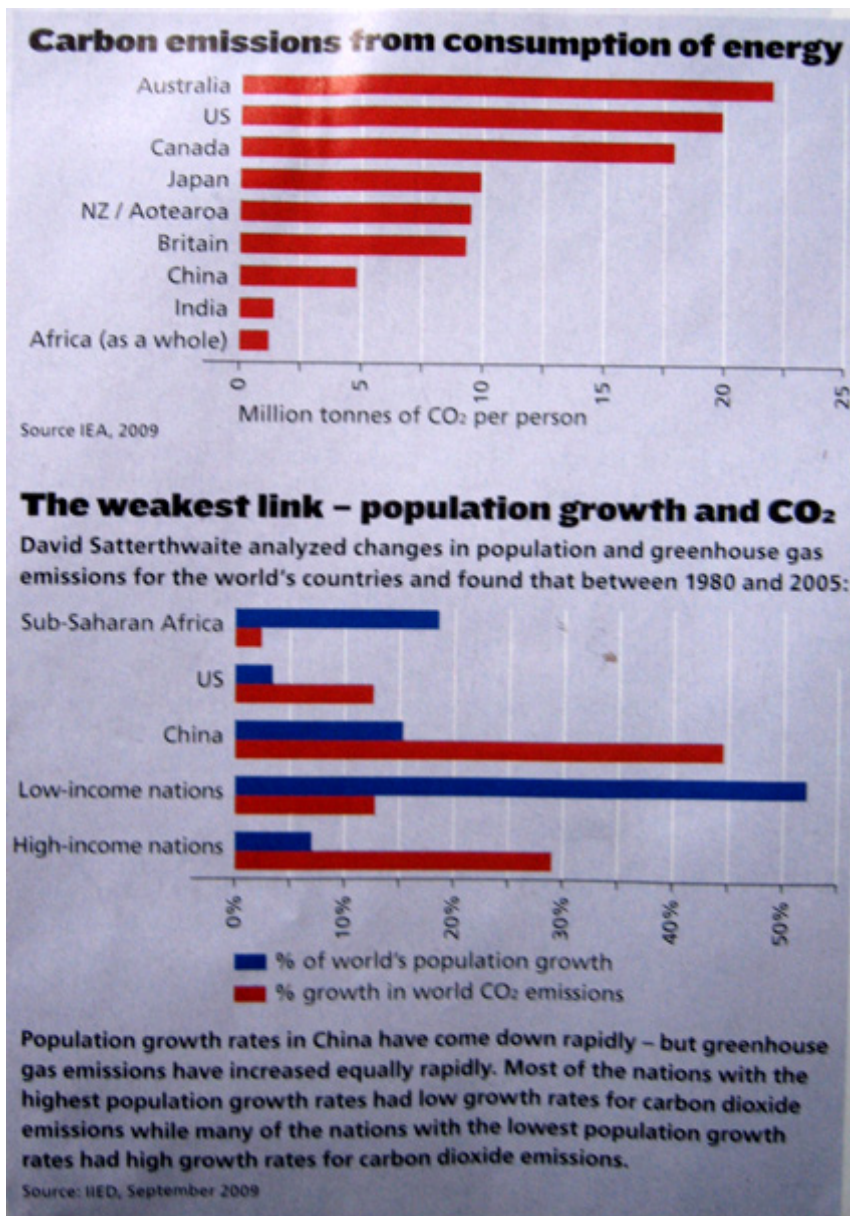
Click to enable Adobe Flash Player

**Darwin's nightmare** - The introduction of predatory Perch to Lake Victoria in Tanzania in the 60s has decimated the native fish species. As huge white fillets land on Western dinner tables and EU commissioners applaud, African conflict is fed by weapons traded in exchange for the fish and hunger remains a problem.

