Week 11 ✩ Evaluation

At the beginning of this course, I perceived environmental design as encompassing sustainable practices, recycling initiatives, & the integration of natural elements. However, as the semester progressed, I came to understand that design itself is a foundational component of creating a sustainable environment – one with the potential to influence & benefit future generations.

“Cradle to Cradle” by William McDonough & Michael Braungart was an influential piece of reading for me, I found the principles raised in the text really thought-provoking & has made me reevaluate the way I view the world & my immediate surroundings in a different way. “Design is the first signal of human intention” is a quote that particularly resonated with me – highlighting the responsiblity that designers have within their projects, their important role to approach their work with purpose, forethought & consideration for the long-term impacts of the design on the world.

The debates undertaken throughout this course have provided valuable opportunities to engage with different perspectives on practices such as circularity, design responsibility, & material innovation. The process of researching arguments for each debate significantly deepened my understanding of environmental designs when it comes to products, architecture & urban planning. A particularly compelling concept I encountered was Jane Bennett’s notion of “scale-linking” from “Vibrant Matter”. This is the idea that localized environmental design choices can manifest at larger scales (flooding from poor water management, damaging ecosystems & life), this prompted me to think more about how big impacts can grow.

As an artist (mainly digital), I thought that this course wouldn’t exactly tie into my own practice as much as it would

for an Interior Design or Design for Change student. However, through a debate, I found that even digital artworks can affect the planet as much as traditional media – this has made me much more conscious about my work & deleting any unused works I have. I believe that as technology & digital media is constantly developing, more & more artists will be affecting the planet without them even knowing.

This course has highlighted the importance of responsibility within design & has prompted me to reflect on how I could improve my work as a designer to influence the environment positively. It has made me realize our collective responsibility both as designers & civilians to take care of our environment as much as we can & both sides affect each other cyclically. I found the theoretical examples from readings extremely influential & I enjoyed learning about the different ways people think about the design process & how they view the world. Tony Fry's "Design Futuring" further reinforces this idea that the world is constantly evolving, repairing & improving – this, alongside the massive technological advancements we have made over the past century, has given me a positive outlook on the future for generations to come.

Despite all the damage we have done through destruction & production, I feel that this course has given me great insight into how we can improve our planet through material subsitution & working with different processes & systems.

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Braungart, M. and Mcdonough, W. (2002). *Cradle to cradle*. Heeswijk: Search Knowledge ; [Schiedam.

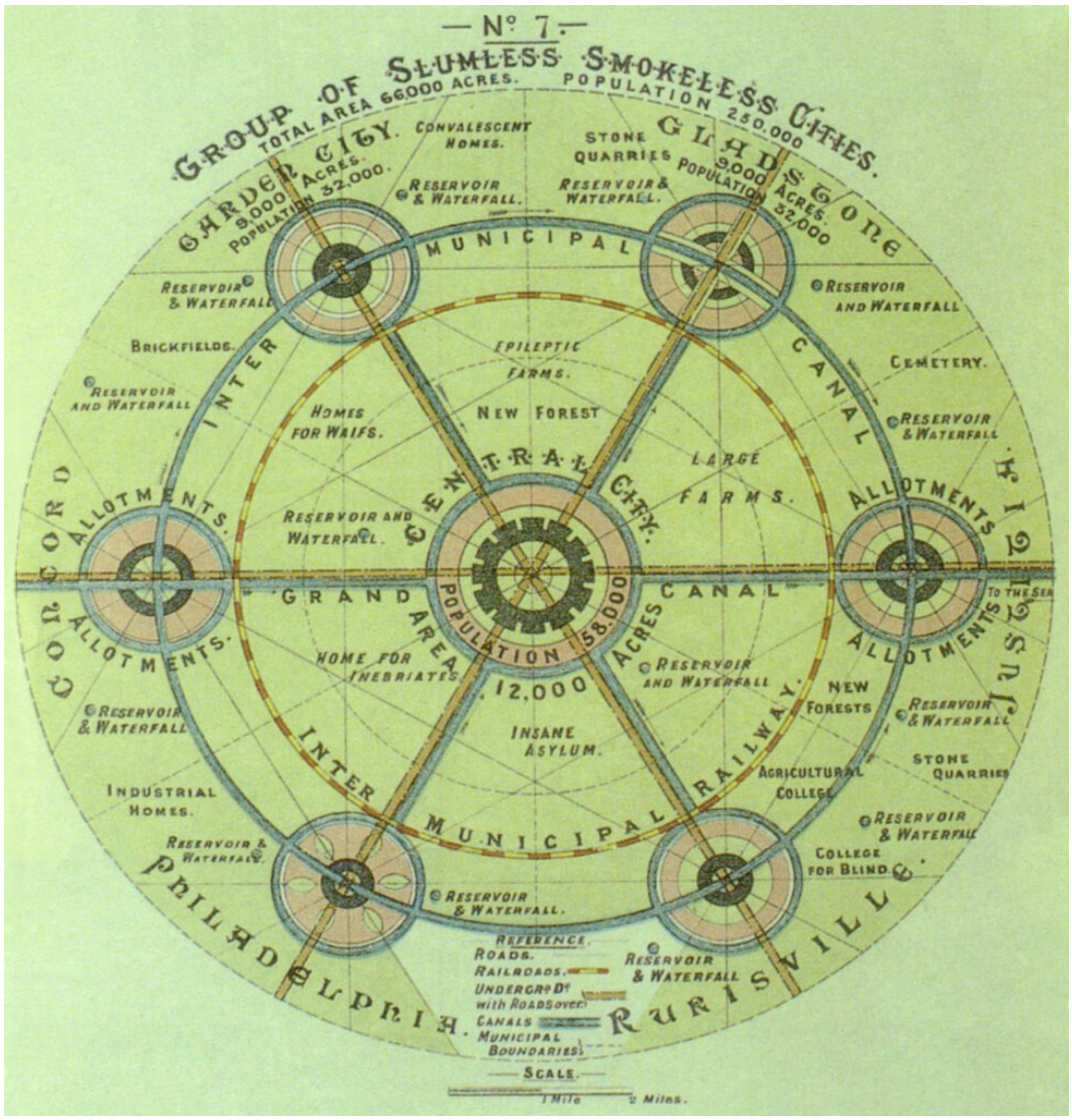
Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Fry, T. (2018). *DESIGN FUTURING : sustainability, ethics and new practice.* Berg.

