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A New Agenda for Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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A New Agenda for Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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Abstract – Sustainability in the broadest sense - environmental, social and economic - is the most urgent issue confronting leaders of organizations and indeed people everywhere. Man-made climate change is the greatest challenge. The second greatest threat is the crisis caused by global social injustice, disease and violence.

Big business is immensely powerful and dominates global institutions. Its responsibilities are enormous. Business is the prime source of innovation and creativity in society. It is a major force for good and has brought great benefits.

Equally it is capable of great harm, especially when in denial or resistance. At its best, business grasps the big issues as opportunities.

Most business leaders are good people wanting to do good. Yet it is difficult for them to do this and meet the demands of stockholders and financial markets. The obstacle is the global framework for business and the underlying values. However, with developing awareness, values change.

We live in an interconnected world, a living system, ecological and human. If this is not respected, the results are punishing, as we are seeing. Change will come about, no matter what we do. If it is to be desirable, less painful change, the underlying system needs to be addressed. This is in everyone's interest. Business leaders need to become activists for systemic change.

The author takes a radical look at the underlying system and offers an agenda – including world trading, money and taxation systems; democratizing global institutions; a charter for global corporations; new legal duties for directors.

#### Keywords

Sustainability, corporate responsibility, free market capitalism, global issues, transformation

#### Biographical note

Bruce Nixon gained an M A(Oxon) and is Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development. He is a veteran management consultant, mentor, shadow consultant in sustainability in the broadest sense, organisation transformation, whole system change, learning and leadership. He is author of over fifty articles and his two current books are Making a Difference – Strategies and Tools for Transforming your Organisation (2001) and Global Forces – A Guide for Enlightened Leaders : What Companies and Individuals Can Do (2000), updated in 2003. Before starting his consulting business in 1987, he worked in HR and Internal Consulting in large corporations in the Caribbean, North America and the United Kingdom. Since then, he has worked at a strategic level with a wide variety of organisations.

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### A New Agenda for Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

#### 1. The Crisis at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

“Climate change is a far greater threat to the world than international terrorism”  
Sir David King UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser. BBC News 9-1-2004

“Poverty, disease and environmental decline are the true axis of evil” Christopher  
Flavin, President, World Watch

“The global war on terror is diverting the world's attention from the central causes  
of instability. Acts of terror and the dangerous reactions they provoke are

symptomatic of underlying sources of global insecurity, including the perilous interplay among poverty, infectious disease, environmental degradation, and rising competition over oil and other resources". World Watch Institute, annual State of the World 2005

It's a wonderful World, full of possibilities. For many people, especially in the West, life has improved immeasurably compared with a few generations ago.

But we face a crisis of enormous proportions. Sustainability in the broadest sense - environmental, social and economic - is the most urgent issue confronting people everywhere. World Watch starkly presents the paradox of the energy and billions of dollars spent on war, rather than on addressing the real crisis.

Man-made environmental change, including climate change, the rapid degradation of the earth's diverse ecology, pollution and the depletion of irreplaceable resources, threatens our very existence. The crisis caused by global social injustice, disease, violence and lack of respect for difference is an equal danger, particularly if it unleashes nuclear terrorism. Sustainability needs to be redefined to include far more than the environment - to embrace all those activities that lead to an unsustainable global society.

The Environment. There is growing recognition that climate change is the greatest threat we face, far greater than terrorism. We risk massive, unpredictable and irreversible ecological change. Current US and European ways of life, replicated throughout the world are completely unsustainable. The rapid growth of the Chinese and Indian economies is a further concern. Tony Blair, preparing for Presidency of G8 and the EU, said the world's greatest environmental challenge is "so far-reaching in its impact and irreversible in its destructive power, that it alters radically human existence." Yet most of us act as if unaware of the need for urgent and far-reaching action. We continue our business and lifestyles as if there were no problem. Greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut by 60% by mid - century. Yet even if the Kyoto Protocol were implemented, emissions would rise 30% in a decade. Meanwhile seas are rising, creatures like fish are moving North, species are disappearing, our soil in Europe becomes degraded and our climate gets more unstable and hotter. The South waits for the rich countries to put their house in order.

