



Bonny Brokenshire and Sarah L. Goul

Royal Roads University

Authors Note

This paper was completed on July 10, 2014 for Communication for Environmental Communicators, EECO 503, taught by Dr. Ireland.

Image Created by Taya Brokenshire

Abstract

In planning an environmental education campaign to promote systems-based produce practices, several communication theories and ecological principles are considered and applied to ensure the messages of the campaign will be persuasive enough to stimulate reflection and subsequent behavioral changes in favor of a sustainable future.

Keywords: Earth-friendly, Systems-based produce, Sustainable Happiness, Narration, Semiotics, Framing.

Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice

In general, it is an acceptable norm within our society to produce vast amounts of waste without thought about or consideration for the environmental impact of our choices. Steffen (2005) identified that our western society produces waste in an amount that is equivalent to the resources of 10 planet Earths. Given this, decreasing waste would be a useful place to focus a sustainability initiative. In particular, an initiative that focuses on decreasing waste related to food attainment and packaging has the potential to spread widely since food is something that we all have a connection to. We have identified a disconnect between the values and actions of local natural food stores where produce is packaged in non-renewable one time use plastic containers; for instance, cherry tomatoes, baby carrots, chopped pineapple, and lettuce all come in plastic packaging. This packaging is a symptom of a larger issue of shipping produce from outside the area, as opposed to using locally produced goods.



Photo Courtesy of Dream Time

Our main goal is to promote sustainable happiness by encouraging the use of systems-based produce practices in natural food stores to include increasing supply from local producers, aligning with seasonal food cycles, and using natural and sustainable food packaging. Marks

(2010) suggested social justice and sustainability, through community and giving, as being the most appropriate measures of success for a society because they are the root of happiness, which is what people universally aim to achieve. Systems-based food packaging and attainment considers the full life cycle of food we eat, including the carbon footprint, or greenhouse gas emissions of both transporting the food and packaging the food. Sustainable happiness can be achieved as community members 'give' to the earth by way of their choices to support this natural food web. Using renewable, ecologically sound packaging reduces the stress on natural resources and promotes green accounting because it brings the factor of sustainability to mind every time a consumer purchases the produce. In line with Marks' ideas, our initiative empowers natural food store owners to recognize and be involved in sustainable practices, as well as encourage their customers to do the same. In order to meet our goal, we have identified two main objectives:

1. Influence the actions of the store owners with respect to produce practices; and
2. Encourage store owners to adopt an ecocentric information campaign that enables their customers the opportunity to make ecologically informed choices about their produce purchases.



Photo Courtesy of G. Palmer

Campaign Voices

We can start to improve the human experience with making Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice. The natural food store owner is the conduit to public awareness, allowing sustainable foods to be prominently displayed with an identifiable symbol. Through local empowerment campaigns in-season, local fruits and vegetables free of packaging could replace the current stream of produce that contributes to polluting our air, our water and our health. In order to do this we need to mobilize support for our campaign by understanding and speaking directly to the various voices of those who are connected to produce. The voices that are important to consider in this campaign are the earth itself, store owners, the store customers, the produce suppliers, and the larger community.

The Earth's Voice

Our campaign gives the Earth a voice by bringing environmentally friendly alternatives to the attention of store owners, store customers, produce suppliers and the larger community. Cox (2010) explained the constitutive aspects of environmental communication to include evoking perspective and values with words and images (p. 19). The words and images used in our campaign highlight the natural systems perspective of produce. These communication techniques empower these intended audiences to be able to take actions that consider the wider environmental impact of their choices. Earth's voice is ultimately our voice in the context of an emerging sustainable paradigm.

The Store Owner's Voice

Our primary intended audience for the message is owners of natural food stores. The store owners have connection to both the farmers who supply the produce and the customers at the store. They have decision making power with respect to what they buy and sell in the store and

they have the ability to empower their customers to make informed choices about produce purchases by providing them with knowledge. The centrality and decision making power of the store owners gives them the loudest voice and this is what makes them our primary audience.