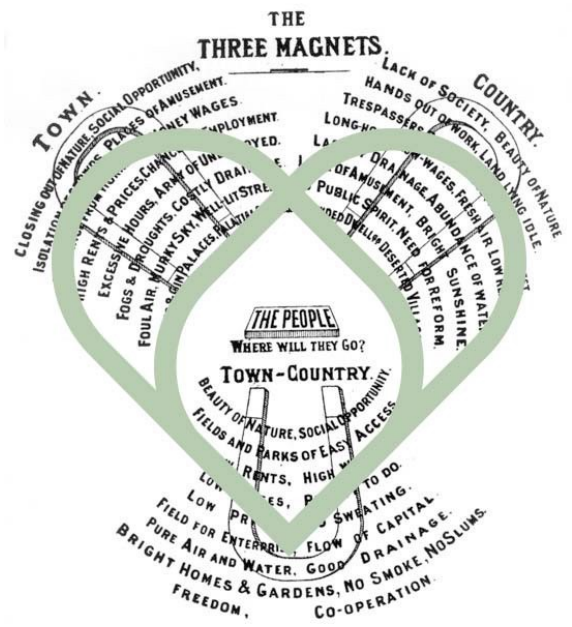
Week 10 ☆ Garden Cities

Whilst studying this week's reading *Ecological Design* by Sim Van Der Ryn & Stuart Cowan, there was a section in which they explored the history & background to ecological design – mentioning precedents such as William Morris' Arts & Crafts Movement, Dymaxion houses, Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture & more. I was especially intrigued by Ebenezer Howard's garden city concept.

"Garden Cities" emerged in 1898 through Howard's book *To Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform.* The concept was a visionary solution to the overcrowded & polluted cities of the Industrial Revolution. The main aims of the cities were to combine urban & rural benefits – blending vibrancies of cities with tranquility & health benefits of the countryside. He mainly achieved this by including "greenbelts" around these communities – a small area of open space to preserve land around cities for agriculture & access to nature.



Ebenezer Howard's vision for a group of "Smokeless, Slumless Cities", 1898.



The concept was introduced to Letchworth in 1903, becoming the first garden city to be developed. It featured planned residential neighbourhoods with communal green spaces & agricultural land. This continues to serve as a case study for more sustainable planning. Eventually, Welwyn Garden City was developed in 1920, this time combining Howard's vision with more modern urban elements (specifically transport).

The three "magnets" of Garden Cities (1898), Ebenezer Howard.

Despite the many ambitions that garden cities housed, there were a lot of challenges within the project. Housing in the garden cities eventually became unaffordable for workers,

which is a large problem still prevalent today. Urban areas with high population densities struggled to apply the expansive designs that Howard envisioned too, which raises the question about how to adapt these elements in such small spaces. As time went on, cities across the country increased their population, so the success of this concept got more & more questionable.

(Pictured right) Sketch of Welwyn Garden City, Natalie Foster.

The concepts seen in Howard's vision are still echoed today – green belts & urban growth speficially have played a large role in preventing urban sprawl, seen in large cities such as London. These areas preserve ecosystems while limiting expansion of urban spaces & gives people a space to relax & take a break from the business of the city itself. Sustainable practices are a lot more common nowadays too, the incorporation of parks, bike lines & pedestrian-friendly streets reflect Howard's vision for a more human-centric environment.

As there is still so much to consider in the present if we want to introduce this type of planning into our own environments, there are ways to possibly modernize the garden city vision. Vertical green spaces could make green spaces a

lot more accessable & viable in densely populated areas, rooftop gardens are already quite popular in places such as New York, Tokyo & Chicago. Technology is also something that has improved significantly since the garden city concept was introduced, helping us immensely over the years through energy efficiency practices & improved public transport.

Letchworth Garden City (2023), Loveletchworth.com

In short, the garden city concept was a groundbreaking idea in the early 1900's as sustainability was still a relatively new practice. I believe that we can still use this urban planning as a foundation for future improvements to cities, our technological advancements have changed our streets dramatically over the past century, so with tweaking this concept can help improve our environment greatly. I find this concept really interesting, I love the layout of the garden city & I find it amazing that the cities in Letchworth & Welwyn are pretty much still the same.

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Van and Cowan, S. (1996). *Ecological Design*.

Britannica (2019). Garden city | urban planning. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/garden-city-urban-planning.

Wikipedia Contributors (2019). *Garden city movement*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_city_movement.

Wainwright, O. (2014). The garden city movement: from Ebenezer to Ebbsfleet. *The Guardian*. [online] 17 Mar. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/mar/17/ebbsfleet-garden-city-george-osborne.

Angermann, M. (2022). *Garden City Movement: History, Examples and Criticism*. [online] Utopia. Available at:

https://utopia.org/guide/garden-city-movement-history-examples-and-criticism/.

