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issue 000 - 2008
water edition

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issn 1998-1023

a publication dedicated to social responsibility in the Arab world

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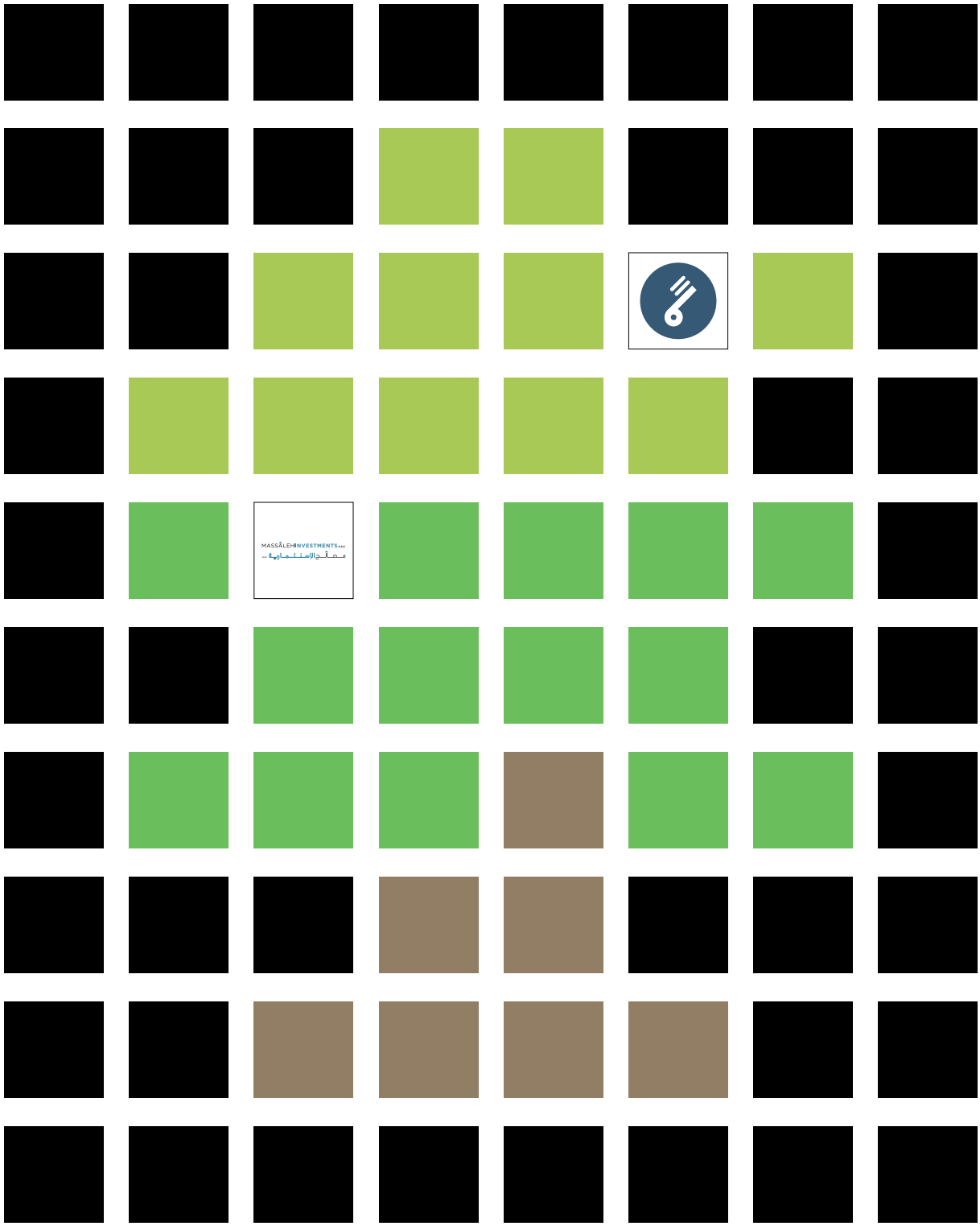
The Tree of Hope is dedicated to organizations and individuals who support en.v as we embark on a thought-provoking journey. Log on to envearth.com and download our mediakit to learn more about how you can support en.v's initiatives.



en.v

Dear Reader,

In the past, we were brought up to consume. We were taught to follow through with our choices and feel success from our achievements.

Today, a new type of citizen is emerging. Their eyes are open and look for change. They think out loud, without fear of judgment, and pursue their passions without fear of disappointment. They are proactive, dynamic, and motivate others to follow suit.

Through them, we will find change. We will feel challenged and, in turn, challenge others. They are a contemporary breed of do-gooders.

I like to call them 'the creative conscious.'

This month, my team and I unearth en.v.

Through en.v, we seek to inspire and inform. We endeavor to find individuals, groups, and organizations from around the region that are working towards a more thought conscious tomorrow and give them credit for their work.

We invite you to participate in our pursuit to raising awareness.

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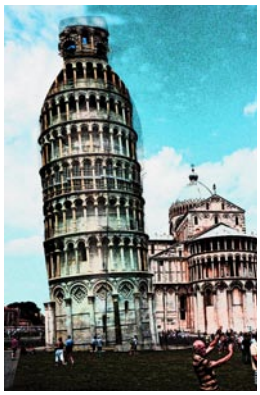

The world bottled water market represents an annual volume of 89 billion liters. no one drinks more than the Italians (107 liters per year per inhabitant).

The Green Step Forward

Shagufta Rahman

a.

b.

a-b. Beirut campaign to generate awareness for rising sea levels.

Customer values are shifting towards supporting business organizations that have adapted environmentally sustainable practices.

The future of our planet depends on the decisions we take today – as both consumers and corporations. It is becoming increasingly important for businesses to turn green: to be ethical and responsible, taking the environment and the communities around them into consideration.

Many see Earth's resources as dispensable. But with research showing that resources are slowly dwindling, it is clear that we have a responsibility to preserve our Earth and to help its rejuvenation. While taking small steps at home is one way to go, businesses also need to take the environment into account.

The corporate world bears a large amount of responsibility. Business decisions can be powerful and influential. Making a value-based decision can equal a stronger bottom line but it can also mean inspiring the community around them. The act of behaving responsibly, known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is a growing trend. While it is still a voluntary action, more and more organizations are realizing its importance

Customer values are shifting towards supporting business organizations that have adapted environmentally sustainable practices. As consumers, people have the power to influence and change business practices. More and more, customers are looking at dealing with a supplier that is responsible – environmentally and socially. Ben & Jerry's ice cream became famous for its approach to eco-responsible business ethics. The late Anita Roddick of The Body Shop was one of the first entrepreneurs of 'Ethical Retail' whose products have risen to new heights in elite markets. Others are doing their bit as well, in the social arena. Richard Branson of Virgin Airlines and Bono of the band U2 are working in Africa to help end AIDS and poverty. Tesco, Wal-Mart, Carrefour and Marks & Spencer are other examples of CSR driven entities.

While there are many ways to make a difference, in your home and in your way of life, CSR is a new trend that not many are following. It isn't just about turning off the lights when you leave the room – it's about going further. By doing business (both personal and work) with companies that behave in a socially responsible way, we can help make a difference. *en.v*

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ONE DROP PER SECOND EQUALS 7000 LITERS OF WATER WASTED PER YEAR

CARBON FOOTPRINT
Measure of carbon dioxide units indicating the impact your company's activities have on the environment in terms of greenhouse gases.

CONSERVATION
Preservation or restoration from loss, damage, or neglect.

CSR
A concept whereby organizations consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, employees, shareholders, communities and the environment in all aspects of their operations.

ECOSYSTEM
An ecological community together with its environment, functioning as a unit.

GREY WATER
Water obtained from common household chores like washing dishes, doing laundry and taking baths that can be recycled and reused.

NON BIODEGRADABLE
Inability of a substance to be broken down, and retaining its form for an extended period of time.

RECYCLE
To put or pass through a cycle again, as for further treatment.

SUSTAINABLE
Capable of being continued with minimal long-term effect on the environment.

VIRTUAL WATER
Virtual water is the amount of water that is embedded in food or other products needed for its production. For example, to produce one kilogram of wheat we need about 1,000 liters of water.

WATER FOOTPRINT
The total volume of freshwater that is used to produce the goods and services consumed by the individual, business or nation.

ORGANIC
For crops, it means they were grown without the use of conventional pesticides, artificial fertilizers, human waste, or sewage sludge, and that they were processed without ionizing radiation or food additives.

1

THE WORLD'S GOLF COURSES GUZZLE A MIND BOGGLING 10 BILLION LITERS OF WATER A DAY.

2

3

THAT'S ENOUGH WATER TO SUSTAIN A SINGLE FAMILY HOUSEHOLD FOR APPROXIMATELY 5000 DAYS.

5000 LITERS OF WATER CAN BE SAVED BY EATING 75 GRAMS LESS MEAT A WEEK.

4

75 LITERS OF WATER CAN BE SAVED IF WE TURN OFF WATER WHILE BRUSHING OUR TEETH FOR 1 WEEK.

5

1" OF RAIN ON AN AVERAGE ROOF GIVES YOU OVER 3600 LITERS OF WATER FOR YOUR GARDEN OR TREES.

6

7

50 LITERS OF WATER IS USED BY A PERSON IN THE SHOWER.

3600 LITERS OF WATER IS SAVED BY USING A FRONT LOADING WASHING MACHINE IN 50 DAYS.

8

9

THAT'S HALF THE WEIGHT OF WATER THAT WOMEN IN AFRICA AND ASIA CARRY ON THEIR HEADS (COMMONLY 20KG.)

THE AVERAGE EUROPEAN USES 10 TIMES (200 LITERS) THAT WATER EVERY DAY.

10

THAT'S ENOUGH WATER TO FULFILL THE NEEDS OF THE AVG. PERSON IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD FOR 20 DAYS.