Focusing on owners, we can engage in a dialogue that will allow us to see the potential and possible limits to actually supplying and packaging food in a new way. It is safe for us to assume that the store owners would be interested in survivability, customer satisfaction and appealing produce displays. In addition, since this is a natural food store, as opposed to a big chain grocery store, we would be conversing with the converted, or in other words, people who already have an understanding of the benefits of supplying local produce and an awareness of sustainable food systems. With respect to sending a message or initiating change, Hoggan (2009) identified the importance of establishing good relations and credibility (p. 5). Engaging in dialogue allows us to establish a relationship with the store owners. In addition, a successful campaign would leave us with room to approach larger chain grocers in the future with the credibility of having an example of successful change with natural food stores.

It is important that we speak to our primary audience before reaching out to secondary audiences. By first communicating with the store owners, they would have time to plan their implementation of Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice without any pressure from the wider community. Cox (2010) explained that collaboration removes a competitive atmosphere, spreads responsibility among all involved, involves mutual learning, and allows for discussion about misaligned values (p. 119). In order to present a persuasive piece, have a chance to identify common values, and brainstorm solutions to potential roadblocks, we need to converse with the store owners before addressing the public.

Store Customers

Once our first objective is met and we have concurrence from store owners, we can proceed to meet our second objective. The customers have a voice through their purchasing power. They can support the initiatives of the store owners by choosing to buy Earth's Choice produce. Establishing an ecocentric campaign spreads our message to the customers at the grocery store and mobilizes them to take action. Cox (2010) explained that advocacy campaigns are more effective than critical rhetoric because they draw on the collective strength of people involved (p 225). Rather than mobilizing the public to protest against current practices with produce, we want customer involvement to be something that is done in collaboration with, and through the initiative of the store owners. This is a joint effort in which there is a place for everyone involved with produce to have a chance to make an impact.

The primary reason for store customers to come into the store is not to read our message but to grocery shop. They may be pressed for time, or be uninterested in being overloaded with information while they shop. However, since they are shopping at a natural foods store, we can assume that they are interested and open to learning about how they can make additional contribution to take environmentally beneficial actions. Sinek (2010) explained that people get engaged in things because of their beliefs, we just have to connect our initiative with their beliefs. Given this, we can mobilize action in this audience if we speak clearly to their values and make our ideas accessible, engaging, and easy to remember and apply. Earths Choice ~ Our Choice does this through the use of communication methods including narrative, framing, and semiotics.

Produce Suppliers

As part of our advocacy strategy it is important to consider this audience. Our intention is to not contact produce suppliers directly but instead encourage store owners to connect in with them to discuss packaging and supply options. In this way we would be communicating up through the store owners to the suppliers. Store owners would already have established a relationship with their suppliers so they have potential leverage to influence changes with produce packaging. During the initiating phase of our campaign, we do not yet have credibility with any of the key players, so it would be wise to build upon the established connection between the store owners and the suppliers.

Community

In addition to communicating to our primary audience, the store owners, a broader communication strategy will include an information campaign that speaks to schools, farmers markets, and health care professionals. These community members are, along with store customers, ultimately a part of our secondary audience. Spreading our information to the wider local community can allow us to mobilize support for our goals. Cox (2012) explained that gaining support from this wider audience can be an effective way to keep the primary audience accountable (p. 219). The specific values and perspectives of these audiences would be determined, but are beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on one part of this larger strategy: communication with the natural food store owners and customers.

Sustainable Choice through Ecocentric Metaphor

Metaphors are communication gems, enriching our lives and, when carefully spun, weave together all living strands into a dynamic whole. Our connections to the Earth have been worn, frayed and in some cases severed. The myth of nature as flat or balanced can be replaced with re-

framing through metaphor, myth and inspirational semiotics. The dominant paradigm with its anthropocentric language can be transformed. Evoking ecocentric frames, creating new meaningful myth, and encouraging celebration and respect for this planet begins with metaphor.

Enhancing our understanding of how our responsible choices contribute to a healthy planet can be achieved by an effective communication strategy (Hoggan, 2009). Our campaign, primarily directed at natural food store owners, will provide influential inclusive metaphors interspersed throughout emotion inspiring narrative. These tactics will augment our audience's feeling that their participation matters (FrameWorks, n.d.). Metaphors in our communication piece allow for frames to emerge that are, by nature, linked to emotional regions of the brain (Lakoff, 2010). In turn, it is this emotional response that determines what we like and do not like (Lakoff, 2010). Ecocentric metaphor guides our audience towards liking our suggestions and wanting to take action in the form of sustainable choice.