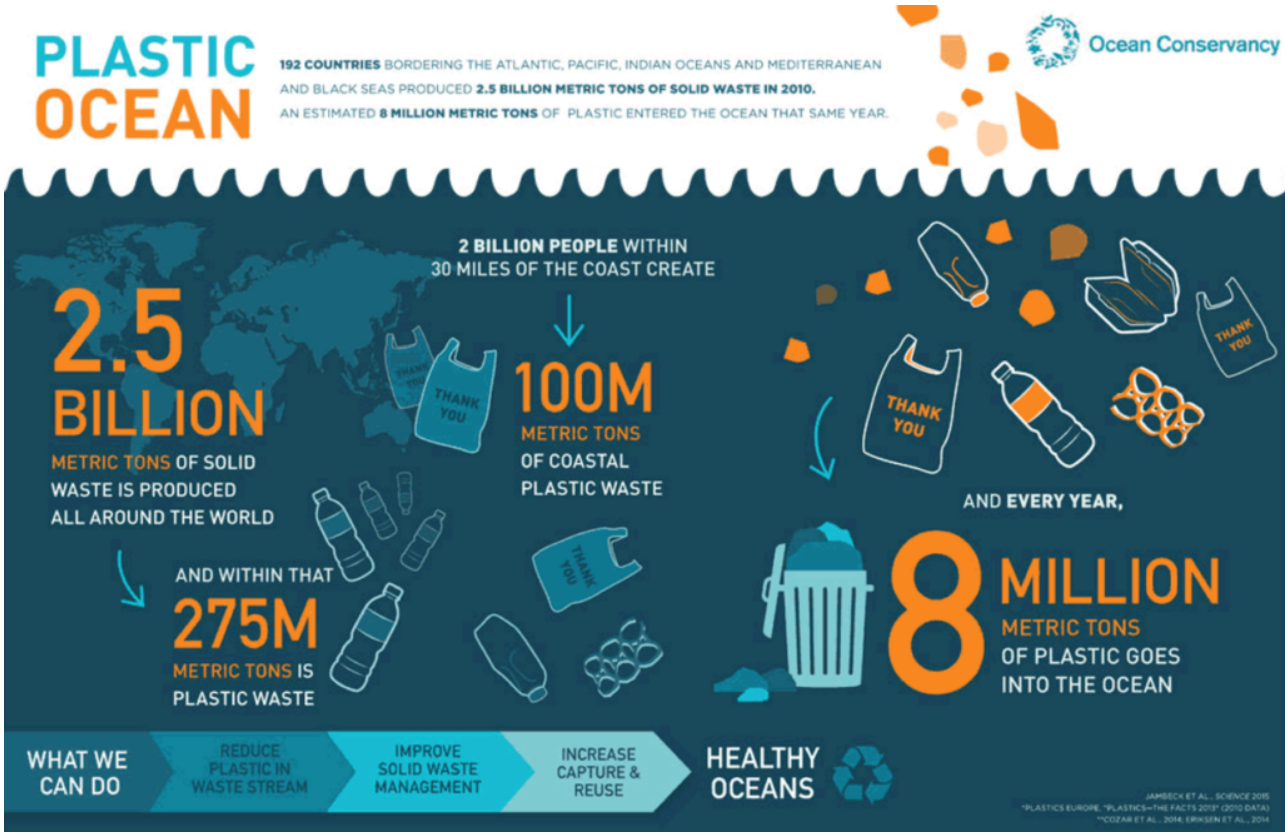
Anon, (n.d.). *Garden City*. [online] Available at: https://www.townandcountryplanninginfo.com/2020/08/garden-city.html.

loveletchworth.com. (2023). *Letchworth Garden City History*. [online] Available at: https://loveletchworth.com/about-and-history/.

Week 9 ✩ Materials

For this week's debate, I was placed on the side of against for the theme exploring the concept of humanity falling in love with plastic again.

This topic is really relevant for me, as my studies in my current MA Illustration project emphasizes the relationship between humans & the natural world, focussing on how the environment affects the human mind positively. Plastic waste is something I encounter in my daily life – when visting these environments in person, the pollution really interrupts the serenity of the scene I'm trying to depict. It's difficult to show the restorative affects of nature when it's destroyed by human-made waste.



There is so much plastic waste existing in the environment already before we should even think about falling in love with plastic again. An estimated 8 million metric tons enter the ocean every year – harming marine life & entering the food chain through ingestion of microplastics. The World Economic Forum conducted a 2016 study that showed if we kept at this rate, plastics would outweigh fish by the year 2050. This is an absurd statistic, it makes me wonder is plastic really worth disrupting various natural ecosystems simply because it's a cheap material that can be replaced with many different materials?

Plastic in the Ocean Infographic (2019), Ocean Conservancy.

The book *Accumulation: the material politics of plastic* by Jennifer Gabrys brings up a lot of good points for this argument about plastic. Gabrys delves deeper into the political & economical consequences of plastic – she explains that plastic is a product of "petrochemical capitalism", which means that it is intricately tied to the oil industry.

Without realising it, people that continue to buy plastic unknowingly support this exploitative system that prioritises profit over people & the planet. Essentially, falling in love with plastic means supporting an oil dependant economy – it also undermines global efforts to transition to sustainable energy & materials. I feel like this is a great point, a lot of people are unknowingly contributing to the constant production of plastic (more people are buying = let's make more) – therefore contributing to the damaging process.

Gabrys discusses how the petroleum industry's economic power ensures a constant over production of plastic, continuing to harm the environment & locking us into unsustainable production cycles. In short, Gabrys argues that plastic production benefits money hungry corporations while burdening marginalized communities with pollution & waste. I find her view really interesting, the points that she made opened my eyes & allowed me to see this argument from a different point of view which I never even thought about. Plastic production is something that isn't talked about at all, never mind the negative affects it has. As a society, we are mainly concerned

about how the result of a product (plastic) affects our immediate environment, not even thinking about the process of it & how that can contribute to damage as well.

> *(Pictured right) Sketch of a plastic bag 2024, Natalie Foster.*

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Gabrys, J., Hawkins, G. and Michael, M. (2017). *Accumulation : the material politics of plastic*. London: Routledge.

Week 8 ☆ Vibrant Matter

This week, the reading material was “Vibrant Matter” by Jane Bennett. Her work explores the subject of objects having some sort of agency or liveliness, as if they’re on the same conscious level as living beings.

The term “vital materialism” explores this similar concept, essentially stressing the fact that all matter has the energy to influence the world around it. Everything has the ability to act, affect & be affected. In retrospect, vital materialism provides a more ecological/ethical way of interacting with our environment & the objects within it – if we recognise & respect the role of all materials around us, we see them as participants within our live rather than passive. However, many people argue that vital materialism is quite radical as it challenges the beliefs about the nature of life & the relationships between humans & the environment. Western ideology is that only humans or animals have the ability to act with purpose, so including objects within that bracket is absurd. This concept questions the boundary between humans &

nature, as well as disrupting hierarchies by placing nature on the same level.