Global social injustice and violence. Less recognised, is the crisis caused by global social injustice and violence. The roots of un-sustainability, are huge disparities in wealth and power and the growing gap between rich and poor. For the mass of human beings, globalisation isn't working - not at least in its present form. For those relative few of us, the "in-betweens", it works to a degree but at a huge cost, personal and environmental, and only in the short term. We are "enslaved" by it and heading for what looks like disaster.

Globalisation works best (though perhaps not at a spiritual level) for a tiny elite of very rich and powerful people (Bill Gates receives £60m in Microsoft dividends) but not for the mass of six billion human beings throughout the world, 85% of whom live on \$5.98 per day (World Bank) and one billion on less than a dollar. Two

hundred and twenty five people own more wealth than the poorest 2.5 billion people (UNDP Human Development Report, 1998). Between the 1930s and the 1980s, the gap between rich and poor in the UK was closing. But, for the last 20 years, for many in rich countries and most people in the poorest, things have got worse. In the US, many people are worse off or at least very little better off, while the rich are vastly richer. Twelve percent of people in USA live below the official poverty threshold. Growing numbers are without health insurance. Working people suffer immense insecurity as jobs migrate and their compensation declines as work is outsourced. Women are put out of food producing work in Africa. In India, rapid development has not benefited India's 550 million farmers many of whom suffer dire poverty and are deep in debt. Many commit suicide. 500 million people in India are below the poverty line. Slavery is illegal in every country but there are more slaves than ever—an estimated 27 million. Four million women and children are trafficked every year, one million for prostitution. (Anti-Slavery International)

Of course, the terminology is wrong. It is not globalisation that isn't working. Globalisation has existed for centuries and, on balance, has brought rich benefits to humanity. It is the current economic system, the doctrine of free market capitalism, involving consumerism, continuous economic growth, the unproven "trickle down" doctrine and imposed universal privatisation that is not working. Over two hundred years ago, Adam Smith, supposed author of the free market doctrine, warned of the dangers of unfettered free trade.

Maybe globalisation is really 'Americanisation' or 'Westernisation'? Perhaps consumerism and the pursuit of economic growth, power and empire-building are leading to spiritual poverty and a widespread backlash is emerging.

Hostility to the West is a major threat to business, our security and peace of mind. 9/11 and subsequent attacks by terrorists have made it clear that no country, however rich and powerful, is safe. 'War against terror' is unlikely to work because there can be no peace without justice. People become suicide bombers when they lose hope of participating in the creation of a fair society. Exclusion and desperation lead to violence. A violent response breeds more violence. It does not tackle the underlying issues. The horrors in Iraq, Israel and Palestine are three of many examples.

2. Business is a major force for good.

It is most important to give an honest and balanced picture. Portraying globalisation and business as bad is grossly simplifying a complex picture. Life expectancy and the conditions of life for most people in the West and many in developing countries, have improved enormously in the past 100 years. The West is a freer, far more exciting place than 50 years ago, full of opportunity and possibilities. Business is, and always has been the major driving force for innovation and beneficial change in society and in our ways of life, a major force for good. Most people in business are good people working hard to provide excellent products and services. An outstanding example of proactive thinking in the USA is the New Apollo Project (Apollo Alliance), an alliance of labour, environmental, civil rights, business and political leaders with a vision to achieve energy independence in ten years and create new jobs. Business, at its best sees the big issues as

opportunities. Those that do so “do well by doing good” as Ray Anderson, Chairman and founder of Interface, says. Interface, a major international carpet company, aims for a “zero footprint” and is more than half way there (Interface). Interface is creating a host of sustainable companies in its supply chain too. Toyota, with its low environmental impact cars, is knocking spots off GM and Ford, the latter with its Range Rovers, Jaguars and SUVs – instead of putting into practice Bill Ford’s vision of a few years ago - “In 25 years, fuel cells could be the predominant way of powering cars”. Businesses that respond to the big issues prosper; those that don’t lose their reputation or decline and die – sooner or later.

3. But business is equally capable of great doing harm.

As organisations grow bigger, so does the potential harm. There is a growing awareness of the adverse and extremely costly effects of business on our health and sustainability (e.g. the tobacco, alcohol, food and drinks industries, food sourcing and agribusiness), our lifestyles, the environment and the way the West is seen by other cultures.