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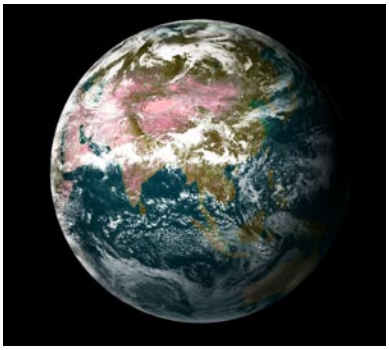

Earth Day - 20.03.08
The idea of Earth Day was first introduced by John McConnell at a UNESCO Conference on the Environment in 1969. It has been a traditional global occasion since 1970.

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Dubai International Exhibition Center
Dubai, UAE
www.arablab.com

RECSHOW
17-20 February 2008,
Kempinski Hotel Ishtar,
Dead Sea, Jordan
www.eng-forum.com/recshow

CLEANBUSINESS
11-12March
2008
ENpark,
Dubai, UAE
www.enpark.ae

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Her Checks Don't Lie

Columbian pop singer Shakira has donated $40 million dollars towards relief efforts in Peru and Nicaragua. Peru was hit hard by an earthquake last August, leaving hundreds of people dead and thousands injured. Meanwhile, Nicaragua is also in a state of emergency after Hurricane Felix, which wiped out entire villages, leaving 160,000 people affected.

The singer donated the money from the Latin America for Solidarity Foundation (ALAS), a foundation she co-founded in 2006. ALAS's donations are providing shelter and basic necessities to over 37,000 people. Shakira also announced that another $5 million will be donated by ALAS to be spent on health and education in Latin American countries.

Recycling Rachel Ray

Everyone knows Rachel Ray as the new Martha Stewart. Now she can be known for doing something even Oprah's magazine couldn't deliver.

Starting October 2007, her popular magazine Everyday With Rachel Ray is being printed on 85% recycled paper. The chlorine-free recycled paper is 10 percent post-consumer waste and 85 percent post-printing waste, according to the magazine.

"We're printing our magazine on recycled paper and saving 11,500 trees with every issue—that's 115,000 trees a year!" Ray wrote in the November issue's editor's note. To borrow her catch phrase – how good is that?

The Punkiest Store in LA.

Remember Punky Brewster? She's all grown up and ready to do some good. Soleil Moon Frye, former star of the show, recently opened an eco-friendly children's boutique in Los Angeles.

The Little Seed is a children's specialty boutique that exclusively carries eco-friendly and organic products. The store's goal was to create a one-stop shop for parents seeking products from skincare to bedding to toys. All products are made with organic or eco-friendly materials. Sample products include sustainable furniture, non-toxic crayons and paints, and a great selection of organic toys. But the products aren't the only things that are green. The entire store environment is safe and non-toxic, from the paint on the walls to the recycled shopping bags.

A Nobel Gift

Former Vice President Al Gore has announced he will donate all the money he will receive for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to charity.

Gore won the award for his environmental work, calling people's attention to the threat of climate change as highlighted in his film An Inconvenient Truth. Gore, who shared the award with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, will receive half of the total $1.56 million prize money for the award.

الشركة الوطنية للخدمات البيئية (ش.ك.م.م.)
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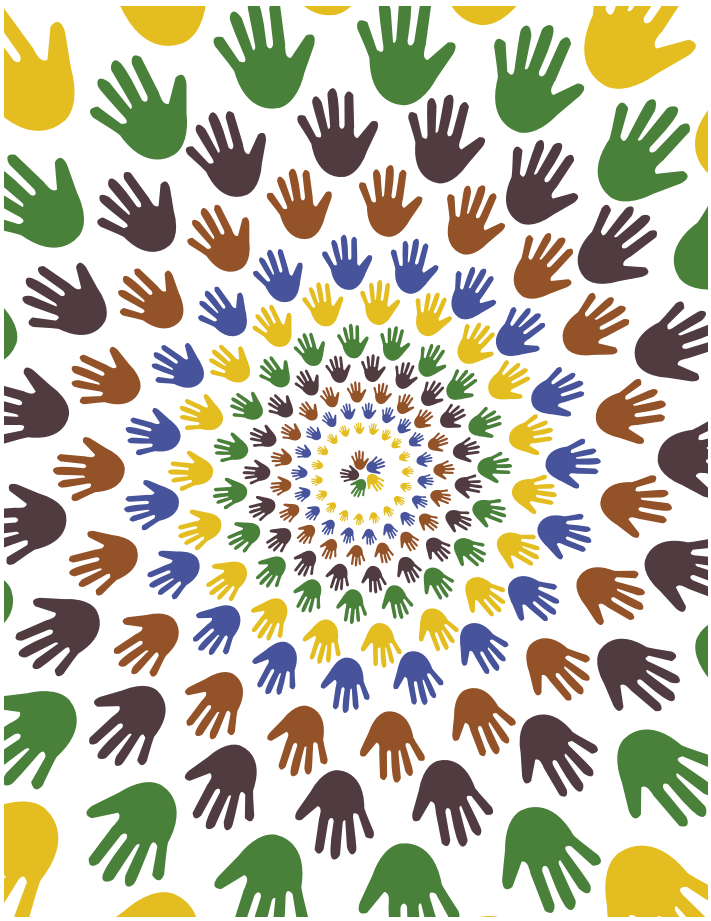
44% OF THE WATER USED BY HOUSEHOLDS IS USED OUTDOORS



Dubai Cares

Sara Al Ramadhan

134 million children between the ages of seven and 18 have never been to school.

Every second child in the world suffers from poverty, and 121 million of them go uneducated, according to UNICEF. Although individuals may participate in helping to eliminate such tragedies, few major Arab organizations exist solely to address this issue. Dubai Cares, a United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) non-profit organization has been a recent exception.

In an attempt to unify and educate the Emirati people on the devastating nature of poverty, Sheikh Mohmammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum has attempted to vocalize his mission. "If we want to champion prosperity and progress, we cannot ignore poverty. We should therefore emphasize the role of education as the most powerful weapon in breaking the vicious circle of poverty," Sheikh Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister, states on his website.

Although organizations, such as the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, participate and contribute to education it's usually on a social service level. In contrast, Dubai Cares is one of the first organizations entirely focused on education for underprivileged children.

According to care.org, about 134 million children between the ages of seven and 18 have never been to school. In the Middle East in particular, women are three times as likely to go uneducated than men. Through a variety of projects, including community gatherings, walk-a-thons and school renovations, Dubai Cares is pushing to reach their target of educating one million poverty stricken children. Other projects include contributing teaching materials and recreational equipment, as well as sponsoring school scholarships and feeding programs.

Dubai Cares is the U.A.E.'s contribution to the U.N. Millennium Development Goals – a set of eight goals by the U.N., ranging from extreme poverty to HIV/AIDS. One of the goals aims to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015. Sheikh Al Maktoum has repeatedly emphasized that education is key to ending poverty.

Stories posted on Dubai Cares' website (www.dubaicares.ae) showcase fundraising success stories and personal experiences. One story tells of a teacher auctioning her wedding dress and giving all the proceeds to the organization. Another story describes students recruiting their parents and friends to participate in running and swimming contests for Dubai Cares. Monetary donations were collected for each lap that was swam or ran.

Although there are numerous individual efforts supporting the cause, the organization holds major fund raising events as well. During Dubai Cares Week, for example, Disney's Philharmonic Concert donated all proceeds from ticket sales to the organization. It is through such efforts that Sheikh Al Maktoum has expressed his commitment, not just to raising money but also to raising awareness. *en.v*

Capitalizing on our Capital

Mariam Al Foudery

For the first time since the early 1980s, the Arabian Gulf is reliving the glories of the petrodollar age. With the price of oil reaching over $70 a barrel, the oil exports of countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Libya, Oman and Bahrain have more than doubled in the last three years. Today, oil exports from these countries alone translate into a $440 billion annual revenue stream that is helping fuel a regional construction and consumer boom on an unprecedented scale. Neither the ski slopes of Dubai nor the couture shops that have become synonymous with the region help answer the question of how the Middle East will sustain its current growth rate of six percent per year going forward though.

The reality is stark: 58 percent of the population is under the age of 25 and there are five to eight new entrants to the job market for every person retiring. Yet despite the fact that both unemployment and youth unemployment rates in the Middle East are already the highest in the world after sub-Saharan Africa, Arab countries are still not investing heavily enough in education to create new skills or an open investment climate to create new jobs.

Although the Middle East has made important strides in education, with literacy rates more than doubling in almost every Arab country since the 1960s, too many are still being left behind. Female literacy rates in every country but Lebanon are about 20 percent lower than men's and almost 10 million children worldwide are out of school today, according to UNICEF.

Perhaps even more worryingly, the education that children are receiving will not necessarily make them competitive in the global marketplace. Countries like Kuwait rank 54 places lower than countries with comparable income levels in educational achievement, according to an educational performance index created by OXFAM. Saudi Arabia ranks 48 places, Qatar 38 places and Oman 36 places lower, according to the same index. To put this in relative terms, whilst the percentage of student reaching the "low" international benchmark for math is only 1 percent in Singapore, it is 32 percent in Lebanon and a whopping 81 percent in Saudi Arabia, according to the World Bank Trends in Mathematics and Sciences Study (TIMSS). We are not going to see the next Silicone Valley popping up in the Arabian Desert anytime soon.

Unfortunately, the high-tech industry is not the only one the region will be unable to take advantage of. By and large, Middle Eastern economies are not investment-friendly towards any business currently. The costs of starting a new business are high, contract enforcement is riddled with delays and unnecessary complexity, and the transport and telecommunications sectors are weak. To once again put this into perspective, if Singapore is the easiest country in the world to do business in overall, the UAE is number 68, Jordan is number 80, Lebanon is 85, Yemen is 113, and Egypt is 126, according to the World Bank. And wealth does not necessarily improve the situation. Oil-rich Kuwait ranks as number 121 in terms of ease of starting a new business - not so far above the Democratic Republic of the Congo at number 146.