Throughout our communication strategy, we are using one repetitious primary metaphoric phrase, which exemplifies our goal. Hoggan (2009) states that repetition enhances the ability for the message to be accessed and the subconscious brain is more apt to believe that easily recalled information is true (p. 70). Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice celebrates our interconnectedness and our ability to join the resiliency of nature, being an integral part of a healthy, symbiotic future. We are immersed within nature's vast food web. Our place among ever-changing adaptive cycles is analyzed but ultimately celebrated. These dynamic concepts are encompassed by our main ecocentric slogan. Additional metaphors such as "nature as celebration," "nature's gifts," "nature as food web," and "nature as cherished" and theories such as adaptive cycles and panarchy are presented so as to compliment the goal of weaving together Earth's Choice with Our Choices.

Barriers to Adoption of Our Communication Strategy

Identifying the barriers that may impede our progress toward attaining our goal is necessary so as to reveal opportunities and develop strategies for addressing these hurdles. Enlightenment reasoning has permeated our consciousness for centuries and has created many of the problems we will need to address in our communication strategy. Our implicit and explicit hierarchical views of our planet have proliferated. Capitalism and consumption are manifestations of these anthropocentric ideals. Although on a path heading toward a sustainable future, natural food store owners still may have an incomplete view of how to align Earth's Choice with Our Choices. Non-local, out of season and package fruits and vegetables are still apparent in these stores. Our communication strategy includes viable alternatives for i.e., sustainable packaging, purchasing local foods, and obtaining and canning/preserving seasonal foods. These options will require substantiation with solid research and by demonstrating socioecologic and socioeconomic advantages in terms of sustainable happiness i.e., Happy Planet Index and green accounting.

Food systems are, in general, dominated by anthropocentric metaphors. Many frames have been shaped, and neural circuits strengthened by this ideological language (Lakoff, 2010; Verhagan, 2008). New metaphors repeated throughout our communication strategy are chosen to guide the natural food store owners toward a more systemic view of nature. The frames evoked by these novel metaphors "must make sense in terms of the existing system of frames" (Lakoff, 2010, p. 72). Our campaign's primary metaphoric phrase, Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice allows familiar, necessary neural bridges to be strengthened.

An additional barrier to overcome is the perceived notion by the natural food store owner that in terms of survivability, valued customers could be lost if packaged produce or non-

seasonal produce is not available. There is an implicit expectation within our western society that a wide variety of fruit and vegetables should be available to us year-round. This barrier is based upon “nature as convenience,” “nature as cornucopian,” “nature as linear,” and “nature as resource” metaphors. Nature as convenience and nature as cornucopian may in fact be the greatest obstacles to address within our campaign.

These mechanistic metaphoric phrases are fortified by predominant myths of nature such as “nature flat” and “balanced nature.” For example, the myth “nature flat” may perpetuate the usage of the cornucopian reductionist metaphor promoting beliefs that human ingenuity can overcome barriers so that exponential growth may occur (Holling, Gunderson and Ludwig, 2002). In this case, nature flat myth reinforces the implicit belief that we should be able to buy any type of fruit and vegetable no matter how far it may have to travel. There is little regard to natural systems.

The “balanced nature” myth also stands as an obstacle. The natural food store owner may still cling to remnants of this myth that may be reinforced with metaphors such as “nature as convenience” or “nature as resource”. The packaging of fruits and vegetables in plastic may be a symptom of this unsustainable belief. Implicitly, both the natural food store owner and her customers may subscribe to the notion that even though nature is disturbed in the production and recycling of packaging, nature will magically return to equilibrium through negative feedback (Holling, Gunderson and Ludwig, 2002). They may feel that nature is endlessly resilient. This is not the case however if potential and connectedness are low within and between the adaptive cycles that make up the food production and distribution panarchy.

Even though the natural food store manager may want to provide a more natural systems approach to produce packaging and attainment, she is operating within a panarchy that possesses

elements of the dominant unsustainable paradigm. Adaptive cycles of various temporal and spatial scales make up this panarchy. Socioeconomic and socioecological systems are ebbing and flowing continuously. Interconnectedness, resiliency and adaptively have resulted in the emergence of natural food stores, sustainable packaging and local produce. Nevertheless, the panarchy ribbons of this food web require innovation, reorganization and rejuvenation to avoid becoming stuck in a rigidity trap and subsequent potential systemic collapse at multiple scales (Holling, 2010).