Business exports most of the environmental and social costs it creates. These costs are not taken into account in pricing or evaluating alternatives – eg sustainable sources of power generation. Cheap may be extremely costly. Companies like Tesco drive down prices but at what cost to the environment, food miles, jobs, the fabric of our towns, local food supplies and countryside? Many of the defensive arguments are obviously flawed. Global sourcing, road transport and aviation contribute greatly to emissions of carbon dioxide. Government and the food industry alike need to face up to the fact that the food system as it stands is unsustainable. Tara Garnett, author of *Transport 2000’s Wise Moves*, (Transport 2000), said: “We have developed a global food industry that is hastening the onslaught of climate change. Climate change is not just a power station or car but the food on our plate too.” Reduced prices resulting from global sourcing do not reflect all the environmental and social costs. A recent study by Professors Pretty and Lang estimates the environmental costs of the way we produce and transport food at £3.2bn or £4bn if subsidies are added (Pretty, J and Lang, J). Does it make sense to evaluate renewable energy without costing the damage to the environment resulting from carbon based or nuclear alternatives? Ray Anderson reckons the full cost of a gallon of gas would be at least \$200 if the Iraq war is included. The tax payer and public services struggle to pick up many of the pieces; the cost grows exponentially.

The influence and power of business have grown enormously and threatens democracy. The economies of many transnational corporations (TNCs) are larger than medium-sized nations. Democratic national governments or regions such as the EU dare not introduce sustainable policies that put them at a competitive disadvantage. National governments have to woo TNCs in their desire to create favourable conditions for investment and employment in their countries. TNCs exert great influence on politicians, global institutions and the current world free trade policies. It is these unfair trade policies and globalisation, which arguably are having the most damaging effect on the impoverished, poor countries and the environment.

#### 4. A confidence crisis for big business.

The succession of financial scandals (Enron, Andersens and World Com) affected people throughout the world. Reports of business malpractice in USA, EU and UK continue. Even well respected companies e.g. Shell overplaying its reserves; BP's alleged involvement in human rights abuses in West Papua and BAT allegedly shifting its marketing of cigarettes to Asia (while 5 million die every year from smoking related diseases, set to double by 2020) dents confidence in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Is it more "spin" than substance? Are we really in a position to lecture Africa on corruption?

The perception of 'fat cat' greed continues. UK directors' pay climbed three times faster than average earnings in 2003. Reports of directors bolstering their own pensions, whilst those of ordinary employees suffer, continue – e.g. Rover and the Phoenix Four. A large proportion of corporate profits, particularly in USA, are held in tax havens. The Economist reported Rupert Murdoch paid no tax in the UK since 1987 on his £1.4 billion profit because of the way he uses the global system to avoid tax.

CSR is viewed by many with scepticism. They see it as "Green-washing." CSR is about making a business case for acting in a socially and environmentally responsible way because it is the right thing to do. It means withdrawing from harmful activities and identifying new markets for new or improved products and services that are sustainable. Sustainability needs to be central to corporate strategy, part of the life-blood of the organisation. This is true for only a very small proportion of companies, like Interface, a shining example. The free market framework within which business operates makes this extremely difficult. CSR seems like a bandwagon, often more about looking good rather than doing good, profitable business and avoiding harm.

#### 5 Loss of confidence in politicians and democracy.

The experience of the war in Iraq has made many people question the efficacy of force in dealing with global problems. Would the \$220bn spent on the war, benefiting arms companies and support industries, be better spent in other ways such as education and health in the Third World? Has the war unleashed an even greater threat to the West? Is a "war on terror" likely to work when it does not deal with the underlying issues that breed violence. (The 20th century accounted for some 95% of the over 120,000,000 deaths in war since 1700. At the close of the century, despite so-called precision weapons, over 95% of the deaths in wars were civilian compared with 52% in the 1960s. The startling evidence is that those who start wars rarely win. (Peace Pledge Union)).

More people are questioning the integrity and consistency of foreign policy. Mark Curtis estimates British foreign policy since WW2 has been directly or indirectly responsible for around 10 million deaths throughout the world (Mark Curtis, 2005). The public note the support of corrupt, tyrannical rulers. Is it more about oil and other interests than ethics? Was Bush in going to war in Iraq primarily acting on behalf of big business and the opportunities it would create for the likes of Halliburton. Did PM Blair mislead the nation? Did he have a "divine right" to take