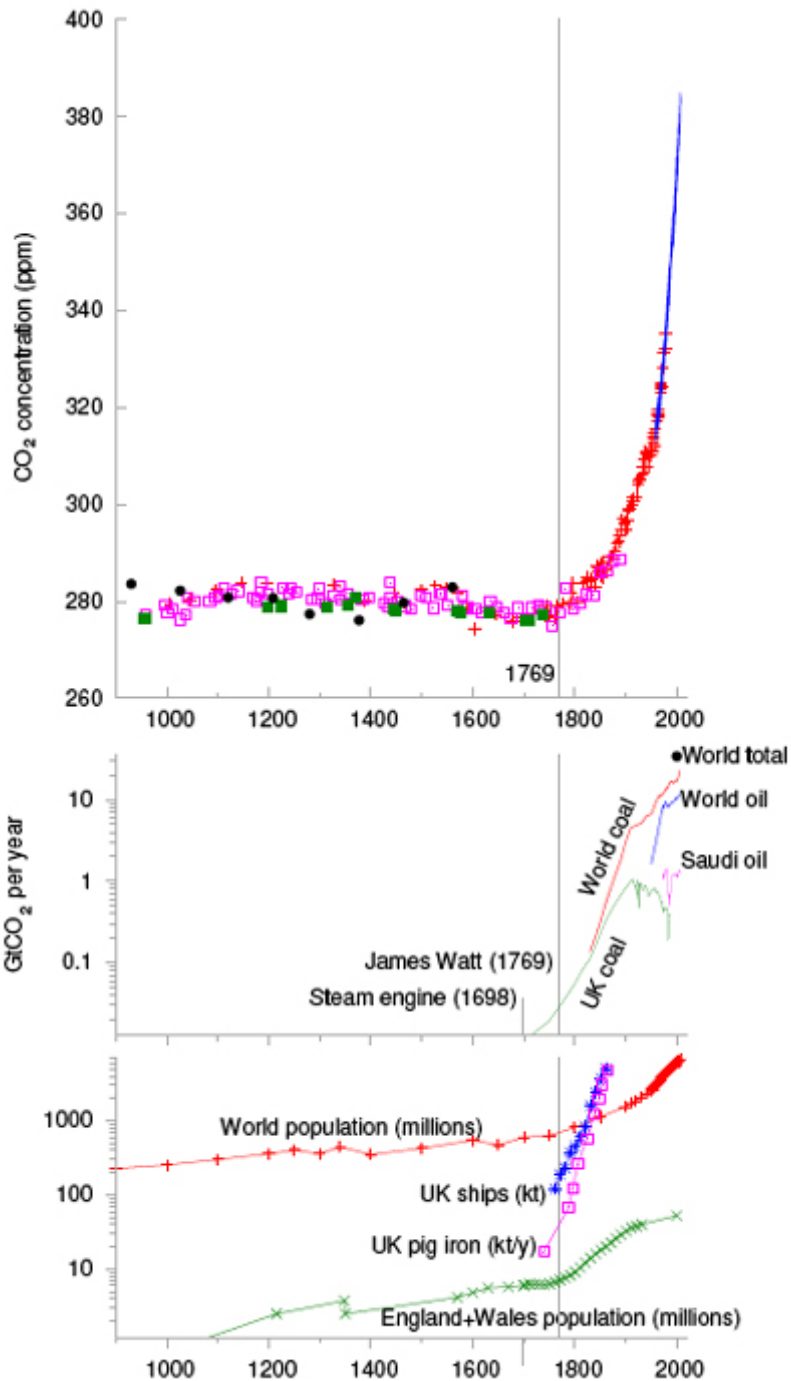
### Graphs:



Graph: Monsanto sold \$4.45bn worth of GM seeds in 2013. They aren't selling them cheap! At the same time farm subsidies in the US/EU make it impossible for foreign farmers to compete with our exports. Local production and self-sufficiency fades and the poor become dependent on the US for staple foods... which gives the US even greater power over their political and human destiny.



Graph above: What's **population** got to do with it? Small changes in family size in high income nations impact emissions. Big changes in family size in Sub-Saharan Africa don't. Emissions are growing fastest in China where a one child per family policy has been in place since 1979. The wholesale shift of global manufacture to China heralded this. The UK industrial revolution, with its harnessing of fossil fuel energy, with its harnessing of fossil fuel energy, provides the model. In this model, energy surplus (coal, oil & thus CO<sub>2</sub>) twinned with technological advances (steam, electricity) facilitate greater productivity, improved living conditions, increasing consumption, longer living and thus the possibility of sustained population growth. The UK model was rapidly adopted elsewhere...



