



Global More=Global Less: Feature Introduction

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Less is the future. Less water. Less food. Less resources. Less consumption. Less of everything. Less equals a mandate for massive change now—the shift in values, in use, in stewardship and in the way we inhabit the world. This can be terrifying, but is change, and less, something to be feared? I don't think so.

Human needs, values and cultural patterns are at the center of this question. Solutions and strategies dependent on the *hair shirt* (cilice) and morals will not succeed. Long-term change and the curiosity and innovation that supports it must be a source of pleasure and joy. Change that integrates richness as a part of living with less can succeed.

This ARCADE feature section, “Global More=Global Less,” asserts that we can leap beyond the fear of change to find liberating strategies, pushing aside stasist arguments that delay action and moving forward. It includes the thinking and work of individuals and organizations that are moving beyond a resistance to change and action. This is hard work, requiring a fearless commitment and a willingness to be alone in an inherently optimistic pursuit.

In Kevin Kelly's “Clock in the Mountain,” we see how The Long Now Foundation's *10,000 Year Clock* project viscerally challenges the accepted short-term view. Casting forward with a time span equal to the period of human civilization, the *Clock* places us at the midpoint and begs us to reconsider our role on this planet. Kongjian Yu is doggedly, at great personal risk, doing just this—*pushing the mountain*. His efforts exemplify the questions raised by the Clock, and are effecting profound physical and cultural change in China. As he discusses in the following interview, Kongjian is compelled to act and is working with great skill in a profoundly complex economic, social, political and environmental situation. Working within the context of the deep cultural patterns of China, this is one man who understands the imperative need to consume less. If he can do this, we all can. As he pointedly notes, we in America have more freedom, and given the international influence of our consumptive lifestyle, we have both a huge responsibility and opportunity to effect change. Kongjian Yu considers values and lifestyle habits and their role in establishing patterns of consumption essential issues, and I agree. Take notice of his example and act.

BIG is implementing a simple manifest of “Hedonistic Sustainability” with the necessary complexity the real world requires. They have directly tackled the assumption that sacrifice is required to be sustainable—that it has to hurt to be good. To this, BIG says baloney and is countering this preconception with real projects, rigor and humor. Humans need pleasure—they are hedonistic at their cores. Pliny Fisk III, with the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, has consistently pursued the question of cultural values and their physical manifestation in his work, and the following excerpts from a lengthy interview share his current investigation into brain function and communication. Like BIG, Pliny's work broadens the framework and tools we can bring to our efforts—a

reason for optimism.

It takes small and big moves to change behavior. Anna Fahey and her family have tackled the addiction to consumption with the experiment of not buying new “stuff” for a year, an experience she shares in this issue. While not a new idea, they are successfully replacing the pleasure of consumption with other forms of gratification and living with less. This is a diet that works. The simple basics keep coming up. A-P Hurd, in her essay “Restoring Our Faith in Investment” urges us to invest in the larger collective and against adding more rules when the basic moral structure like *thou shalt not lie!* does the job. Biologist and visionary behind The Long Now Foundation and the *Whole Earth Catalog*, Stewart Brand, reflects on a new sense of time growing out of the Apollo 8 moon mission and our first full view of the Earth from space. First published over a decade ago, his observations are still immensely relevant.

Many of these ideas are old, but the juxtapositions that are surfacing are surprising. Lisa Picard argues that the struggle for change and associated discomfort is no worse than discomfort resulting from life fractures due to inaction. Lisa is acting and thinks real estate development should be undertaken with mindfulness in order to nurture new, rather than habitual, responses. This has its roots in the teachings of Buddha and is a mind-blowing way to view development. In practice, it forces the thoughtful consideration of what is real and what is essential. It questions the superficial mindless trends and historic patterns of consumption. It drives strategies to a deeper level and while uncomfortable, pushes toward change.

Having time for mulling and incubation is essential to finding truly integrated, innovative strategies. Maggie Kaplan, founder of the foundation Invoking the Pause, has committed to supporting exploration through small grants that give recipients the freedom of time to explore intellectual and meaningful connections. This generosity is essential in shifting profoundly embedded values and patterns

The contributors to this issue of ARCADE represent a small sample of the multitude of individuals and organizations working with conviction, dogged commitment, and often alone, toward effecting fundamental change. Many like Stewart Brand and Pliny Fisk III have made this their life’s work. If you are impatient or given to whim, this path is not for you. If you are in it for the long run and really care, we live in a time when access to information is richer and more diverse than it has ever been in history. The opportunity for cross-disciplinary and integrated thinking, rapid innovation and action, is exceptional.

In terms of design, access to this wealth of information and examples of innovation fundamentally increases our ability to reframe the basic cultural values that define the world we live in. It is possible to build credible arguments, find like-minded thinkers and shift the cultural impulse from more to less.

More Individuals Effecting Positive Change

Rory Sutherland, Ogilvy & Mather

Cultural values and patterns are critical tools for those in advertising, and Rory Sutherland’s observations in a number of recent TEDTalks merit watching. People who sell things and ideas must understand values and behavioral economics to be successful. If we are to shift, as Rory suggests, from our blind attraction to big actions with little return to small actions with huge return, we should understand these forces. He believes value is relative, which if true, presents a remarkable tool for all of us to use.

Pieter Hoff

Inventor Pieter Hoff’s Groasis Waterboxx exemplifies thinking that creates more from less.

The Waterboxx, which lasts for 10 years, captures daily condensation— enough to support plant saplings or seeds. Dew collection is not new, but this simple strategy can be used to successfully address the fertility of arid and semi-arid lands impacted by war, deforestation and over-farming. Brilliantly, he has proposed a cross continental Waterboxx tree-windbreak in the African Sahara. The Waterboxx is a great example of a remarkable return on investment and a perfect response to the questions A-P Hurd raises in this issue about focusing on a long-term vision, not just rules and standard evaluations of return. How many Waterboxxes could be purchased and installed for the cost of one fighter jet?

Brian Eno

Brian Eno – composer, producer and visual artist – is a board member of The Long Now Foundation, maker of the 10,000 Year Clock. His thoughts on “Now” from the foundation:

“The longer your sense of Now, the more past and future it includes. It’s ironic that, at a time when humankind is at a peak of its technical powers, able to create huge global changes that will echo down the centuries, most of our social systems seem geared to increasingly short nows. Huge industries feel pressure to plan for the bottom line and the next shareholders meeting. Politicians feel forced to perform for the next election or opinion poll. The media attracts bigger audiences by spurring instant and heated reactions to human interest stories while overlooking longer-term issues—the real human interest.

...But can we accept that our actions and decisions have distant consequences and yet still dare to do anything? It was an act of complete faith to believe, in the days of slavery, that a way of life which had been materially very successful could be abandoned and replaced by another then yet unimagined, but somehow, it happened. We need to make a similar act of imagination now.”

Barbara Swift is a landscape architect, urban designer and founder of [Swift Company LLC](#). Barbara's work at the European Ceramic Workcentre focused on the development of a building cladding system that collects and slowly releases water.

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