the nation to war without the formal approval of a fully informed parliament and with so many citizens opposing war, because of his conviction that it was right? Can politicians be trusted? Are expensive inquiries and commissions essentially expensive "hog-washing"? Is power the primary motivation of politicians? Why do they resist a voting system that would bring about a House of Commons that more closely matches the electorate's votes? Is the underlying thrust of the Africa Commission neo-colonialism, implanting Western approaches, seeking opportunities for business rather than supporting African people in creating their own solutions including grass roots initiatives? The dire situation in Africa today, though rooted in a colonial legacy and corruption, is substantially due to unfair terms of trade imposed by the West, including high tariffs and dumping subsidised food produce; the huge debt and interest burden created by the West and an arms trade centred in London (Dowden, R 2005). It is it fair trade, not charity and aid, that will help fundamentally transform the situation. Fine promises and years of summits have produced little action so far.

6. Human society is part of an interconnected living system. If a living system is not respected, it hits back harshly. It is now even more obvious that human society and our planet are all part of an interconnected living system. When people do not learn willingly, the Universe forces it on them – the principle of Karma. That applies both to our environment and human society.

We are all members of a global community and what happens in other parts of the world, especially in other cultures and the less economically developed world, affects everyone. Every human being deserves the chance of a healthy and fulfilling life. All life on the planet needs to be respected.

Many people in the world experience or intuitively understand the destructive aspects of globalisation. Rejection of the current form of global capitalism and its values may have already begun. Every day, the big issues present themselves in the media more strongly. The big wake up call was the horror of 9/11, the consequences and the corporate scandals that emerged. Perhaps George Bush and the Neo-Conservatives and the phenomenon of Usama Bin Laden, Al-Qaida and Fundamentalism are reflections of each other. The instability, disturbances and breakdowns we are now facing, may lead to breakthroughs in our consciousness.

7. Seeing the system  
If we want to change things for the better it is no good picking at the problems. Problem solving won't work. We need to see the underlying system. We need to address the system and think creatively – outside the box. For business leaders committed to sustainability as the central strategic imperative, the system is an obstacle. So what is the system? Here is my best understanding of the key elements of this interconnected system.

#### The System is the Obstacle

- The Money Debt System Almost all the money we use (except the 3% which is notes and coins) is created by commercial banks, who charge interest, not by central banks and government. USA, poor countries and people generally are hugely indebted. Banks make enormous profits. It's a great way to make

money. We need to look afresh at the debt-money system. The need to earn enough to repay large amounts of interest and debt drives the pursuit of continuous, unsustainable economic development. This impoverishes us all in the broadest sense – not just the money but the pressure and distortion of life style. Money could be provided in other ways, particularly for investment in public services — transport, health, education, water, sewerage, affordable housing and small businesses. Are PPP and PFI building up a huge debt burden for future generations? Does it make sense that the Channel Tunnel, which provides a more sustainable form of travel than air, is crippled with enormous debt, for example? Aid to poor countries and debt relief under Gordon Brown's current proposals would be funded by banks thus creating even more debt. Maybe the old idea that usury is a sin, has found its place for a second time. (Robertson, J, 2003).

- Taxation Currently, taxation penalises positive contributions people make to society and fails to penalise value subtracted such as over-use of natural resources and pollution. It taxes work and enterprise; does not sufficiently penalise the unsustainable or, on the other hand, reward and encourage the sustainable. Similarly, many subsidies are perverse. The present tax system makes it easy for rich people to evade tax. The poor pay a higher proportion of their earnings than the rich. (Robertson, J, 2003).
- Tax evasion. Assets held offshore, either tax-free or subject to minimal tax, are estimated at €9.2 trillion, over one-third of global GDP.
- Company Ownership Company ownership and financing ties businesses to the short-term pressures and unpredictability of the stock market. It exposes businesses to the constant threat of take-over, instead of enabling them to focus on sustainability, meeting human needs, long term development and serving customers (providing good value), employees and the community.
- Company law. Current perception is that the primary duty of directors is to shareholders — to maximise profit and share value — rather than all stakeholders such as the environment, society as a whole, local community, consumers and employees. Corporations have globalised – but the rules haven't.
- Unrepresentative Global Institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the IMF are dominated by the interests of large corporations and rich nations. They have imposed unfair trading rules, "structural adjustment programmes," privatisation and a huge burden of debt and interest payments on Third World countries. Theories of undiluted global capitalism, "free trade" (not fully applied to our own economies) and "trickle down" wealth creation have not worked. We have dumped subsidised goods and destroyed local producers.
- Obsession with GDP as a measure of progress rather than meeting human needs and supporting human dignity. If the primary aim were to meet human needs in a sustainable way, would growth be needed on such a scale to provide jobs? The consumer society and glorification of material consumption turns humans into obsessive workers and consumers. There are other measures of prosperity or wealth such as the New Economics Foundation's Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW).
- Racism and lack of respect for difference are at the root of social injustice and violence. This enables us to justify exploitation and mistreatment of others who are different. It manifests in how we value some lives more than others eg