The writing on the wall is clear: Arab countries are not capitalizing on their capital, human or financial. If petrodollars are not translated into much-needed reforms soon, the Middle East region will run the risk of fulfilling an old Arab proverb that warns of the "the camel going into labor and producing a mouse." *en.v*

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A Precious Commodity

George Dardarian

Water is the single most important economic input to the global economy and, more specifically, to individual enterprises. The disparity between supply of and demand for clean water is an inevitable problem; yet the persistent demographic demand for its uninterrupted supply makes water by far the most stable of all commodities. In order to maintain existing water infrastructure globally and also grow it to meet the targets of the UN, it is estimated that $1.5 trillion dollars needs to be spent over the next 20 years.

The World Bank has warned the countries of the Middle East and North Africa that they will face a crisis in water availability unless they develop more transparent and efficient policies. They estimate that by 2050, per capita water availability in the region will fall by 50%. In particular, the Gulf countries have low water reserves but at the same time are regarded as its largest global consumers. Having been neglected for years, the urgency of the issue is increasingly coming to the forefront. Population and economic growth are stretching the supply of fresh water and making the scarce commodity into an even more critical resource to humanity.

Meanwhile, governments in the Middle East region are expected to boost investments in fresh water projects by approximately 60% between 2005 and 2015 compared to the previous decade. Where there is a problem, there must be a solution and where there is a solution, there must be an opportunity. Investing in the third largest industry in the world is a start. If all the fund flows that have been forecasted come to fruition, companies that operate in water markets will reap the benefits. New water-quality standards are being put in place in various countries like India and China, which will force new major investments in water treatment and purification. Furthermore, countries that currently mismanage their water supplies will have to unearth new sources of water,

... governments in the Middle East region are expected to boost investments in fresh water projects by approximately 60% between 2005 and 2015.

or invest into new infrastructure projects. No economy can flourish for long by polluting the water that sustains its workforce. *en.v*

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Tradition Lost

Tahir Sultan

Enter any Indian community and you will find a sea of color. Greens, reds, pinks, yellows – nearly every color under the sun is represented in the traditional sari. The sari has been around for centuries and would be carefully handcrafted on handlooms, with weavers regularly producing yards of the colorful fabric.

However, with the onset of industrialization, the careful craftsmanship is being threatened by mass production. The expensive, delicate fabrics are quickly being replaced by synthetic fabrics and fibers. Cheaper? Yes. But while cheap production may be a plus, there are an array of problems that come with it.

Mass production of the sari first began in the late 18th century, with the development and growth of machine spinning and weaving. The new machines also adapted and modified the traditional Indian cotton dying technique, making it more efficient. With heavy tariffs and import prohibitions imposed from England, India was importing mass quantities of inexpensive English cotton textiles. As a result, the local handloom industry virtually died out by 1825. 200 years later, the sari industry has slowly started returning to India. However, for every one sari that is still produced by handloom, there are hundreds more cheaply produced in factories. The boom has led to the death of a lot of traditional techniques in the manufacturing of yarn. The once-abundant handcrafted saris are now treasured and hard to find.

The hand loomed saris are highly prized, and made by skilled craftspeople whose knowledge has been passed down for generations. Every year, a few traditional saris are weaved, for the upper-class clientele, but the majority of creations are the cheaper, lower quality sari. Generally, craftspeople are paid minimum wage by the government to make these saris. To illustrate: Raipur, a village in central India, is home to 120 weavers. None of them produce anything other than the Janta (the government sponsored sari), and they get paid as little as nine rupees per day (20 cents/day). If they change professions, they lose their professional dignity and could wind up working as laborers. If they move cities, they risk losing their ancestral homes. Meanwhile, weavers in other cities, such as Saunsar, are unable to weave the soft, 100-thread count cotton saris because the kind of yarn needed is simply not available anymore.

Today, there are many patrons of this lost art that are working hard to keep the traditions of weaving and textiles alive. They are actively trying to save these communities and keep the art of weaving these textiles alive. At the same time, these patrons are trying to raise awareness about the natural cloth, and its importance – not only for the clothing made, but for the heritage and the stories it holds. *en.v*

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a.

Out of Africa

Sara Al Ramadhan

Dressed in shorts, slippers and a polo t-shirt Bader Al-Jamili stepped off the plane in early August – unaware, that in Kenya, he would be arriving in the middle of winter. "I remember secretly wishing that it was just a cold breeze, and I didn't just pack a suitcase full of summer clothes," he said.

It would be the first of many lessons on his trip.

In an effort to analyze the effects of climate change on some of the lakes of Rift Valley, Al-Jamili and 11 other global HSBC employees volunteered for the recent Earth Watch program. A non-profit organization based out of Maryland,

b.

every year Earth Watch recruits about 4,000 volunteers who participate in different scientific research studies across the world. Companies, such as HSBC, have taken environmental initiatives to partner with Earth Watch and commit to some of their missions and research projects. This particular program, Lakes of the Rift Valley, focused on preserving the waters of Kenya, affected by climate change.

For 20 days, the 15-person team worked in broken-down groups. They shifted between different observations and studies on a variety of lakes. Home to thousands of animals including hippos, giraffes, birds and fish, scientists have found that the waters have been facing a decrease in quality as well as soil erosion. In turn, these life sources could have a significant effect on the surrounding animal population. The search to answer such questions has been one of the many efforts HSBC has undertaken towards becoming eco-conscious.

In 2005, HSBC became the world's first major bank to become carbon neutral – which was the first of its green initiatives. In addition to requiring its global offices to efficiently use energy, the bank also partnered with Earth Watch in 2002 and launched their $50 million campaign, "Investing in Nature." Since then, HSBC has had over 2,000 volunteers who have contributed to Earth Watch's generous efforts, turning what was a simple step into a significant leap. Al-Jamili has been one of the 2,000.

He remembers responding to what he thought was a common corporate email forward, which was a recruitment call that HSBC had sent to its 9,500-some offices around the world. "I replied never even thinking that I'd be chosen," he said.

The next day, he was invited to participate in an experience he now refers to as being a wild adventure. "I'm a banker," he said. "Give me numbers, give me financials, I can work with it. But Kenya?"

Like many other everyday bankers, who might've become accustomed to the safe environment of cubicles, water coolers and two-piece suits, Al-Jamili found himself in the middle of a country famous for its roaming "Big Five" – lions, leopards, elephants, buffalo and rhinoceroses. Aside from the technological disconnect and separation from his comfortable lifestyle, the experience was further embraced with tents, tin-water bottles and kakis. "We were allowed only one bucket of water a day for personal use. After coming from a city and being allowed to use as much as I please, it was a definite adjustment," he says. Bankers from Bahrain, China, Tunisia and the UK all participated on the trip as well. "I personally kept on changing my mind about going, but then just realized I needed to experience something like this for myself."

Al-Jamili and his colleagues camp was stationed five hours outside the closest city by Lake Bogoria, which is particularly known for its importance to the hundreds of thousands of flamingos

c.

d.

a-d. HSBC Studies Climate Change in Kenya

that live there.

The research was divided into six different concentration groups: water, bird, invertebrate, fish, plant and laboratory work. Each involved different routines, starting from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m., which were led by Earth Watch scientists. All the groups shifted between the six different research studies.

Work varied depending on the group. For example, bird-group volunteers would observe, note and attempt to mark all the surrounding birds in hope of establishing a concrete population estimate. Their work was then meant to be passed on to scientists who would keep such records for comparison in the future. "Depending on their findings, scientists plan to compare today's numbers with future numbers," explained Al-Jamili. Through such data collection, animal population decreases could provide sufficient proof that the surrounding waters and climate were having severe consequences on animals.

In the evenings educational videos and seminars were held to help inform the bankers on the bigger meaning of their project, and how climate change affects different parts of the world. The volunteers were also encouraged to start personal initiatives and programs to help make sure their environmental contribution became a daily footprint, instead a mere phase.

"On the weekends we could go into the city , meet people and discover the country," Al-Jamili said. He recalled most locals
being welcoming about the researchers and scientists. "I made friends with the locals. They were very generous and polite."

The local assimilation didn't end there. It was during his struggle with a Kenyan monkey, who was trying to take his mobile phone that he seemed to truly connect with the "safari" experience. Despite scratches and eight injections, it all still seemed worth it. Then, his colleague was almost mugged for his watch. All was well and good, until the monkey called his 20-some monkey friends to come fight. "Big guy teases small guy, small guy calls his cousins," said Al-Jamili. "It was all very Kuwaiti."

Aside from the lessons on Kenyan seasons, the stubbornness of wild animals and scientific discoveries of Lake Bogoria and its surrounding area, Bader now retains a personal affection for preserving nature, particularly in Kuwait.

"Our water-life in Kuwait is a great attraction and source of enjoyment," he said."We should always look out for nature, including here - it's given back to us so beautifully."

Since then, Al-Jamili has started a recycling program in Kuwait's HSBC offices, and reserves what he considers, a great personal voyage and experience from his trip to Kenya. "It's not everyday a banker gets to just go to Africa and contribute to something like this," Al-Jamili said. "I left with a lot from this experience – and, definitely, a warmer outfit." *en.v*

Making A Difference, One Heritage Building at a Time

Mariam Al Foudery

a.

At the site of one of Kuwait's last remaining traditional mosques, an all-male construction crew is busy stripping a wall of the peeling plaster that covers the original building blocks. Supervising the reconstruction and issuing orders in a mismatch of Arabic and Farsi is the lone woman in sight, architect Evangelia Simos Ali. It is the twentieth such mosque that she has helped save since the late 1980s.

"Evy," as she is known to friends and colleagues alike, is an Australian-born Greek married to a Kuwaiti. A quiet woman with a twinkle in her hazel eyes, Evy began what would become a lifetime of advocacy work to save Kuwait's heritage buildings when she moved to the country soon after her marriage.

"I first came to Kuwait in 1977 for my wedding party," she says. "Being both a foreigner and an architect, I was instantly fascinated with its old buildings – they seemed to convey a sense of living history."