I find this idea a really interesting way of viewing the environment & it’s a great way of respecting it, however I can see the point that objects shouldn’t be placed on the same level as living things. While it’s true that objects can affect us whether we see it or not, I just find it odd to view them as “living things”. I can see how this view can positively affect my environment in the future as if everyone treats objects with “respect”

in the same way as other beings, people will pay more attention to waste & pollution.

Bennett also talks about “assemblages” which are a set of collective interactions between humans & non-human components. All influence one another – a good example of this would be a city, or a park (humans, animals, as well as buildings, plants, air, man made paths, cars etc.). Each component holds its own energy & are completely different, yet whe they’re

together they make something new. Assemblages are an important part of her theorising as they show agency isn't limited to individual things but can be evident in the relationship between things. An example of this is a black out – it's not completely caused by power lines/weather conditions but by the interaction between weather/buildings/infrastructure. This concept was hard to wrap my head around at first, however I slowly began to understand – everything does have the power to affect & be affected & I find it interesting that a group of simple objects or beings can make no sense individually, but together they create something new.

> *(Pictured right) Sketch of people in a city crossing the road 2024, Natalie Foster.*

Vibrant matter presents a lot of eye opening ideas, it has definitely changed the way that I view the world now – all objects & materials affect us in our day to day life, so it's important to pay mind to them, their processes & where they could possibly end up.

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Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 7 ✩ Circularity

This week, we explored the theme of "circularity" & conducted a debate with the motion: "This house (i.e we) would enforce a circular economy". I was put on the side of against, which is quite difficult to find evidence to combat this motion, however there are a few examples of different ways we can

tackle negative environmental impact.

Recycling has been around for centuries & it's helped the planet exponentially – The University of Colorado estimates that recycling between 2020 & 2050 will reduce emissions by 5.5 to 6 gigatons of carbon dioxide (equivalent to taking one billion cars off the road a year). It's clear to see that it's very beneficial to the planet, however there are some drawbacks to enforcing a circular economy.

Transition costs are a big worry for most companies, both big & small – smaller companies simply cannot absorb the costs. A 2020 study by the European Commission found that a transition to a circular economy can cost the EU up to 1.8 trillion euros – new processes, technology & infrastructure required for sustainable systems don't seem necessary for the majority of big, profit-driven companies. As well as this, in regions where environmental regulations are non-existent, companies have less incentive to enforce these systems – regulations vary throughout the world, so it's quite difficult to enforce this idealogy of circulation on the entire planet.

Relying on a circular economy also requires this trust within the consumer that they would repeatedly buy these sustainable products & use them appropriately. We will have to assume that they will adapt to these new systems,

meanwhile a large majority of people prioritize convenience & cost over sustainability. This is evidenced by a 2021 study conducted by Deloitte: only 57% of people would change their purchasing habits, however 64% said that price & convenience were the most important factors when buying a product. In 2023, 62% of people stated that sustainable products were too expensive. In general, cost is a big issue when converting to a circular economy.

Reducing single use products & reducing consumption seems to be a better solution for the environment rather than enforcing this economy. In 2018, The World Resources Institute found that reducing waste at the source can be 3-5 times more effective in lowering greenhouse gas emissions compared to recycling. In conclusion, I believe that a circular economy is really beneficial & it has worked for years now, so I am convinced that a circular economy is a good idea. However, there are a lot of issues with people adapting to it & I feel that there is a bigger conversation to be had. Single use

products are more & more popular these days, especially with products such as vapes where I can see them litter every street I walk on, so I feel that if we reduced those types of products first, it would be a great step in the right direction.

> *(Pictured right) Sketch of plastic bottles (2024), Natalie Foster.*

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Robinson, C. and Huun, K. (2023). *The impact of recycling on climate change*. [online] Environmental Center. Available at: https://www.colorado.edu/ecenter/2023/12/15/impact-recycling-climate-change.

Europa.eu. (2021). *Inforegio – Cohesion policy powers EU circular economy shift*. [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/whats-new/panorama/2024/03/20-03-2024-cohesion-policy-powers-eu-circular-economy-shift_en [Accessed 2 Nov. 2024].

Deloitte (2023). *Sustainability survey | Deloitte Ireland*. [online] www.deloitte.com. Available at: https://www.deloitte.com/ie/en/about/press-room/sustainability-consumers-climate.html.

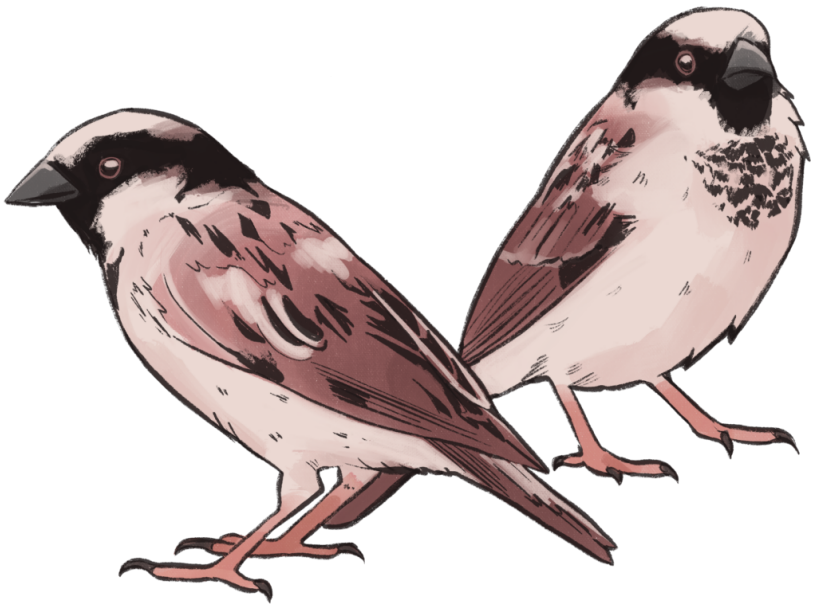
Ranganathan, J., Waite, R., Searchinger, T. and Hanson, C. (2018). How to Sustainably Feed 10 Billion People by 2050, in 21 Charts. *World Resources Institute*. [online] Available at: https://www.wri.org/insights/how-sustainably-feed-10-billion-people-2050-21-charts.