the focus on deaths of US and UK troops amounting to over 1,000 compared with Iraqi deaths variously estimated between 30,000 and 100,000 (the latter figure, Lancet, October 2004). This is paralleled by not understanding the importance of ecological diversity and our difficulties with people who express contrary views.

- Leadership values and a masculine/feminine imbalance. An underlying value is that moneymaking, profit, share value, market share and size, should always be more highly prized than human needs and rights, democracy and the environment (Capra, 2002). The glorification of material consumption wields tremendous power to maintain optimal conditions for the expansion of production – rather than wellbeing. Power, wealth, consumption, speed, decisiveness and aggression are closely linked to our model of what it is to be a successful male. Business and politics are bedevilled by the competitiveness of leaders. Opinions of others are frequently rubbished. We all suffer as a result of the male belief system that values power and domination. Patriarchy not only harms women and denies them their proper place but it harms men just as much. Patriarchy is incompatible with democracy too (Fonda, Jane, 2003). A big part of male consciousness includes belief in heroic top down leadership. It includes the notion that problems can be solved by violence and war, and of being right, despite what many other people think. What a change it would be to say sorry. “The noble art of losing face will one day save the human race.” Hans Blix. The ancient psyche that still dominates leaders’ impulses and actions is inappropriate for the interconnected world of the 21st century. This male energy may have served us in the past. Surely we are learning that it is not working in our time and we need a better balance? We need to listen to wise women and men like Vandana Shiva and Satish Kumar (Shiva, V; Kumar, S).

## 8. A New Agenda for Leaders

“What if we discover our present way of life is irreconcilable  
with our vocation to become fully human?”  
Paulo Freire (2004)

The greatest challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be to change the value system underlying the global economy so as to make it compatible with the demands of human dignity and ecological sustainability. Fritjoff Capra, 2002

Because of its power to change the World, business needs to take a much higher level of responsibility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and be proactive, rather than defensive, putting human needs at the top of their agenda. This means taking on the challenge of changing the system. Leaders need to become activists. There are already plenty of examples of corporate leaders taking action on global issues – we need more.

“Activism is my rent for living on the planet.” Alice Walker

Here is an agenda for them to take action in their own companies and campaign for change outside:

### A new agenda for leaders

- Promote understanding of the big picture and the urgency of the situation, the ways in which the global system is, and is not working; the damage it is causing; the real costs and the threat to human society and the planet.
- Help create a new consciousness. Increase understanding and awareness of the need for a change of values and consciousness. Meeting human needs, giving every human being the chance of a healthy and fulfilling life, producing useful goods and services rather than making money and making money out of money. Make these ideas main stream.
- Make sustainability central to corporate values and beliefs. Get sustainability into the life-blood and central to business, community, government strategy and our individual lives. Public interest needs to be elevated to be something of fundamental importance.
- Reform the money system Explore alternative ways of providing low or zero interest finance for public services, infrastructure, environmental projects, small businesses and economic development in poor and developing countries where debt is crippling. In a democratic age one would expect money to be created as part of a national or supranational money supply by independent monetary authorities such as a National or Regional Bank and international currency – currently the dollar - by an International Bank. James Robertson has put forward comprehensive proposals (Robertson, J, 2003).
- Reform taxation. A new approach would be based on collecting for the benefit of society the value of common resources whose value is due to Nature, such as unextracted energy, or the activities of society as a whole such as land values enhanced by public developments; taxing the use of non-renewable resources and actions that harm the environment. Tax reform needs to be linked to a basic or Citizens income (Robertson, J, 2003).
- Help people see that racism and lack of respect are at the root of economic exploitation, foreign policy and the policies of global institutions. Deep down it seems some lives matter less than others.
- Lobby for democratising global institutions, namely the World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank and IMF. Focus on fair, not free, trade, and the promotion of human welfare
- Regulate global corporations. Create a new legal charter framework for licensing large corporations. Rabbi Michael Learner and others call for a new charter for large corporations, requiring them to be granted a license to operate. This would require them to justify their continued license to operate on their record in acting with responsibility.  
"A first step..... is to seek A New Bottom Line, so that we judge institutions productive, efficient and rational not only to the extent that they maximize wealth and power but also to the extent that they maximize our capacities to be caring, ecologically aware, ethically and spiritually sensitive, and capable of responding to the universe with awe, wonder and radical amazement at the grandeur of creation." Tikkun Community, A New Bottom Line at [www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org)