"Buildings can tell you so much about a particular time and place," she says, smiling. "For example, if you look at the walls of the old nurses' hostel in Kuwait City, you will see that there are jagged bits of glass from soda bottles embedded into the cement to keep intruders from climbing the walls and fraternizing with the young nurses. Those little colorful spikes in the wall give you real insight into the people that lived within them."

When Evy returned to Kuwait some years later, she knew that traditional buildings were her passion. "I wasn't really interested in working on anything else. Beautiful old buildings were being knocked down like crazy and Kuwait was emerging as a totally modern town, losing something of its essence in the process. The few buildings that remained were neglected – no one knew what they were, who they belonged to, or any of the stories behind them." She decided to make it her personal mission to find out.

Evy began working at the Kuwait Municipality, creating a heritage building register to "list" traditional structures left standing and grade them in terms of historical importance. She also began photographing buildings and analyzing them to see how they had evolved over time, using aerial photographs from the 1950s as her reference point.
Evy then mobilized a campaign to save the most important old buildings and restore them to their original form. There were many challenges along the way.

"Especially in the beginning, doing this sort of work was really about changing peoples' attitudes – encouraging them to embrace their culture and heritage rather than destroying it in favor of the new and shiny," she points out.
Working with both the National Council for Arts and Letters as well as the Awqaf Ministry and Foundation, Evy has since taken the lead on every single mosque restored in Kuwait since 1998. She has also worked as a consultant on a number of other renovation projects for historic buildings.

Her work has not stopped there, however. Evy continues to try to influence

b.

a. A restored mosqe off the Gulf Road in Kuwait.

b. Evy Al Foudery

the attitude of the next generation by lecturing to young architecture students at Kuwait University on heritage buildings, and also conducts a "heritage walk" several times a year for the public through the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiya. Her latest project is to try to convince governmental authorities to rebuild the old town-wall that protected Kuwait against foreign invaders in the 1920s. Her vision is to construct one segment of the wall per year, using a design chosen from an annual competition open to university students.

"It will become a permanent national art instillation in the heart of the City, marked along its length by heritage markers that tell the story of old Kuwait," she says enthusiastically. "Imagine it: maybe one segment of the wall will be made of a sheet of running water and the next will be an illusory light projection, and the third segment will be formed of clay and sea stone with colorful mosaic images on its surface."

"Together though, it will form a seamless bridge that brings Kuwait's past into its future." It is a bridge that Evy has been building in her work every day for over twenty years.

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One Earth One Source

Sandra Al Saleh

Rusted water pipes.

From space this living planet was first glimpsed as a swirl of blue, as two thirds of its surface proudly displayed its most striking feature: Earth is the only planet in the solar system to have water in liquid form, thanks to our strategic distance from the sun. A little closer and water would have evaporated, a little further and it would be frozen. Our sister planets can attest to this. Water is also the only substance on earth that is found in three states (solid, liquid and vapor) and it has no known substitutes. It is little wonder then that so unique a substance should play the greatest role in producing, sustaining and even threatening life on earth.

Water, found in almost every living thing, carves huge canyons out of tough rock and falls on the most delicate plants without harming them. It is a key player in every single one of our bodily functions. It regulates our temperature, just as it regulates that of the earth. The blood running through our bodies keeping us alive is 83% water. Even our brains are 75% water. Since water is a great conductor of electricity, none of our thoughts (which are technically messages transmitted by electrochemical signals) would take place without water as a medium. Everything down to our bones, the solid frames that hold our wobbly mass of watery flesh and organs up, made up of water. The eyes with which you can read these words are filled with liquid. It is clear that water is essential to our survival and yet everywhere you look, water is under threat.

But of all the water on our planet, only 3% is fresh water fit for human consumption. Two thirds of that fresh water is locked away in ice and glaciers, which are necessary to keep the planet at a temperature safe for life, and to keep water levels from rising and destroying coastal populations. Just 1% of water for human use sounds terrifying, but it is in fact enough to sustain all our basic needs. Our earth's current water crisis is a result not of too little water but of its uneven distribution. The crisis is also made worse by pollution, population growth with reckless consumption and bad management policies. Climate change has now also emerged as a growing threat to water supplies. The most successful governments and societies will be the ones that learn to preserve and protect their water resources for generations to come.

The greatest civilizations and most prosperous cities have always risen by the water, from Mesopotamia to the great Egyptian cities and the great civilizations around the Mediterranean, to Paris, Hong Kong and New York. By the same token, the lack of access to water can also hinder development and destroy the future of cities. Populations need water to grow food, and to feed the animals they depend upon, it is necessary for hygiene and for basic health. Access to water routes has resulted in the flourishing of trade and economic success. Without adequate access to safe water, societies are driven to poverty and disease, which further restricts their development, weakens their economies, destroys their health and limits their access to yet more vital resources.

... of all the water on our planet, only 3% is fresh water fit for human consumption.

Roadworks in Beirut

"The Human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights."
UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Today, one in five people in the world have little or no access to safe water, and that number is rising. UNICEF estimates that at least 4,000 children die each day because they do not have clean water. Women and children in developing nations walk an average of 6 km every day to fetch water, disrupting their lives, education and development as members of society.

It is one of the ironies of our planet and our politics that, despite the staggering abundance of water, our access to it is restricted. Not only by its salinity, but water is restricted by the fact that the tiny amount of fresh water is not evenly distributed. So where can fresh water be found? Importance sources include underground aquifers, some of which are replenishable (like those in China and India), and others which are not (like the ones in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Yemen, and across the MENA region). Once the non-replenishable aquifers are used up, they will not be refilled for hundreds of years to come. Yemen, which will have pumped out its last drop of ground water by the end of the decade, is facing a major water crisis. Its residents, according to the World Bank, already use only 2% of the water that the average person elsewhere does. The huge water subsidies for agriculture, in arid water scarce regions of the Middle East, are a short-term national interest- food security- but a long-term recipe for water depletion and insecurity. Places like Yemen will need to consider what options they have for water very soon. Will they have to import water and grain or will they be able to afford expensive and polluting processes like desalination?

The Gulf region contains some 60% of the world's desalination plants and with water fast disappearing from under the ground, this number is set to increase. Kuwait relies heavily on desalination as a source of fresh water and leads the world in the field. It has provided safe water for all in a country that is water scarce. Saudi Arabia has the largest desalination plant in the world and is overextending its fresh water resources. Unfortunately, a recent WWF report claimed that desalination should be an absolutely last resort, since it is expensive, polluting and contributes to climate change. The process raises water temperatures, increases concentrations of salts and pollutants and disrupts the delicate marine environment.

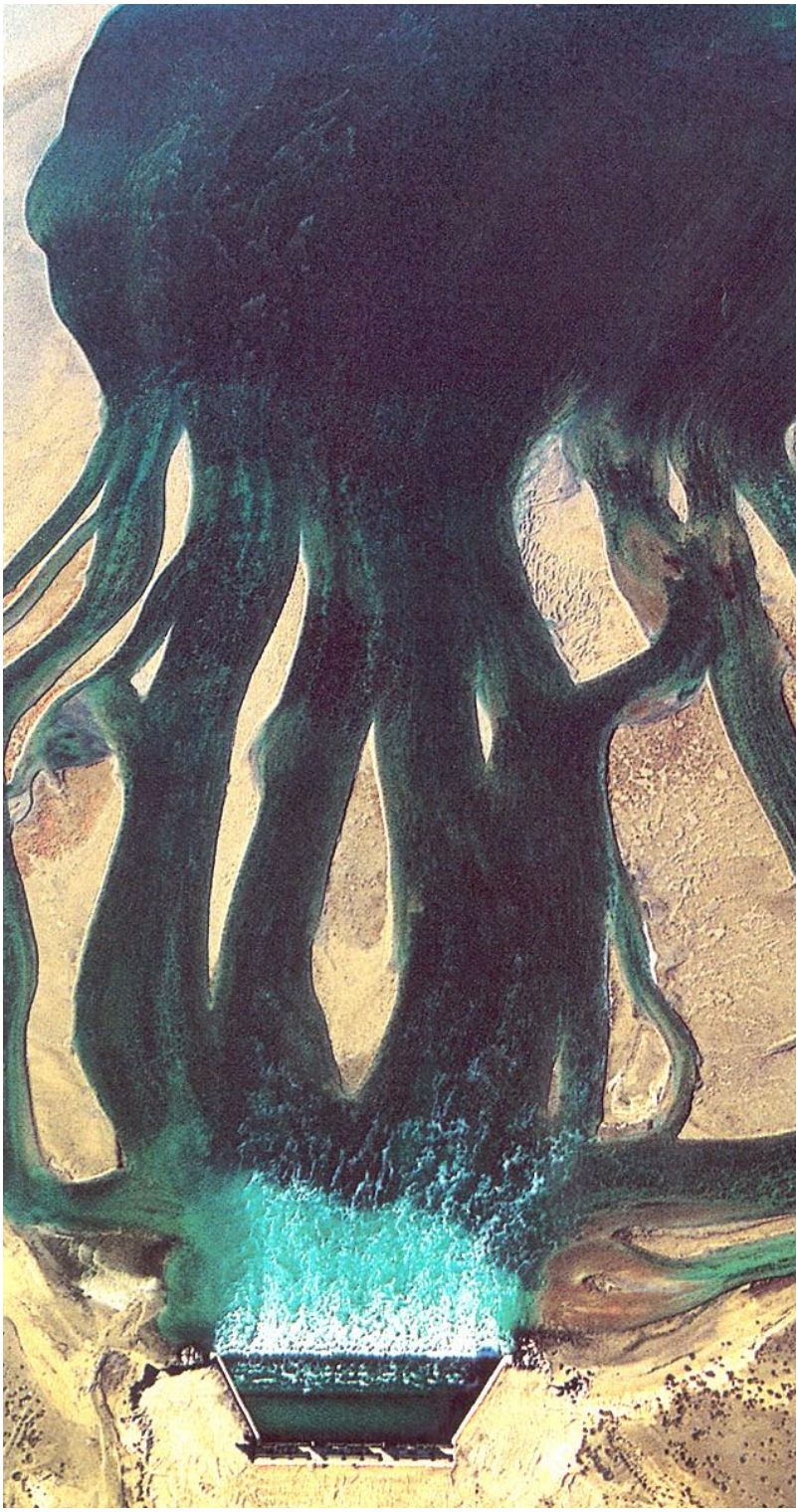
Technologies in the desalination field are improving, the waste products are handled better and energy use is decreasing, but investment in these cleaner desalination options will only come about if measures to outlaw pollution and waste are seriously implemented. That said, the effects of the process will never be clean enough if desalination continues to expand and increase. The main culprit in intensifying the need for more and more desalination is our reckless desire to overuse such a precious and endangered resource like water.