Week 6 ☆ Bibliography

I have chosen to focus on the impact of human activity on nature & wildlife as the central theme of my annotated bibliography. I believe that animals play a crucial role in raising awareness about environmental issues, as many people are particularly empathetic towards what they experience. Despite their empathy, humanity's actions have a large effect on the natural world, with animals being the most affected due to their dependence on these ecosystems that we destroy. I find this really tragic – we as a society are drawn to animals as we have always been connected to them through our genetic makeup. We have lived alongside them ever since the beginning of humanity, & to see us destroy their only remaining habitat whilst still calling ourselves animal lovers is cruel.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. 1962.

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* explores the detrimental effects of pesticides on wildlife, ecosystems & human health, with a focus on the widespread use of DDT. She argued that the invention of this specific type of pesticide, as well as all pesticides, disrupted natural ecosystems through bioaccumulation – specifically birds. Silent Spring had a major role in the environmental movement by showcasing the connection between pollution & species endangerment – this led to policy changes & the banning of DDT. She argued that the public was unaware of these dangers as chemical companies suppressed information & promoted the benefits of pesticides.



Carson’s work remains crucial for understanding the long-term ecological impacts of human pollution & acts as a warning about the consequences of technological advancement.

(Pictured right) Sketch of sparrows (2024), Natalie Foster.

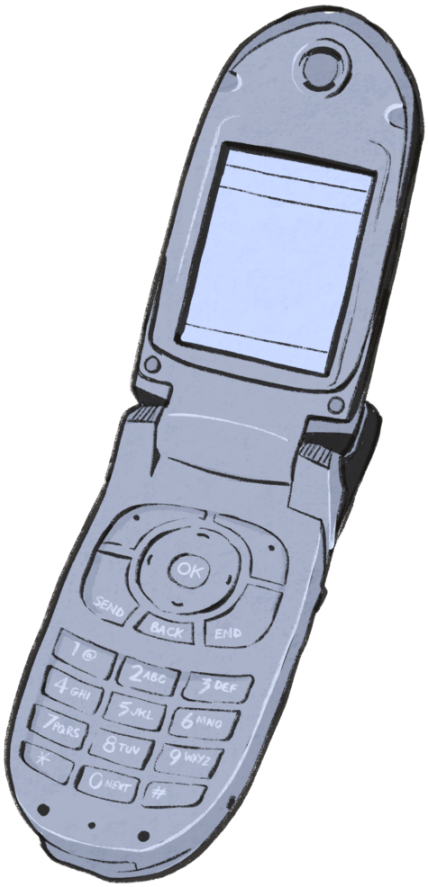
Meyer, Stephen. *The End of the Wild*. 2006.

In this book, Meyer presents an analysis on the extinction crisis, focusing on how industrialization & humanity in general have caused irreversible declines in nature. Due to habitat destruction, pollution & climate change, he highlights that “over half of all amphibian species are now endangered”. The book states that since industrialization, the fragility of ecosystems has been exposed massively, that even “the populations of large carnivores have descreased by over 95% since industrialization”. Meyer argues that while efforts to conserve wildlife are essential, they are unlikely to reverse the damage already inflicted by humanity’s impact. Through detailed case studies, Meyer demonstrates the harsh reality that is wildlife endangerment. He urges that adopting sustainable practices in environmental design will halt the speed of these threats against biodiversity.

(Pictured left) Sketch of a frog (2024), Natalie Foster.

Week 5 ✩ The Secret Life of Stuff

The Secret Life of Stuff: A Manual for a New Material World by Julie Hill explores the theme of sustainability – delving into the environmental & social impacts of the objects that we use daily. It essentially explores the journey of everyday items (production to disposal), arguing that the impacts are largely hidden from view & offers guidance on how to live a more sustainable life.



One of the main case studies brought up is the mobile phone – Hill uses this to demonstrate the hidden environmental costs of technology. She examines the entire life cycle of the phone (extraction of minerals to energy process & the waste generated when phones are discarded). The quote "The sheer complexity of mobile phones, with their mix of metals, plastics, and toxic chemicals, makes recycling a daunting task. While recycling programs exist, they often fail to recover all valuable materials, and many phones simply end up forgotten in drawers." showcases the fact that phones & technology in general are so complex with their mixtures of materials that many people simply just bin them, adding to environmental waste. This supports the argument that there is a massive lack in infrastructure to deal with growing e-waste & there is virtually no guide on how to recycle technology properly.

(Pictured right) Sketch of a phone (2024), Natalie Foster.

“When you buy an item, you are not just buying the object itself, but the materials, energy, and labor that went into its creation. Every product tells a story of extraction, transportation, and manufacturing that most of us are unaware of.” This has changed my perspective on a lot of things when consuming products – we hold such immense power that the choices we make have massive impacts on the environment & society. I find it interesting how such a small choice such as buying one fast fashion item can support such a large business exponentially.

(Pictured left) People wait in long lines at an Apple store in Cologne, Germany, for the release of the iPhone X (2017), Marco Verch via Flickr.

Supported by William McDonough in the text *'Cradle to Cradle'*, Hill advocates for moving from a linear model (produce > consume > dispose) to a circular economy, where materials are continuously reused & recycled. This shift would reduce both waste & extraction of finite resources. She points out that the Netherlands is one of the most prolific countries in leading a transition toward a circular economy – creating a plan to reduce the use of primary raw materials by 50% by 2030.

McDonough's "Cradle to Cradle" process (2021), Clearloop.

I believe that this principle of a more circular system will be very benefical to the planet, however with the constant evolution of technology & products in general, many big profit-driven industries don't really care about the impacts on the environment. As many people don't see the way they affect the planet first-hand, I feel that we as a society aren't taking big enough steps to protect it just yet.

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Hill, J. (2011). *The Secret Life of Stuff*. Random House.

