



Green, Sustainability, What's it all about?

Christine Ulness, i design ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN, LLC (P) 920.858.9234

References to "green" are everywhere. It is a word seen in newspapers, on talk shows, in advertising and product labels. The green movement is now the "little black dress" in our world__ always in good fashion. Here's how it evolved and where as t

All things were once made by humans, using manual labor and draft animals. People lived self-sufficient lives rurally and in small villages, enjoying the beauty of wild natural tree-filled vistas. Life was simple and while it sounded romantic, much of it was not. Life expectancy was limited to about forty years of age due to the high mortality rates of infants. Food shortages were common, no central heating systems and travel occurred over dusty primitive roads riding behind smelly sweaty animals.

The first industrial revolution began in Britain about 1730, and spread to the rest of Europe, North America and eventually, the world. Textile, agriculture and mining industries changed from human to machine based manufacturing economies through new technologies of water, steam and refined coal power. Rural people moved to cities, providing labor for factories, and together this placed new demands on the earth.

The second industrial revolution, fueled by power from steam, the internal combustion engine, and electrical power cogeneration, occurred during the middle of the nineteenth century. Economic growth, aided by improved rail and steamship travel, grew rapidly, effecting every aspect of human civilization all over the world. People now enjoyed electric lights, indoor plumbing, automobiles, appliances and other consumables items. Mass production made things available and affordable to everyone.

There was little time for "mindful" thinking about where this growth would lead, or its effects on our natural world. Economies grew experimenting with new chemicals, minerals and processes, even though the fields of applied chemistry, physics, biology and medicine were all still in their infancy. Industrial production led us toward a better life and but also created a magnitude of unintended outcomes.

Currently we are in another industrial revolution. This time the intent is to grow our economies using "smart" chemistry, technology, biology and manufacturing processes which do not negatively alter the health of our atmosphere and biological world. This new behavior of how to treat our oceans, lakes, rivers and the impact of our technologies on the health of animals, plants and humans is what many call "green." and is about being sustainable to allow future generations to enjoy living on earth.

William McDonough an architect, visionary, and environmental thinker is one messenger behind the current industrial revolution. Time magazine in 1998, called him the "man to save the planet." He's an advocate for business growth, believing that businesses, as designers of our destiny, need to grow in harmony with nature. His ideas ask us "What is it we wish to grow?"

"If our intent is to, by design, fill the oceans with plastic, create products that cause cancer and birth defects, acidify the oceans...then we're doing a really great job. But, clearly this isn't our intent. Designers are therefore in charge of taking our actual intents, a globe that is clean, healthy, and inhabitable for an infinite amount of time and creating products that fit within them. So what is the ultimate intent? What do designers need to ask themselves when getting started on a new design? .How do we love all the children of all the species for all time? Conflict between industry and the environment is not an indictment of commerce but an outgrowth of purely opportunistic design."

People everywhere are listening to the message of McDonough. Either by how they make their products, reduce carbon emissions, conserve water, design and construct buildings or save energy using sun and wind power. Worldwide, we are seeing organizations adopting principles and policies for sustainability. Among them are such institutions as the Vatican, large and small communities, universities, medical organizations, charitable groups and business organizations from fortune 500 companies to "mom and pop" small businesses. All have adopted plans and use practices which promote the benefits of behaving sustainably. Company products are being redesigned so they can be made again someday as a new product or used in a manner beneficial to the environment. This is McDonough's "waste equals food." message from his 2002 book, Cradle to Cradle. It is predicted, the future of a company will be determined by how successfully it redesigns its products and factories to work in harmony with nature versus choosing to travel the path of "buggy whip" manufacturers. who ignored the impact the gas powered engine would have in the next century, holding on to the belief that it would come and go but horse drawn vehicles would always be around.

Sustainable means to provide for the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It's about businesses learning from nature and working in harmony with it. A sustainable world is a place where businesses can grow and profit amongst all living things.