Besides the ever-dwindling supply of water, the Gulf region has had its fair share of water pollution to tackle, from oil spills and toxic war legacies over the years to industrial and domestic waste discharges and lax pollution law enforcement. In a region with so much water traffic and so little water flow regeneration, it is better to err on the side of caution. The region has seen fish kills and red tides, which occur as materials such as waste and fertilizer are released into waters and decrease the oxygen content. Warming waters as a result of higher global temperatures also contribute to the increase in algae and oxygen depletion. There are beaches strewn with non-biodegradable materials like plastic bags, bottles and tires just to name a few. This plastic and waste does not only choke marine life, but will also find its way back into our food and bodies and cause all the havoc it has now become famous for such as endocrine disruption, cancers and other illnesses.

It can be overwhelming to consider the scale of the potential water crises to come, but solutions are possible, and we can start with our homes. Using water conservatively, by using less of it and employing water saving technologies, is vital. To assume that water is in endless supply just because it costs so little is inaccurate. Refusing to use the hose to clean cars and driveways, even planting the proper plants for the climate can reduce water in astonishing ways. Just showering three minutes less can save over 1000 gallons of water. Eating less meat saves water: it takes 15,000 tons of water to produce a ton of beef but only 1,000 tons to produce a ton of grain. There are an endless number of ways water is wasted everyday, and conscious consumption is not only wise, it is necessary.

As for large business, industrial water consumption and pollution should be strictly regulated and irrigation of crops made more efficient. It is estimated that over half the water used to irrigate crops worldwide, is wasted due to inefficient watering systems and incorrect field construction. The Gulf region is lucky to have water provided at so low a cost, since it is a human right to have access to this vital resource. However, that should not allow us to abuse this gift that is in such short supply. Many countries have chosen to, or have been forced to privatize water supplies in an attempt to introduce efficiency but the obvious problems associated with privatization of a human right have beeabundant, and we are privileged not to have to suffer from them. By handing over a vital and dwindling resource to private companies it has become obvious that there is a conflict between the necessity of providing safe clean water to every single person no matter what they can afford and the natural corporate drive to maximize profits. There is, furthermore, an incentive to sell more of water if it is a commodity than there will be to reduce and conserve it. This could and has spelled disasters; skyrocketing prices and water cut-offs in the US, UK and Australia, hundreds of thousands of people losing access to water resulting in civil unrest in Bolivia, and reduced standards and misconduct across the board, notably in Argentina, South Africa and Tanzania.

There is no simple solution to providing for the safe, just and efficient availability of a natural resource that is a life source for all. But what is important is that everyone realize how vital and threatened it is. Every time we turn on the tap, what flows out of it is the most precious resource our planet has to offer and we have the greatest stake in protecting it and preserving it. The region's water crisis is set to get worse, and we can avert disaster now, or bear the costlier consequences in the very near future. *en.v*



Wastewater from a desalination plant in Kuwait.

The Water Crisis

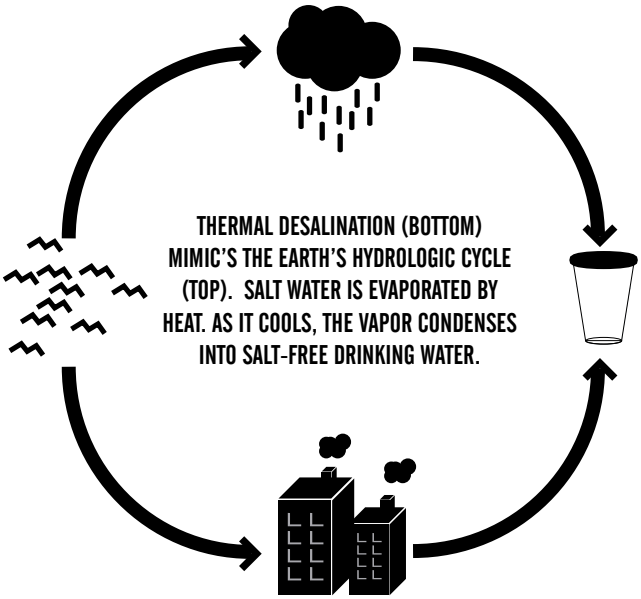
Sarah Schmidhofer

As much as 60% of the world's available freshwater is within the borders of Canada, China, Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, the United States, India, Columbia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – less than ten countries.

The 20 MENA countries have a population that is 6% of the world total – yet has less than 1% of the world's water.

Average freshwater available per person within the MENA region is only 13% of the global average, and falling.

Much of the MENA region (including Oman, West Bank/ Gaza, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait) have already reached or surpassed "the water barrier," below which it is difficult to survive.



Water, Water.... Everywhere?

I'm a little confused about the so called "water crisis" getting so much press lately. Last I checked, the Earth's surface was dominated by ocean, weighing in at over 70% of the total surface area. With waters averaging a depth of 4 km, that is truly an enormous amount of water – so much in fact, that with recent sea level trends rising as they are, we are literally almost drowning in it. So how is it that over 1.1 billion people this year will go without adequate water supplies?

The answer is that a full 97% of the Earth's water is saline ocean water; only 3% is potentially potable. Even worse, over two thirds of that freshwater is tied up in glaciers and ice caps. In total, potable water (groundwater, lakes and rivers) represents less than 0.3% of water on earth – and a substantial portion of groundwater is contaminated. This tiny number is falling further as we speak, because of rapid population growth, climate change, contamination and leaks in water management systems.

"Ok fine," you say. "I get it. We won't drink ocean water straight – but people have been removing salt from seawater for centuries, by boiling it and collecting the vapor. Can't we do that?" Well, that just might work, and such desalination plants currently exist all over the world. This process is actually so effective at removing salt that other compounds must be re-added to the product water to make it potable for humans (i.e., it is too pure for our bodies to absorb effectively).

But there is more to it than simply boiling water on a stove. Two central techniques are commonly used to desalinate seawater: Thermal desalination and membrane distillation.

Thermal Desalination

Thermal Desalination mimics Earth's own hydrologic cycle, alternately evaporating water to remove the salt, and condensing vapor into freshwater by cooling. This process is hugely energy intensive, as it relies on heating and cooling enormous quantities of water. Thermal methods are overwhelmingly used in the Middle East, as the area has a unique surplus of energy resources.

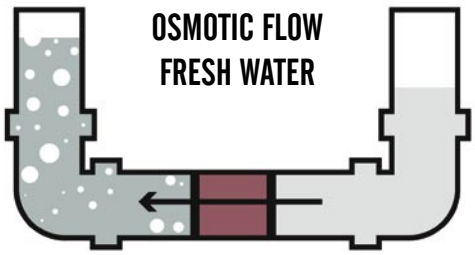
One of the largest thermal desalination plants is in Shuweihat (UAE), producing about 455,000 m3 of water/day. It uses Multi-Stage Flash technology involving successive distillations through multiple chambers, each stage requiring less pressure for evaporation than the previous. Though thermal distillation has a lower recovery rate than membrane technologies, the product contains less salt.

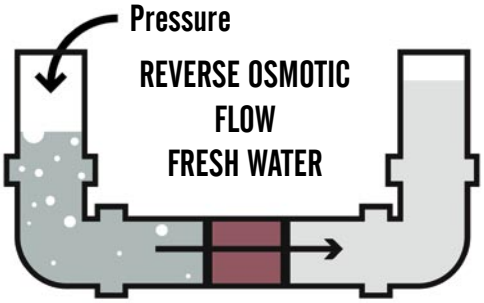
Membrane Distillation

Most new plants rely on membrane distillation procedures, based on osmosis. Osmosis is a natural process involving passage of water across a membrane. When a membrane is placed between pure and salty water, the water flows to dilute the saltier side, creating osmotic pressure across the membrane.

Reverse Osmosis (RO), the most common type of membrane distillation, applies pressure to the salty water, forcing only the water through a membrane and reversing the usual flow. Since pure water would naturally flow to the salty side, RO stets up a situation where water flows away from the salty side, leaving salt behind and the water salt-free for drinking.

The membrane can be used to remove contaminates from other sources of feed-water as well, proving useful in recycling waste waters and purifying





contaminated waters. This is cheaper and more efficient than using seawater, because the impurities in these waters are less concentrated. The total amount of energy required ultimately depends on how much 'stuff' must be removed.

Reverse Osmosis ranges from 30-80% effective, depending on the quality of the feed-water. The largest existing RO plant at Ashkelon, Israel produces 320, 000 m3 of water per day. This is rapidly becoming the most popular method for desalinating water, due to lower costs and energy requirements.

Problems

Unfortunately, the obvious solution to desalinate is actually quite complicated when viewed from an environmental perspective. Not surprisingly, just as we need freshwater for our survival, the millions of species living in the ocean need seawater for theirs. When desalination is involved, the two issues are no longer separate. Even the design of the plant can have damaging effects on its surroundings.

Intake Issues

At the water intake site, plants accidentally remove crucial marine habitat components and organisms. Using barriers, taking water from beach wells and intaking waters with lower concentrations of sea life (e.g., deeper water), are some strategies used to minimize environmental damage. Unfortunately, these approaches involve structural changes to existing plants, increased costs, or reduced flow rates, making them less appealing.