Clearloop. (2021). *Cradle to Gate vs Cradle to Grave | Life Cycle Assessment*. [online] Available at: https://clearloop.us/2021/03/24/cradle-to-gate-vs-cradle-to-grave/.

Week 4 ✩ Design's Responsibility/The Story of Stuff

"Designers haven't acknowledged their role in causing environmental crises or their responsibility to address it & haven't changed their practices to reflect it"

Designers play a crucial role in shaping the products, systems & experiences that define the living environment. Many people argue that they haven't acknowledged their responsibility in contributing to environmental degradation – this is specifically because of the fact that design decisions often prioritize aesthetics & marketability over sustainability. A 2019 study highlighted that most product design processes follow the

model take -> make -> dispose – there's only a small percentage of companies which actively design products for repair/reuse. A study by Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) emphasized that 85% of textiles end up in landfills –

highlighting how much design choices in materials contribute to waste & pollution.

(Pictured right) A mountain of waste at the Kpone landfill site in Tema, Ghana (n.d.) – Nipah Dennis, Getty Images.

In recent years, artists & designers have adopted the digital field as a way of producing work – however, not many people realize the carbon footprint that digital media really has. The storage that data centers harbour consumes a lot of energy as the electricity required to run them are responsible for 1% of the global electricity use according to a 2021 study.

Turning to digital media when traditional media has always been harmful – using toxic art materials such as oils, acrylics & resins may be doing the same amount of harm if not more. I think that because designers aren't truly seeing the impact they're making on the Earth, they aren't prepared to accept responsiblity in these situations. Many designers shift their responsibility to manufacturers for environmental issues, blaming corporations & consumer demand – in a more profit-driven industry, it makes sense why these sustainable materials aren't being introduced, more sustainable materials = higher cost = less profit.

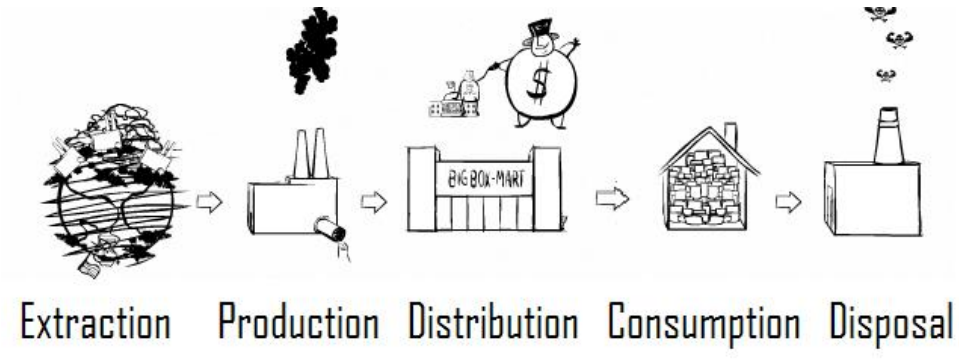
(Pictured left) Sketch of paintbrush pot (2024), Natalie

Foster.

It’s fair to say that the design industry as a whole has been slow to embrace its responsibility environmentally, it’s that many designers are working to address these issues – however it’s a small amount. The future of design & the environment may depend on how quickly & broadly these sustainable practices are put into action.

As an artist myself, these facts were quite eye opening when I was researching. I specifically didn’t know about the way that digital artistry is affecting the planet massively – learning these details definitely has reshaped my mindset into how to produce my work in the future & how to be more environmentally conscious with both traditional & digital media. I find it very ironic that artists can produce such beautiful work inspired by the greatness of the environment specifically with tools that can destroy it.

‘The Story of Stuff’ explores a linear system within material goods. It focusses on the process of extraction, production, distribution, consumption & disposal. It argues that this system is very unsustainable & asks for a more sustainable way of living – emphasizing reduce, reuse & recycling. I think that a more circular system, as seen in Cradle-to-Cradle, is a much more beneficial cycle compared to a linear process – we will be the ones living in the future we have created, so we need to fully think about the present & how we design things.



The Story of Stuff (2007), Annie Leonard.

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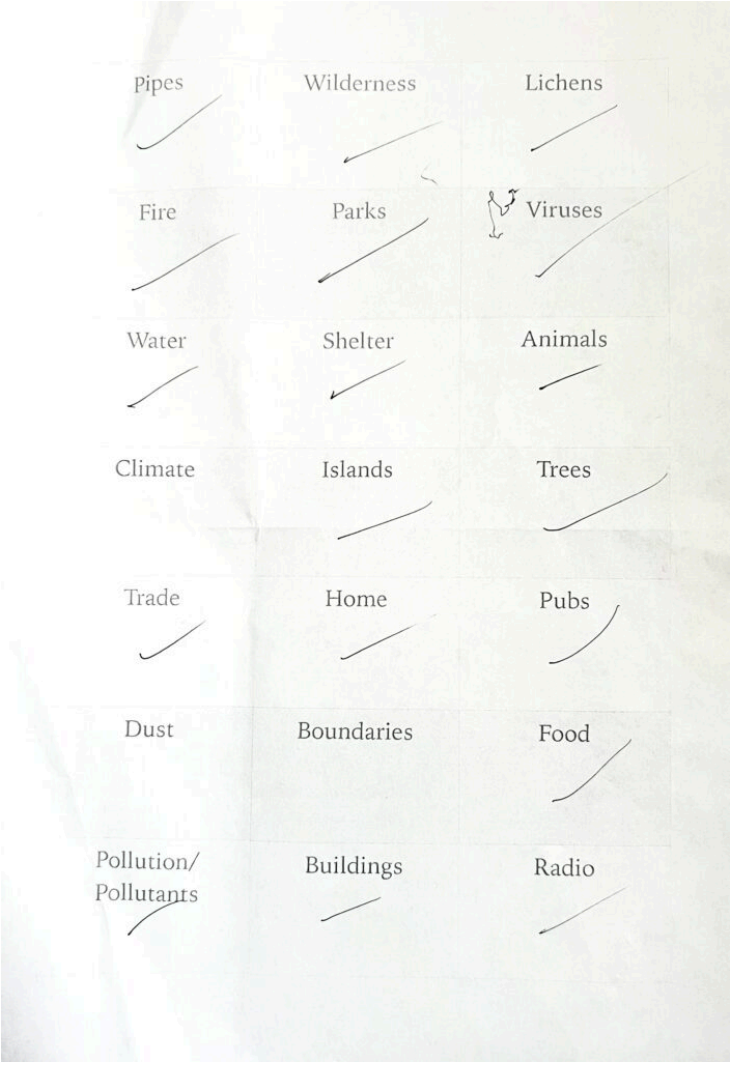
Gueye, S. (2021). *The trends and trailblazers creating a circular economy for fashion*. [online] www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org. Available at: https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/articles/the-trends-and-trailblazers-creating-a-circular-economy-for-fashion.