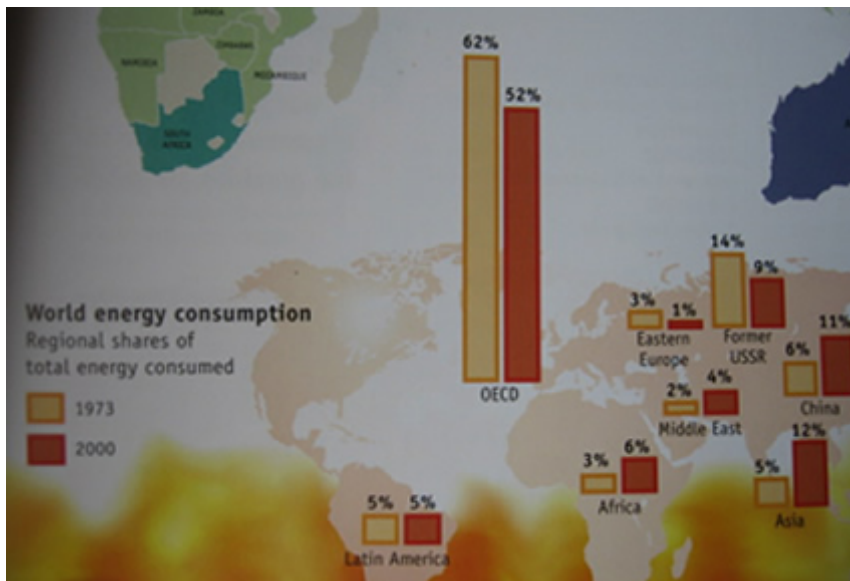
In short...

Environmental damage = **consumers** x affluence x technology

To get an idea of what this looks like in terms of real time CO<sub>2</sub>, visit Breathing Earth's world map simulation.

Illustrations below from The State of the World Atlas:





Home of the world's top 100 transnational corporations  
 Domestic Water Use (1000 litres per head) by country  
 Percentage of wages spent on water by country  
 The cost of hygiene  
 US military spending vs the world 2008

#### Related Articles:

2013

CO2 emissions outsourced by rich countries to rising economies  
 Genocide was overseen by Brazil's 'Indian Protection Service'

2011

US food aid programme criticised as welfare for grain giants  
 Logging is wiping out the Amazonian Awa - a tribe of just 355  
 40% of US corn is now being converted into fuel for cars  
 90% of cars are under-utilised, 70% of journeys are solo rides  
 Rich nations live a lie by not counting carbon from imports  
 Rothschild Jnr secures \$3bn worth of Indonesian coal extraction

2010

12 Sep: Backlash against world landgrabby by rich elites  
 27 July: Miner Vedanta plans to dig up Indian tribe's sacred hills  
 26 May: Should profit be the only driver of business?  
 19 Feb: UN study to reveal impact of 3000 largest companies

- 2009

Looted wealth fuels Congo's conflict  
 UK's SDC advises shift away from meat, dairy and processed foods  
 WRAP advocates a 'hire' rather than 'throw away' society  
 I live without cash  
 Poor countries urge G8 to impose 40% emissions cut by 2020  
 Rich buy up the poors' best land to grow own food & fuel  
 Meat suppliers to UK supermarkets helping destroy rainforests  
 Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua dare to be different  
 Estonia's Bank for happiness trades in good deeds  
 Nestle CEO: risk we'll run out of water before we run out of oil  
 Whose got the biggest green stimulus package?... China  
 15% of Chinese CO2 results from exports to US & Europe  
 Shell racks up record profit at £60m a day

1/3 of arable land and 1/3 of total land is now in meat production  
Half of England and Wales suffer from 'water stress'  
Ancient skills could help reverse global warming  
27 countries are 'importing' more than 1/2 water they consume  
India's tricky path to industrialisation  
UN: eat less meat to curb global warming  
History of trade demonstrates that protectionism makes you rich  
Senegal's fish sustenance being trawled by Europeans  
Brit uses 4645 litres of water a day when hidden factors included  
Prince Charles: GM crops would be 'environmental disaster'  
Liberalised Haiti spends 80% earned from exports on food imports!  
World Bank report blames switch to biofuels for rise in food prices  
IEA 2008: "We are very far from sustainable development"  
If we care about the real global crisis, we should eat less meat  
Demand for biofuel and meat escalates shortages of staple foods  
Two thirds of world's population short of fresh water by 2025?  
World Food Programme Facts & Figures  
Forest clearance to make way for palm oil is a major cause of CO2  
9 litres of clean water used to make 1 litre of Coca-Cola in India?  
The population growth issue pales against the greed of the rich  
Meat production -71 million tonnes in 1961 rose to 284 in 2007  
It's more than our light bulbs that we're going to have to change  
Climate crisis demands reappraisal of what progress means  
At 6% of GDP, the US has the world's biggest ever trade deficit  
Villagers in Nandigram shot dead to clear way for chemical plant