Discharge Issues

Turning our attention to the other end of the plant, it is obvious that large quantities of brine and impurities must be disposed of once freed from our drinking water. This waste contains chemicals from processing and pretreatment, impurities, toxic metals, dead organisms (casualties of intake) that consume O2 as they decompose – and, of course, salt. The waste can go straight back into the ocean or be mixed with run-off from other processes first. It can also be dried out in a landfill or sent to sewage facilities for more treatment.

So many options, but only one solution usually prevails. An overwhelming majority of plants choose the cheap and simple way out: returning waste straight back to the ocean. Since waste is not returned with the same amount of water 'buffer' with which it came, this results in extremely high concentrations of salt and impurities in the discharge areas.

While distressingly little research has been done on habitat and marine life effects in these dumping areas, scientists remain concerned of damage. Increasing mortality of ocean species not only has effects on local ecosystems, but also damages the local fishery trade, which may experience lower catch yields.

Oceans with particularly delicate ecosystems such as the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea are especially vulnerable to changes in chemical composition and salinity. These waters in particular house some of the most threatened coral reefs worldwide, and suspiciously, a large proportion of global desalination capacity. Though exact cause-effect processes are hard to tease out of such

Water Storage in Beirut

dynamic systems, high salinity has been implicated in the reef damage, indirectly pointing its finger at the nearby desalination plants.

Better discharge procedures involve diluting and dispersing waste to reduce concentration in any one area (though this doesn't address toxic effects of heavy metals) and utilizing "zero spill" practices resulting in solid waste for salt mines or chemical uses. Effects of dumping need to be researched in much more detail.

An upcoming NASA satellite (part of the Aquarius Mission) will help, providing real time sea-surface-salinity (SSS) readings to determine how sensitive the ocean is to salinity changes.

Energy Issues

The consequences of desalinating are inseparable from consequences of the colossal amounts of energy driving it. When fossil fuels are used as the primary energy source (as in the Middle East), the consequences entail huge carbon gas emissions and, therefore, a hearty contribution to the mounting global climate change. Ironically, global climate change itself contributes to the water shortages these plants are built to address.

Ways of reducing this carbon footprint are being addressed by many organizations such as MEDRC and WADImena. Suggestions include requiring CO2 emissions to be offset with energy efficiency improvements, taxes, or emission reductions elsewhere.

By 2050 the majority of the MENA region will be water scarce, as predicted by the World Bank – meaning that the need for water conservation, wise use and pollution control are absolutely vital to the region.

Using waste run-off from power plants ("co-location") is a good way of recycling thermal energy without bringing in fresh sources. This is popular in the MENA region because of the abundant energy resources of the region. Some reports estimate that using 100% waste energy can cut CO2 emission as much as 93%.

Alternative power sources hold promise for fueling the industry without harmful greenhouse gases. Solar energy is a major field of current research in the "sunbelt countries" of the MENA region and it is estimated that harnessing sun-energy on just 6000 km2 of N. African desert would provide the energy equivalent of 9 billion oil barrels. The UAE, Egypt and Yemen all have solar-desalination projects underway. Nuclear power plants can also be used in co-location to drive the desalination while avoiding fossil fuel pollution. Wind power is another renewable energy source, seen most successfully at a wind-driven plant in Libya.

What About the MENA Region?

Desalination plants are found in many countries and in various colors and flavors, but nowhere does desalination have bigger impact than in the MENA area – "the most arid region in the world." About 60 % of worldwide desalination occurs here, with almost a full third of it in Saudi Arabia.

It is clear that despite environmental concerns, desalination has a role to play in this water-starved region to augment the feeble water supplies. Indeed, Ronald Spiers, an executive at electricity utility International Power warns that "in the Middle East, there isn't any choice. If desalination plants in the Gulf stopped operating, the countries would die in days." Even so, the environmental impacts must not be ignored and must be eliminated whenever possible.

Educating the masses about this precious resource is a good starting place. According to the director of environmental policy at IDRC, "Almost all states of the Arabian Peninsula are consuming much more water than their annual renewable water supply." In other words, people use more water than they can

An oil Fired power Station in Jiyeh.

replace, but do not know that they need to conserve it. Since saving water effectively increases supply while reducing need for desalination, conservation efforts by every person are vital.

Current government subsidies on water in the MENA region (making it so cheap) remove incentives for people to conserve, and could be reduced. If prices more accurately represented the value of the scarce resource, consumers would be more likely to use it sparingly. The subsidies on desalination plants in particular encourage their liberal use (harming the environment), when conservation would prevent the need for creating such large quantities of manufactured water in the first place.

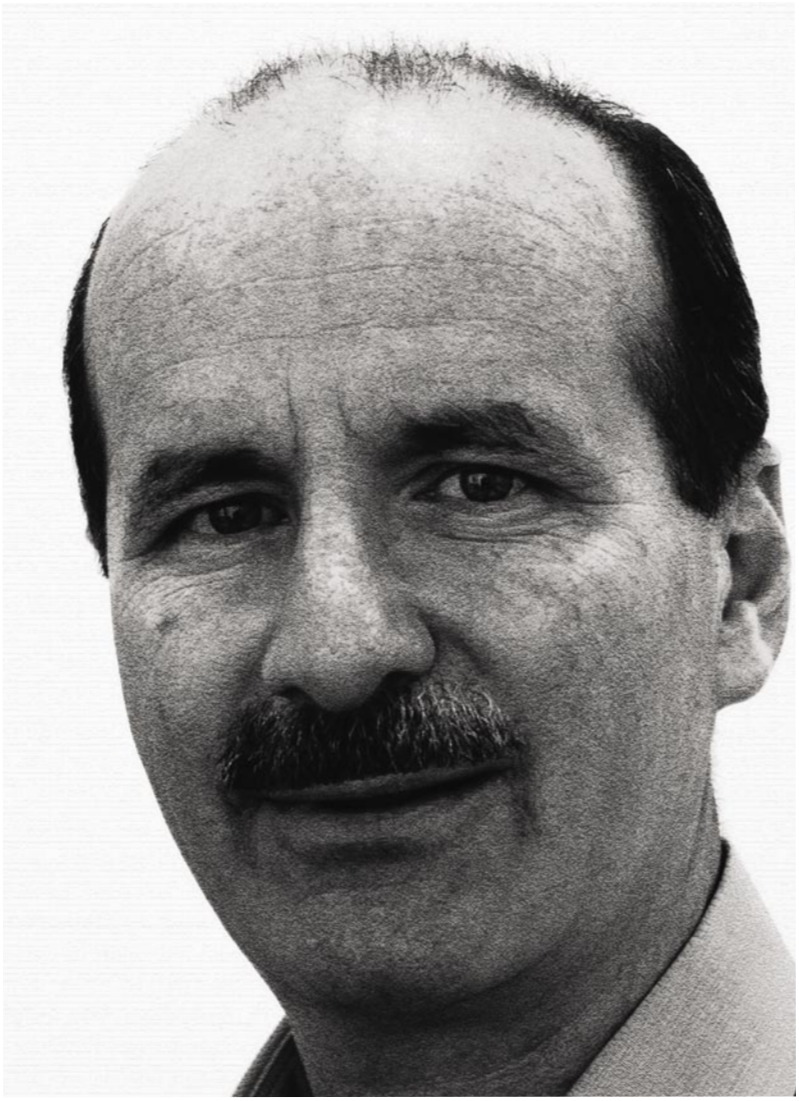
Increasing water use efficiency will also help reduce the plants' impact on the environment. Agricultural practices, consuming over 85% of water in the region, could use water more efficiently. Due to the desert climate of the MENA region, crops are currently being grown and watered with non-renewable water. Saudi Arabia, for example, uses a good portion of its water to produce wheat and milk, when it would actually be cheaper to import. Farmers often find financial incentives through domestic price support, subsidized credit, energy subsidies and foreign import barriers to over-irrigate low-value crops. Switching to lower quality water for agriculture would free up the best water for drinking and reduce the need for heavy desalination.

Since plant efficiency depends on impurity concentration, using non-oceanic sources of water should be viewed as cheaper, less energy-intensive ways to produce and conserve water. Domestic waste-water (from showers, sinks, etc...) can be recycled through some of these plants, as can contaminated groundwater.

Not only will these measures help increase the supply of water, they can also relieve pressure from overused natural sources, allowing wetlands to rejuvenate and aquifers to recharge.

Plants need to continue moving quickly towards renewable power sources, as even the most efficient plants purportedly use four times the minimum amount of energy required to desalinate a volume of water, while the least efficient can use up to 25 times that amount. Clearly there is room for improvement.

There is clearly a role for desalination in the Middle East, but it must be used to augment (not replace) water conservation. Efficiency improvements should continue, alongside research and concern for environmental impacts. *en.v*



If you had one selfish wish, what would it be?
Spend all my time with my children.

José Maria Figueres

A graduate of the United States Military Academy (West Point), and later the KSG School of Government at Harvard University where he completed his graduate studies, José María Figueres (www.josemariafigueres.org) served as the youngest president of a Central American country, Costa Rica, from 1994 to 1998.

Prior to his presidency, Figueres served his country as Minister of Foreign Trade (1987-1988) and later Minister of Agriculture (1988-1990). After leaving public service his achievements include establishing and leading the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (ICT), aiding in the establishment of the Fundación Costa Rica para el Desarrollo Sostenible, and working at the World Economic Forum becoming its first CEO in 2003.

Renowned for his work in the field of sustainable development and its linkage to technology applications, Figueres is proving to be an international dynamic leader in the cause for mitigating climate change.

At the offices of the National Projects Holding Co. in Kuwait, *en.v* engaged in an open discussion with Figueres regarding his perspectives on climate change and the role of today's global community in combating it.

Is it true that you drove an electric car during your time in office?