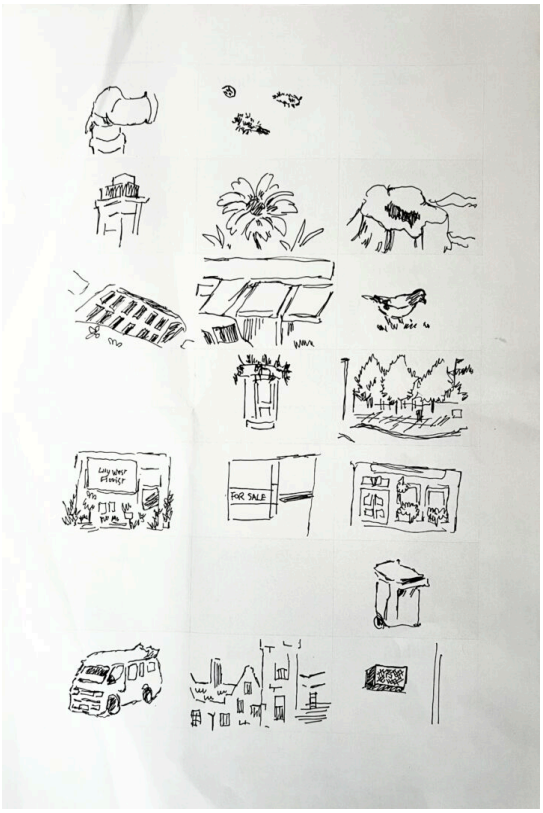
Roundy, J. (2023). *Assess the Environmental Impact of Data Centers | TechTarget*. [online] Data Center. Available at: https://www.techtarget.com/searchdatacenter/feature/Assess-the-environmental-impact-of-data-centers.

The Story of Stuff Project (2009). *The Story of Stuff*. *YouTube*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM.

Week 3 ☆ Workshop

In the workshop this week, I was tasked to record elements from urban environments & nature in general. During a brief 10-minute walk near the campus, I aimed to identify as many unique features as possible that could vaguely relate to natural elements. The exercise revealed how dominated our surroundings are by manmade structures & objects. Interestingly, I found myself struggling to locate simple elements like water or fire, highlighting how such important aspects of nature are obscured in urban spaces. Instead, it was much easier to encounter constructed elements like buildings, trade, radios, & pipes. I particularly enjoyed thinking creatively about how to represent some of these elements – such as recording a pillar covered in posters with foliage growing from the top as an example of the contrast human activity & the natural elements.





Sketches from the workshop (2024), Natalie Foster.

This workshop experience reinforced the way I now view my surroundings, especially in light of my research into the biophilia hypothesis as part of my MA Illustration project. I plan to incorporate this concept into a travel illustration

journal that will emphasize the human connection to nature. The biophilia hypothesis, introduced by Edward O. Wilson in 1984, proposes that humans have an inherent tendency to seek connections with the natural world. Our evolutionary history has ingrained within us a deep emotional bond with landscapes, animals, and natural settings, & I find this concept particularly resonant with the way I interpret and reflect on design & the environment. It is speculated that the divergence between nature & humans began when technological developments became more prevalent in the 19th/20th century. Enclosed/sterile spaces, cars & workplaces are where most people spent their time, sheltered away from the elements of nature.

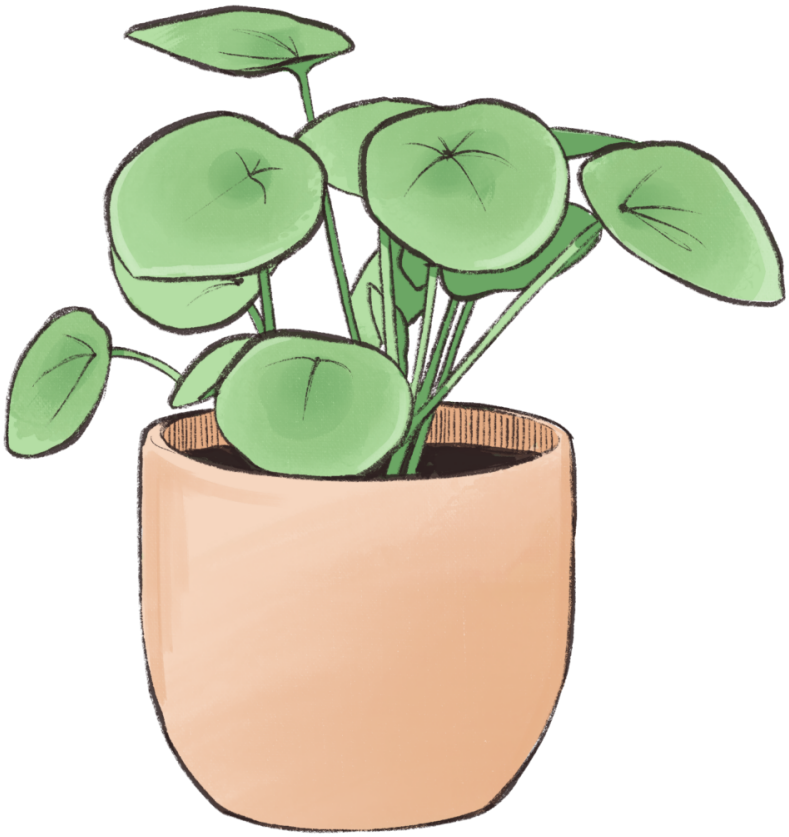
(Pictured right) Grow Urban, Edinburgh, (2023), Adi Forgang.