- Create a new legal framework for the duties of company directors including strengthening the powers of non-executive board members to monitor sustainable and ethical performance and call directors to account.
- Create fresh legal frameworks for company ownership and financing John Lewis Partnership and St Luke's Advertising are examples. In USA, ESOPs (Employee Share Ownership Plans) go far beyond the Anglo-Saxon model of ownership by stock exchange shareholders or pension, saving and insurance funds. ESOPs cover more than 9 million workers in more than 10,000 firms. (Job Ownership [www.jobownership.co.uk](http://www.jobownership.co.uk)) Legislation is needed.
- Get city analysts to take Sustainable Investment seriously. They continue to ignore the evidence that it is a sound investment strategy. There are promising initiatives with many stock exchanges and organisations joining the UN Global Compact.
- Pay company taxes and create accountable accounting systems. CSR includes paying the taxes the company should pay under the law and creating accountable accounting systems. Declaring in the CSR statement that this company will refrain from using offshore financial vehicles would be a bold step. Such statements have been made regarding financial speculation by the Co-operative bank
- Close tax havens, through which half of global trade flows, exposing the massive profit laundering of corporations, money laundering of criminal and terrorist leagues, and tax evasion which is depriving states of their capacity to provide health and education for citizens
- Regulate financial markets and explore and implement measures such as the Tobin tax. The Tobin Tax proposes a simple sales taxes on currency trades across borders which would discourage short-term currency trades—about 90 percent are speculative—but leave long-term productive investments intact.

Some of these, such as monetary reform are truly radical, involve major vested interests and require huge readjustment. Resistance to monetary reform and changes in taxation from vested interests and government will be major. It is not the economics I was taught in school or university. The way is to proceed step by step.

#### 7. A New Consciousness is Emerging

Maybe we are at a turning point. Cultural Creatives, a virtual organisation, estimate in 2000, that there are some 50 million adults in the United States and probably about 80-90 million in the European Union with the worldview, values and lifestyle needed to respond to the big issues in a values based way and change the world (Cultural Creatives, [www.culturalcreatives.org](http://www.culturalcreatives.org); Ray, P and Anderson, S, 2000). Many people are realising that literally everyone needs to be a world citizen if we are to enjoy a secure and sustainable future. We are all responsible.

Sustainability in the broadest sense needs to be central to corporate, community, national and international strategy and the personal choices of everyone.

We are, as yet, a long way from that. It will take time. Humans, especially their institutions, change slowly. "Group think" gets in the way of openness. Huge vested interests have to be addressed. We are all slow to change. It is part of our psyche. We are all in the same boat, drifting to disaster if we do not take action. We all need to make radical changes in our living habits and use our purchasing power. But change we must.

With growing awareness, comes a change in consciousness and that leads to transformation.

"Problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness that created them."  
Albert Einstein

The importance of global citizenship and greater respect for different cultures is gaining ground. The West is beginning to respect and learn from ancient traditions whether African, Asian, Native American or Hindu. Many people desire greater meaning and balance in their lives. Balance and a fairer and sustainable world can work together.

As an optimist, I take the view that if we work with rather than against the flow, living systems work benignly on balance. That is the story of human history thus far we have not destroyed ourselves. Transformation will happen what ever we do. We might as well influence it for the better. A commitment to sustainability is in the long-term interests of everyone, including companies, company directors and CEOs and our children and our children's children.

The way human beings learn is messy. When things are not working, something else emerges. It is up to each of us, to decide what unique part we want to play, where our energy lies, where our passion will take us and what we will do. A useful precept is:

Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you do it.  
Mahatma Gandhi

For everyone, a useful question is:

"What is it that the world of tomorrow needs that I am uniquely able to provide?"

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