There is a possibility that some of our audience is in fact trapped in rigidity. Our communication will suggest this as a possibility by providing education about the nature of adaptive cycles. Entering into a natural food store philosophy and business, many of the store owners most likely underwent a transformative initiative that was filled with innovation, reorganization and rejuvenation. Their movement away from traditional forms of fruit and vegetable shopping i.e., introduction of organics, less packaging, and fresh local produce probably has led them into the upper right quadrant of the adaptive cycle or in other words into the conservation or maturity stage. Our primary audience may be comfortable to have their natural food stores rest here as they have reached a level of economic and societal recognition. But by being static, they may have entered a rigidity trap (Holling, Gunderson and Ludwig, 2002). As adaptive cycles require constant flux, the longer they stay in this conservation phase the greater the risk for panarchical collapse. This moment of perceived success is actually the time when a movement forward on the adaptive cycle ribbon could result in release of resources. This would result in another loop rich in new innovation, reorganization and rejuvenation to ensue.

In addition, our communication campaign needs to be mindful of communication theories i.e., Cognitive Dissonance. If new information is too conflicting, the store owner may revert to his current business as usual attitude (University of Twente n.d.). A phenomenon such as cognitive dissonance, if activated, could undermine our goal. Further, our strategy needs to address the attitude-behavior gap by encouraging agency and positive action in the form of sustainable choices (Cox, 2012 p. 232; Hoggan, 2009). Ultimately, without agency the social imperative crumbles and true sustainability is unattainable (Dale, Dushenko, and Robinson, 2012).

Relevant Communication Theories



Image courtesy of Nicofruitit

We would like to stress the use of adaptive communication, which encourages dialogue and joint solutions. In accordance with Wals' et al (2008) description of the instrumental, emancipatory, and blended models, we are looking to use a blended model to change behaviours. We would like to offer solutions, however, our focus is to initiate a dialogue with the store owner so that we can present the issue, identify common ground, and act as consultants to assist with finding a suitable way forward. There are several communication theories and concepts that can be useful in identifying and connecting key players with the common values that are shared between potentially conflicting worldviews including the use of narration, framing and semiotics.

Narration

Our communication initiative follows the outline of a story. Cox (2009) identified how imbedding initiatives into a story provides clarity and comprehension (p. 51). Similarly, with respect to presenting a vision and mobilizing action to reach it, Futerra (1996) identified the importance of presenting a vision, choice, plan, and action (p. 4). In the beginning we will introduce our envisioned future state and engage in dialogue in order to understand the perspective of our audience and identify any barriers or challenges that may not be evident to us. In the middle, we will offer solutions and together brainstorm ways to move past any barriers to reaching our vision. The climax/turning point of our campaign will occur when we have collaboratively identified a way forward and are moving ahead with implementation including empowering consumers' choices. Store owners can provide customers feedback on the actual reduction in carbon emissions that was achieved as a result of the efforts of everyone involved. This feedback, which monitors progress, can empower participants to continue the new practices.

In addition to our use of storytelling as a structure, it is a useful way for us to present our perception of the way forward with respect to systems-based produce practices. Sinek (2010) argued that people "do not buy what you do, they buy why you do it." We connect at the level of values by sharing a child's personal story of why there is a need for change and by highlighting the common values we share with store owners and customers. With this story, we give people a reason to support our campaign by evoking emotions and connecting our experiences with their own archetypical beliefs and values.

Framing and Semiotics

We want to frame our message in a way that uplifts our audience and motivates them to take action towards our mutual vision. When outlining a Republican Party environmental

platform, the Luntz Research Company (n.d.) stressed the need for the use of big picture framing, positive language and vision, and connection to what people value (p. 135). We can use a similar approach with the framing of our initiative. We can present the big picture in our vision of a healthy world with images of local produce that is packaged in an earth friendly way. The use of images and words can trigger existing frames and make the message powerful (Cox, 2010, p. 235). The use of local produce makes the campaign more personal. O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole (2009) stressed the need to connect ideas to everyday life, especially with environmental issues that feel like a distant problem in terms of both space and time (p. 369). If people make a connection between their choices with respect to produce purchases and natural systems, there is a better chance they will take positive action.