Grow urban is both a plant & coffee shop which I walk past every day – evidencing the biophilia hypothesis as they bring the natural elements inside.

This change in environment became normal, yet it impacted many people's mental health – this lack of interaction with the natural world created a decrease in appreciation for life forms that support human survival, resulting in more species extinction & less consideration for nature conservation. This hypothesis explains why human connection to nature is important & why people tend to feel rejuvenated after spending time outdoors, why we are drawn to natural beauty & why natural elements are often incorporated into urban spaces. What I

find particularly striking is how, after generations of industrialization & urbanization, society has begun to recognize the need to reintroduce nature into urban spaces. This reflects a growing understanding of the psychological and emotional benefits that come from reconnecting with natural elements.

(Pictured left) Sketch of a houseplant (2024), Natalie Foster.



Growing up with a focus on sustainable design education, I have always been conscious of the relationship

between manmade environments & the natural world. The insights from this workshop & my broader studies continually shape how I navigate industrialized spaces, reminding me to seek natural elements even in highly constructed environments – it's something I've always loved about some pieces of designs. The biophilia hypothesis resonates with my own belief in the power of nature to restore & inspire, both in

my creative work & in the way I engage with the world around me.

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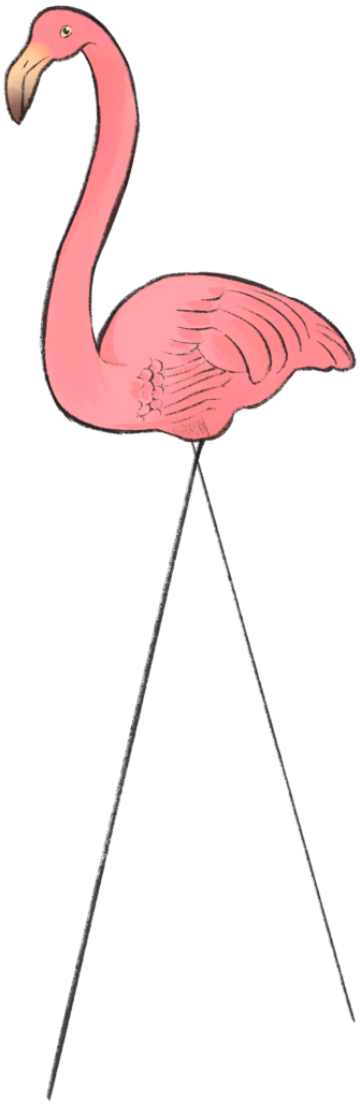
Rogers, K. (2019). Biophilia hypothesis. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com/science/biophilia-hypothesis.

Week 2 ✩ Environmental Histories of Design

This week, I read the main text for theme 1: *Environmental Histories of Design* by Kjetil Fallan and Finn Arne Jorgensen. The article's main goal is to combine both design (how/why things are made) & environmental (how humans affect it) history into one research approach – understanding the environmental impact of design requires insights from bothsubjects. Furthermore, the article explores the reciprocal relationship between design practices and environmental change—how design affects the environment & how environmental changes influence design decisions.



Both Fallan & Jorgensen believe that understanding the impact that design has on the environment is crucial for tackling climate change/pollution issues so both designers & humanity as a whole know the steps to make to solve these problems in the future. The text helped deepen my understanding of the intricate relationship between design and environmental history, as well as how profoundly designers influence the natural world – mainly negatively – even as society idealizes the beauty & ideology of “nature” while simultaneously contributing to its degradation.

(Pictured right) Sketch of a plastic flamingo (2024), Natalie Foster. – In regards to Jennifer Price’s study about the life cycle of a pink plastic flamingo in the 60s.

An illustrative example of this tension is William Rollins' analysis of the SUV, which highlights the irony of marketing a highly environmentally damaging vehicle as a means of exploring nature's beauty. This contrast underscores how people tend to romanticize nature while failing to recognize the environmental consequences of the products and designs they engage with.

Ad for Ford Explorer (2023), Ford UK.

Model Image for new 2025 Ford Explorer (2024), Ford US.

Thursday's lecture featured Arturo Escabar's "Design for the Pluriverse" (2018). It stood out to me as it explores the idea

of redesigning the world by challenging modernist practices – it advocates the idea that design is a vital role for creating a comfortable, livable world. Design shapes our view & understanding of the world, this is a big part of our lives, therefore sustainability is very important in creating a harmony between humanity & the world around us.

Tony Fry's *Design Futuring* further reinforces this idea, notably through the statement: "…one can say: destruction & creation are indivisibly implicated in each other – the one always coexisting with the other. What is created or what is destroyed can be comprehended as negation or affirmation." This implies the world is ongoing, constantly changing with the destruction & creation of many objects in our environment so nothing is ever static. I find this view refreshing & necessary, as it encourages us to see the world as continually repairing, reinventing, & evolving – offering a more positive outlook for humanity. I can see this perspective as there are always roadworks happening around me, or new buildings being built, or all types of advancements within my urban environment. This cyclical process creates an environment for designers to draw inspiration from & innovate toward a more sustainable future.

Reflecting on my own educational experience, I realize how significantly it has shaped my perspective on environmental design. Sustainable practices have been emphasized throughout my education, from primary school onward. Seeing the effects of bad sustainable practices both first-hand & second-hand gave me a great understanding of the wider world & how much responsibility we truly have.

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Fry, T. (2018). *DESIGN FUTURING : sustainability, ethics and new practice.* Berg.

Kjetil Fallan and Finn Arne Jørgensen (2017). *Special Issue:*

Environmental Histories of Design.

Ford UK. (2023). *Relive Aloha's trip in the New All-Electric Explorer | Ford UK*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vJlfinqikY.

Ford Motor Company. (2017). *2020 Ford® Explorer SUV | New and Improved Best-Selling SUV | Ford.com*. [online] Available at: https://www.ford.com/suvs/explorer/.