José María Figueres: I did. My 'presidential limousine' was a small electric car manufactured by a company called Solectria. And I drove an electric car because I was absolutely convinced that if we wanted to achieve a shift towards greener ways of transportation I should lead by example.

How did Costa Rica position itself as one of the leading eco tourism destinations in the world?

Figueres: With much hard work. Just like businesses, countries need a strategy to successfully tackle the process of globalization. Our strategy in Costa Rica was to move towards sustainable development, giving equal importance to macroeconomic balances, strategic social investment mainly in health and education, and building an alliance with nature. On top of that we began to create clusters of national competitiveness. One such cluster that capitalized on our biodiversity, was 'eco tourism'. We used this term as a branding for tourism and it worked. Growing numbers of tourists were coming to experience our natural parks, and bio-reserves. Preservation generated economic returns. Today, eco tourism in Costa Rica has become a good business opportunity.

What environmental initiatives did you pioneer during your presidency and since?

Figueres: One was the promotion of clean energy. Today about 90% of my country's energy is renewable, including hydroelectric, geothermal and wind. A second initiative was moving towards sustainable agriculture produced in accordance with environmentally friendly practices, thus generating higher prices for farmers. A third initiative was to initiate an international market for carbon sequestration, selling tons of carbon fixed like any other commodity. All these different initiatives and many more, were all market oriented.

What do you think are the most promising segments for influencing environmental change?

Figueres: You have a growing awareness with respect to climate change around the world. Now we need to move from awareness to action by all sectors of society. Governments need to enact proactive environmental policy frameworks creating good opportunities for business to come in and help solve the environmental challenges. Businesses can then make mitigating climate change a profitable undertaking by investing in environmental solutions, new technologies, energy efficiency, and carbon sequestration. And all of us need to change our attitudes and especially our consumption patterns.

It's no secret that the Middle East is trailing behind the world in terms of eco development. How has your experience been, thus far, in the region?

Figueres: I disagree. I feel that the entire world has fallen behind. However different to the rest of the world that needs to correct so much of what they have done, in this region we can take advantage of new developments to make sure they are environmentally responsible and set an example for the rest of the world.

Whom from the Arab community would you say we should keep our eyes open for as an up and coming leader for regional eco-change?

Figueres: I'm not yet familiar enough with the region to be aware of all the environmental initiatives happening. However I am particularly impressed with Musaed Al Saleh (founder and CEO of National Projects Holding Co.). He represents a new professional generation and he is well versed in business acumen and environmental determination. His company is already making good business opportunities out of the environment, such as with their investment in the Dubai Recycling Park (www.recyclingdubai.com). That's the leadership we need!

Given that oil production and export is a major source of revenue for the region, how well do you think the leaders will receive the notion of alternative energies?

Figueres: The world will continue to use oil for the next 20 or 30 years. I don't see oil prices diminishing. Most countries in this region had budgeted their oil at about $30. Today it is hovering in the $90 range – three times more income than was originally budgeted. The challenge is to invest this surplus creating new comparative and competitive advantages for the region. This includes investing in alternative energies, such as solar power that could provide the region much of its needs thus liberating more oil to be exported.

What is the role of corporations and the business community with regard to the environment?

Figueres: A very important one. Leading businesses are already looking at the environment as an opportunity and no longer as a cost. And it is only with the entrepreneurship, capital, and leadership of the private sector that we are going to be able to solve the challenges of climate change. That's why governments need to be proactive and enact good policies that give businesses incentives to play its role!

Use of the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is becoming commonplace amongst leading corporations. To what extent do you feel this is a PR ploy by marketing executives to justify their bottom line/careless actions?

Figueres: You find different attitudes towards CSR in different companies. Cutting edge corporations are mainstreaming environmental concerns in their business units, and transforming them into opportunities. For these companies 'green means green' (environmental green now equates to the green of the dollar bill).

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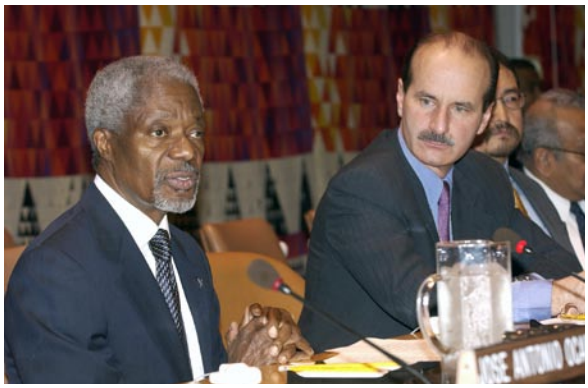


b.

Do you think political posts help or hinder environmental advocacy?

Figueres: They can go either way. It could be very easy for political leaders to think that environmental issues are something of the future. As citizens and voters become better informed and more sophisticated, they will increasingly turn to leaders who have a responsible position with respect to the environment.

Do you think Al Gore would make a good President today?

Figueres: Al Gore would be a superb president. He would bring renewed leadership to a country that is lacking in guidance. He would bring much hope to a world that can be more constructive, in which we can work together and tackle global challenges in the way we need to. Having said that, I don't think he would run for president. New platforms of leadership are emerging that are completely different to those of the past. A winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and an Oscar commands more attention. He can get issues to move faster at the global level than if he was the president of the United States. Al Gore is a pragmatist who clearly understands that the greatest challenge humankind has ever faced is that of climate change, and he has already done more than anybody else to make peoples around the world aware of this.

What is your outlook for the global economy in the next 5-10 years?

Figueres: The last five years have witnessed unprecedented growth at the global level. While the price of energy and a lack luster US economy could dampen future growth, demand in emerging markets will continue to grow. I therefore have a general positive outlook towards the future.

The drivers of growth will continue to shift towards the Pacific Rim, as China moves 350 million people from its agricultural sector into its industrial sector. India will also continue to grow, mainly in the services field.
Our greatest challenge however is how we distribute that growth. Globalization has created many opportunities and lifted many millions of people out of poverty but it also has created a larger differentiation between those that have and those that don't. Unless we are able to narrow that gap and create opportunities of well being for people that have less, it's not going to be a safer world. The challenge is therefore not so much global economic growth, but rather how we reinvent the distribution of economic wealth and create opportunities of well-being for all.

You spoke at the American University of Kuwait (AUK). In the past, how responsive have students been to your initiatives?

a. Figueres and the UN Secretary- General, Kofi Annan, during the meeting "Global Forum on Internet Governance" held by the United Nations.

b. His Holiness Pope John Paul II together with Figueres.

Figueres: Very responsive. They understand the challenges much better than the older generations. 25 years from now the students of today will look back and either remember us with pride, respect and admiration for our resolve in tackling climate change, or they will say, "why didn't our parents act?"

If you had one selfless wish, what would it be?

Figueres: Dedicate my time and effort to work in such a way that would effectively move people from awareness to action with respect to mitigating climate change.

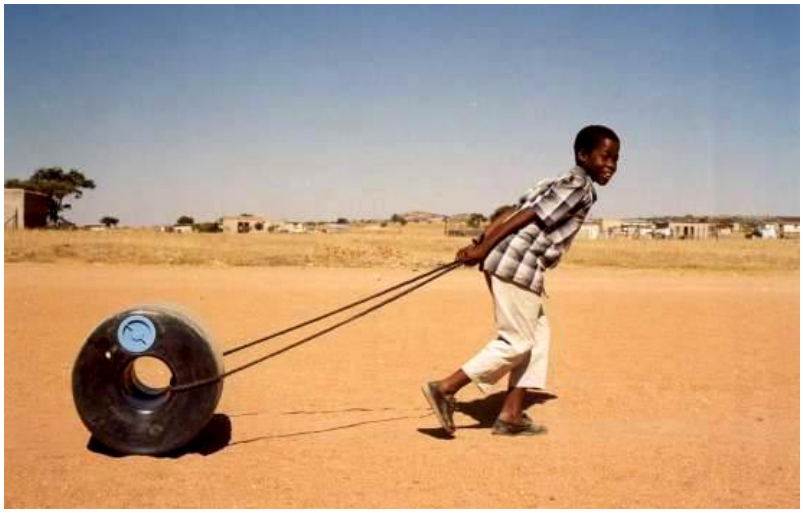
Please complete the following sentence: If I could .... I would ...

Figueres: If I could convince my fellow human beings that in the world of today we have created enough economic activity and enough technological advancement to live better lives on the planet, I would be part of a happier global family that would be much more at peace with itself. *en.v*

Constructive Measures
are Being Taken to Conserve Water

en.v

a.



a. The Q Drum

b. The Waterless Urinal

Industrial designers recognize the need to make potable water accessible to rural areas. The Life Straw is a personal mobile device that can convert surface water into drinkable water. The Q drum is a cylindrical water transportation device that enables large quantities of drinking water to be transported (enough to sustain a whole family)

Grey water or wastewater is a highly intelligent alternative to excess water consumption.

Particularly in the Middle East and Africa, where fresh water is hard to come by. Inventions like the Drought Buster can siphon water from your bath to water your plants. The Ban Beater is another recycling system that simplifies the reuse of household water.
Start at home. In restrooms, low flow toilets, showerheads and waterless urinals are among some of the most promising new products. Doing laundry need not be so wasteful either. GE's Front Load Washing Machine reduces water usage by 23 gallons per load (a combined annual savings of $3 billion dollars a year in the US alone). *en.v*

b.