Illustration 1. Created by Taya Brokenshire



Another way to motivate action is through the use of empowering words and symbols. With an audience that already considers environmental choices to be important, the use of words like “responsibility,” “accountability,” “choice” and “we can” could motivate personal reflection and result in even more involvement with building a positive future. In addition, positive and

affirmative language can convince people that they can make a difference and that their actions are important. Semiotics can reach people on a deep level by speaking to their limbic brain where they make decision and connect to values (Lakoff, 2010; Sinek, 2010). In addition to the words, we can speak to this area of the brain directly by using the Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice symbol and slogan. The circular shape of the symbol and also the play on words "Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice" unifies us with nature by eliminating any barriers and showing continuous connection.

Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice: Your Choices Matter

What follows is a rough script of what we would present to the natural food store owners. Hoggan (2009) stressed the importance of preparing ideas in advance, so that no matter where the conversation goes, we can always bring it back to our key message (p. 108). Although we would adapt to the flow of the conversation as it evolves, it is valuable to have some communication goals for the meeting. The key message that we would keep coming back to is Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice, as a natural food store owner, *your choice* matter. Our communication campaign to be displayed in the natural food stores would also be fully prepared in advance, but we would remain open and flexible to work in collaboration with the store owners ensuring a personalized presentation if required.

Supporting Sustainable Community Action: The Store Owner's Contribution

Good morning,

Thank you for meeting with us today. We are presenting a transformative way to envision produce practices so as to demonstrate what is possible for your store to lead the way right now. The adoption of systems-based produce practices is directly in line with the vision of your

natural foods store and connects to the values of your customers. Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice is a sustainability initiative that considers the full life cycle of produce.

Taya's Story (7 years old). Taya Brokenshire's story explains why there is an urgent need for change with produce packaging:

"All things come from nature. I love nature. I love the flowers and the bees. They buzz around our kale flowers. They like the colour yellow. I like colours too. I love blue sky. Summer time is fun. I get to play with friends in the garden. I help Mom plant and water the vegetables. I am careful to water the soil and not the leaves so that the roots get wet. I do not want to waste water. Nature doesn't waste things.

We are lucky to have a garden. Lots of people don't have one. We get to eat fresh food a lot. We go to farmer's markets too. When we grow extra food I help Mom can so that we can eat from our garden even in the winter. We like to share our canned fruit and vegetables with our friends. They smile when we visit with our garden jars. I feel happy.

Me and my friends at school eat litter-less lunches. We get points for food that is free of packages. We get points for fruits and vegetables that are not wrapped in plastic and fruits and vegetables that are grown in our community. It is fun to make sure we don't use up nature. I have learned that even recycling uses up nature by eating energy.

Mom and I shop at the Ruddy Potato for some of our fruits and vegetables. It is a nice store close to our house. Sometimes they have treats for kids. There are many yummy, healthy things to eat but there are fruits and vegetables that are not litter-less. They are wrapped in plastic. Sometimes, I watch Mom stand in front of vegetables that have come from far away. She also stands in front of the cherry tomatoes that are stuffed into containers. I can tell that she is thinking. She doesn't buy them. She just stares at them. They look very tasty but Mom

says we are choosing to pick fruits and vegetables from close to home. She says nature is better off because of our choices.

Illustration 2. Created by Taya Brokenshire



I love nature. I want to have nature for the bees and red tomatoes. I don't want the blue sky to turn grey with the pollution from travelling fruit and vegetables. Since nature doesn't waste things why are vegetables in plastic packages? Making packages wastes water and energy. Everything comes from nature. If we use too much of her the colours will be gone. I will be sad."

Where Do We Grow From Here? We see that you are ahead of the game as natural food store owners because there is already an acknowledgement of environmental factors with the kinds of fruits and vegetables that are stocked and sold here. Customers flock to your store because you respect natural systems. In order to keep speaking to customers values, it is useful to adapt and evolve, as opposed to maintaining status quo practices. This period of success is in

fact the optimum time to move forward so as to encourage innovation and rejuvenation. Your store can lead the way to support natural systems choosing produce attainment and packaging that is earth friendly. Earths Choice ~ Our Choice is the path to do this.

As natural food store owners, you can lead the way to a sustainable future in five ways:

1. Reducing the carbon footprint of produce transportation by buying locally produced foods;
2. Source produce that comes in natural packaging (this can include the use of invasive plants like Japanese Knotweed, or materials that may otherwise be tossed away like corn husks);
3. Align produce supply with the seasonal cycle of local foods and promote canning;
4. Replace plastic/paper bulk bags with hemp bags; and
5. Increase consumer awareness by implementing an information strategy that allows consumers a chance to make ecologically informed choices about their produce purchases.

These five actions are possible because there are customers who are already using their own natural packaging for produce transportation to their homes and aligning their diets with seasonal and local produce. Your actions can be so valuable and instrumental in helping your customers live their values of supporting the environment through their produce choices. Your store can be groundbreaking and forward thinking by supporting these values and adopting the five points of Earths Choice ~ Our Choice.

We have suggestions for an information campaign that could be run in your store to empower customers to make earth friendly produce choices. We share common values of wanting to respect natural systems, so as to enjoy beautiful nourishing food. We would love to hear your ideas and engage in discussion. As an owner of a natural food store, you are already an established community leader with respect to environmentally sound food choices. Given this, your decisions with respect to produce practices are vital and can make such an impact to the

wellbeing of this community. We would like to join you and lead the way with Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice produce.

Empowerment Strategy for the Customers

Our information campaign for your customers is adaptive, resilient and evolving. By displaying the Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice logo, you can *give* to the community through helping local producers and ultimately the planet's health. In addition to this, through implementing an information campaign about Earth's Choice produce, you can improve the happiness of your customers by allowing them the opportunity to make informed choices that support earth friendly practices. This information initiative can be adaptive, resilient, and evolving as a flow of information emerges between consumers and the campaign. We have some ideas about the initial campaign, which could be presented to customers through large, colourful, simple, professional, and catchy poster boards in key areas in the produce section of the store. The information on these boards could include:

1. Presentation of the Issue: Provide Taya's Story;
2. An Offer of Solutions: Prominently displayed sustainable foods with the identifiable Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice symbol and encourage customers to choose produce with this symbol;
and
3. Follow Up Data: Track the reduction of your store's carbon footprint and let your customers know of the success that they are a part of!

Community Awareness Campaign

In tandem with the communication campaign designed for a primary audience of natural food store owners, an additional campaign will be developed for community members. This educational dialogue and information dissemination initiative would begin with visiting local

farmers markets, schools and preschools. Presenting and displaying our campaign materials i.e., Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice logo, at farmers markets could reach some of the same individuals that may shop at the natural food stores. In addition to the store customers this part of the large secondary audience, (community members), may become advocates and supporters of our campaign as they become familiar with our semiotics and educational materials. Cox (2010) states that the secondary audience plays an important role in keeping the primary audience (natural food store owners) accountable (p. 218).

Another part of our community-based communication strategy would originate with children, youth and their teachers. Litter-less lunch initiatives in schools could be augmented by displaying and discussing the Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice symbol, the Freedom Tomato poster and Taya's story. Encouraging systems thinking by promoting sustainable produce production and attainment could be achieved. Providing images of the problem i.e., Earthbound lettuce in a plastic container could be impressive especially if juxtaposed with a beautiful garden full of "greens". These visuals would be accompanied by posed questions that evoke curiosity, and imagination. Allowance for creative thinking could abound for without this ability, sustainable outcomes are hampered (Cooper, 2011).

Similar to the campaign specifically designed for our primary audience of natural food store owners, this communication campaign repeats the idea that we are a part of the amazing web of life that provides us with spectacular fruits and vegetables. As we adapt to feedback from all community members and include them in future actions, we are practicing a mode of empowerment (Cox, 2010, p.84). Over time, our campaign could be disseminated further a field, touching a broader community by social networking and main-stream media. Our core message would remain clear and focused. Aligning our choices with those choices that support nature

allows for the earth to flourish. Making Earth's Choice ~ Our Choice improves the human experience.

Choosing a Flourishing Path Forward



Image Courtesy of T.Loe

From early transitional movements such as the Enlightenment Period, much of Western Civilization embarked on a trajectory rocketing away from sustainable ideals. With respect to an ill-defined quest for "human progress", reductionist severing of humanity from nature has been the result. It is now a commonplace mis-informed assumption that progress is confined to technological advances. Technology does not often take systems thinking into account. Plastic packaging, for example, uses enormous quantities of fossil fuels during production which deleteriously affect the earth through greenhouse gas emissions (Gleick & Cooley, 2009; Pilz, Brandt, and Fehring, 2010). It takes approximately half a litre of oil to make one plastic tomato container (Plastic Oceans, n.d.). Energy is then again exhausted if and when the packaging is recycled. Limits to industrialized progress is tightly linked to limits of nature. Depletion of natural processes limits human progress. While we continue to modify our natural systems we are actually modifying ourselves to a point that makes it challenging to distinguish our essential connection to the earth from the mass materialized heterogeneity of our surroundings. Being a

part of this incredible planet rather than separate from the source of subsistence is key to a sustainable path forward. Ultimately, aligning Earth's Choice with Our Choice allows natural bonds rich in sustainable happiness at all levels of society and in every aspect of decision-making to emerge, grow and flourish.

References

- Christakis, Nicholas. (2010, February). The hidden influence of social networks. TED Talks. [Video file: 18:10]. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U-tOghblfE>
- Cooper, C. B. (2011). Media literacy as a key strategy toward improving public acceptance of climate change science. *Bioscience*, 61 (3), 231-237. Retrieved from: <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/ehost/detail?sid=39c8548c-a590-4919-8a0f-49b2d0f5ad84%40sessionmgr110&vid=1&hid=125&bdata=#db=aph&AN=59236298>
- Cox, R. (2010). Chapters 1, 2 & 8. In *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dale, A., Dushenko, W., and Robinson, P. (2012). *Urban sustainability, reconnecting space and place*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- FrameWorks. (n.d.). In James Hoggan (2009). *Do the right thing: PR tips for a skeptical public*. p. 74. Sterling, VA: Capital Books.
- Futerra Sustainability Communications. (1996). [Sizzle: the new climate message](#). 32 pages.
- Gleick, P. H. and Cooley, H. S. (2009). Energy implications of bottled water. *Environmental Research Letters*. 4. Retrieved from: http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/4/1/014009/pdf/erl9_1_014009.pdf
- Hoggan, J. (2009). Chapters 5 & 16-21. *Do the right thing: PR tips for a skeptical public*. Sterling, VA: Capital Books.
- Holling, C. S. (2010). Resilience and adaptability cycle. Social Innovation Generation. Retrieved from: <http://www.sigeration.ca/home/resilience-and-adaptability/>

Holling, C.S., Gunderson, L.H. & Ludwig, D. (2002). Chapter 1: In search of a theory of adaptive change. In Lance H. Gunderson & C.S. Holling (Eds.). *Panarchy: Understanding transformations in human and natural systems* pp.3-22. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Lakoff, G. (2010). [Why it matters how we frame the environment](#). *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70-81.

Marks, Nic. (2010, Jul.). [The happy planet index](#). TED Talks. [Video file: 16:49]

Pilz, H., Brandt, B., and Fehring, R. (2010). The impact of plastics on the life cycle energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in Europe. *Denkstratt*. Retrieved from: http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CDoQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.plasticseurope.org%2Fcust%2Fdocumentrequest.aspx%3FDocID%3D46091&ei=X6qvU48M4jhoAT63IHODA&usg=AFQjCNG8IAxXC7OYQKpMt6Z_gtqE3lzYQQ&sig2=UoFrGPYKu4lLHK-K6WMLKQ&bvm=bv.69837884,d.cGU

Plastic Oceans. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.plasticoceans.net/the-facts/energy-consumption/>

Sinek, Simon. (2010, Sept.). [How great leaders inspire action](#). TED Talks. [Video file: 18:05].

Steffen, Alex. (2005). [The route to a sustainable future](#). TED Talks [Video file:17:31]

The Lutz Research Companies - Straight Talk. The environment: A cleaner, safer, healthier America. Retrieved from <http://moodle.royalroads.ca/moodle/mod/book/view.php?id=63438&chapterid=26315>.

University of Twente. n.d. Levels of theories. Cognitive dissonance. Retrieved from: <http://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Levels%20of%20theories/>

Verhagen, F. (2008). Worldviews and metaphors in the human-nature relationship: An ecolinguistic exploration through the ages. *Language and Ecology*, 2 (3).

Wals, A. E. J., Geerling-Eijff, F., Hubeek, F., van der Kroon, S., & Vader, J. (2008). [All mixed up? Instrumental and emancipatory learning toward a more sustainable world: considerations for EE policymakers.](#) *Applied Environmental Education & Communication*, 7(3), 55-65.