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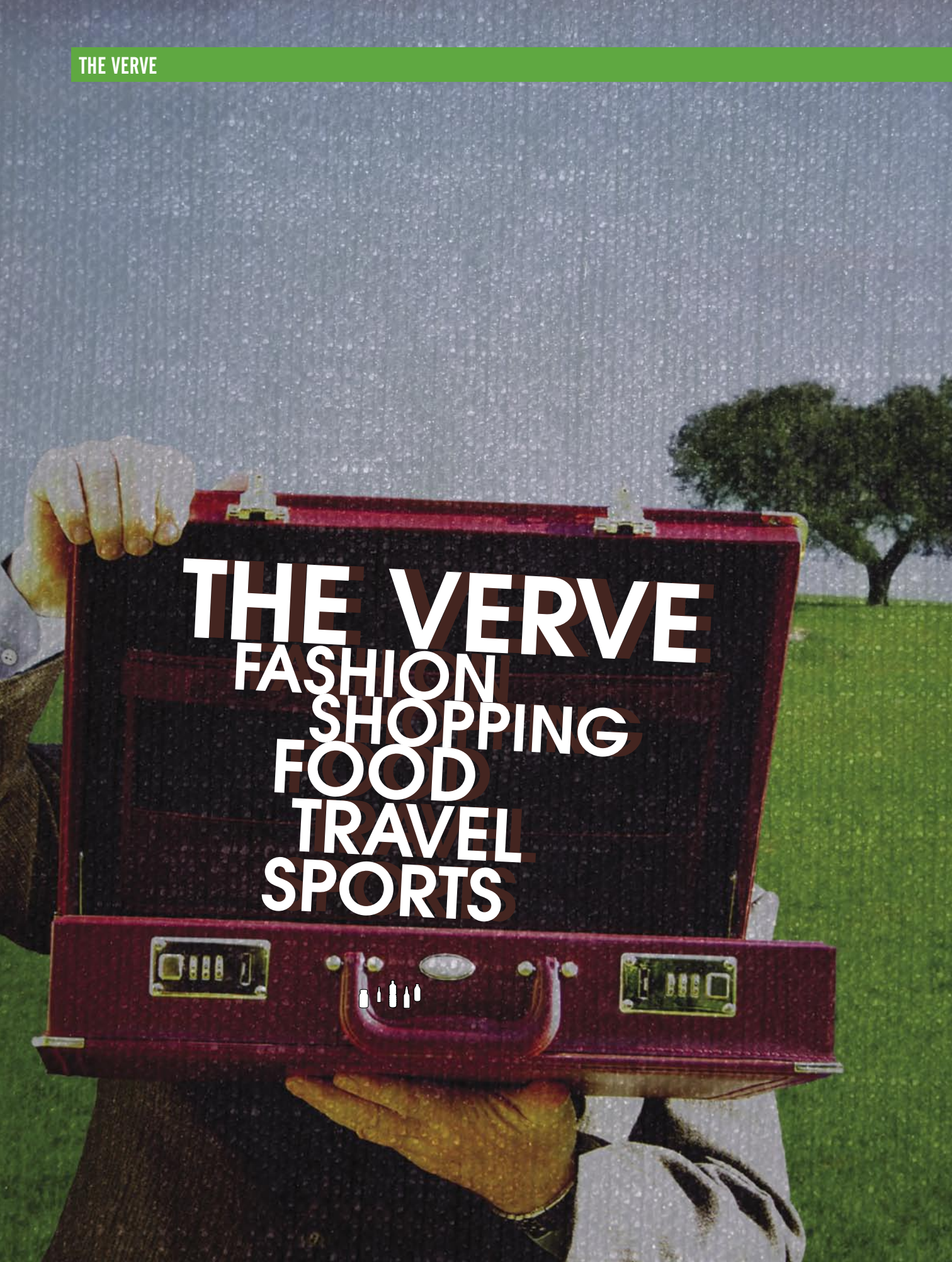
THE VERVE
FASHION
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Green is the new Black

Nouf Sultan

Fashion is trend enthused and eco-fashion is an escalating trend in the world of clothing.

Eco-fashion first became hip in 2005 when an entire runway show was dedicated to the cause during New York's Fashion Week, FutureFashion. The show featured clothes exclusively made from eco-friendly fibers, such as bamboo, organic cotton, and corn. Famous high-end international designers, including Oscar de la Renta and Proenza Schouler, participated in the event lending credibility to the cause.

Since then, a new market is emerging. Some of today's hottest up and coming labels have latched on to the eco-friendly cause. EDUN, for instance, has taken the fashion world by storm. Ali Hewson (wife of U2's Bono) launched EDUN in 2005. The label is currently at the forefront of ethical fashion and organic clothing. 47.1% of the cotton used in EDUN's collections is organic. The company's core mission is to produce beautiful clothing while fostering sustainable employment in developing areas of the world, particularly Africa. The company helps build the skill sets for those making the clothing and encourages members of the fashion community to trade in Africa, a quest to elevate the nation from extreme poverty.

With eco-fashion still in its early stages, responsibility lies in the hands of the industry. A system of eco-labeling is being established to confirm which clothes have been made humanely and in an eco-friendly manner. 'Fairtrade' is one such company that spearheaded the campaign. The 'Fairtrade Mark' is an independent consumer label that guarantees fair trade was used in the manufacturing of a product. The labeling initiative is currently active in 20 countries around the world, mainly throughout Europe and North America.

The next time you go shopping, look for the label and assist the cause. *en.v*

Tahir Sultan

Arabesque Guacamole

Choose organic, local and in season.

Two large avocadoes
Three lemons
Four cloves of garlic
One large onion
One large tomato
A small bunch of coriander
One green chili
One-tablespoon cumin powder
One teaspoon of salt
One teaspoon of ground black pepper
One tablespoon organic olive oil.

Mash the avocadoes in a bowl (save one seed). Finely chop the coriander, tomato and onion and add. Crush garlic cloves and add. Squeeze lemon into the bowl and add salt, pepper, cumin powder and olive oil. Finally, de-seed the green chili (dice in half and remove seeds under running water). Chop and add.

Accompany with delicately toasted Lebanese bread. *en.v*

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A Few Easy Tips on How to be Eco-Friendly

During The Holidays

Get Creative

Make your own wrapping paper. Use brown paper bags, newspapers, or even old magazines. Hand-made wrapping is personal and fun. It's like giving a gift within a gift. Best of all, it's recyclable.

Recycle

Buy wrapping paper made from recycled content. It looks unique, you'll feel good buying it and you can reuse and recycle it later. Steer clear of wrapping paper with metallic dyes; they can't be recycled and are at times toxic.

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

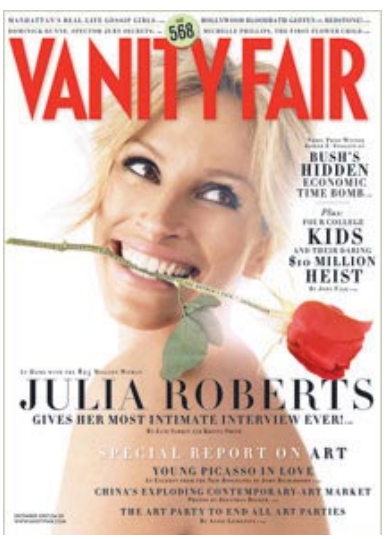
Give gift certificates this year. They require virtually no wrapping (apart from the envelope, which is recyclable) and your recipient will get to choose the gift they want. Satisfaction guaranteed.

Donate

What do you give a person who has it all ? You give a donation to a charity or cause in their name. Local and international charities can always use a helping hand, especially during the holidays. (Try Unhcr.org or Redcross.org online to donate to a wide selection of charities.)

Buy Organic

When in doubt, choose organic. Organic clothing and bedding are rapidly gaining popularity. Or, give a beautiful gift basket. Fill it with lots of organic treats like cookies, coffees, teas, hot cocoa, chocolates, and even flowers.



"We make a lot of garbage. How can we make less garbage? This is our plight. I use Seventh Generation (chlorine-free, non-toxic) diapers for Finn and Hazel, and then I was turned on to the (plastic-free, flushable) gDiapers for Henry. It is flushable, but you've got to stir that thing! If you don't really break it all the way up, it doesn't go all the way down"

Julia Roberts, from the December issue of Vanity Fair

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Play Clean
Stay Green
en.v

With the advent of an unwavering movement towards cleaner energies and responsible lifestyles, professionals and outdoorsman alike will need to re-address their leisure habits. Given the surplus of sand in the region, it seems only logical to explore the sportive appeal of deserts. Camel racing, horse racing, and falconry are all commendable options, yet principally expensive. Thus, we give you sand surfing.

Comparable to snow boarding, sand surfing is a pure adrenaline rush downhill and evidently tiresome uphill. The competitive advantage to sand surfing though is that dunes aren't seasonal. Practice, as in all sport, makes perfect. Strengthen your mobility technique and tactical maneuvering becomes second nature. Sand surfing is by no measure exclusively reserved for enthusiasts, extremists too are adopting the sport. Josh Tenge holds the world record for the longest back flip, a staggering 44 ft and 10in. Erik Johnson, a professional sandboarder, holds the Guinness World Record for Speed at a dashing 51mph. Dubai is one of the premier destinations in the world to experience sand surfing. In late January, during the Dubai Shopping Festival, the Big Red plays annual host to the Hugo International Sand Boarding Championships. Accept the Challenge. You might make waves or just plain eat dirt. *en.v*

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Eco-Luxury
on Oryx Land

Reham Samarei

a.

Spanning nearly 5% of the emirate of Dubai's total landmass, the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDCR) is a sanctuary for indigenous desert wildlife. The DDC is a national park that exists to conserve and protect over 33 species of mammals and reptiles. Most popular amongst these is the majestic Arabian oryx. Native to the UAE, the oryx was on the verge of extinction nearly 50 years ago. This prompted the ruler of Dubai at the time, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, to decisively relocate herds of oryx and along with species to a wildlife reserve in Arizona, USA. 35 years later, 90 descendents of the same Arabian oryx were brought back to Dubai to thrive once again in their native desert.

Al-Maha Desert Resort and Spa is the eco-tourist's overnight destination within the DDCR. Having been adorned with numerous accolades from the likes of Conde Nast Traveller, National Geographic Traveler and more this is eco-tourism at its most luxurious. Nestled amidst the large reserve, Al-Maha's facade mimics a Bedouin encampment.

b.

a-b. Al-Maha Desert Resort and Spa.

Amenities on offer include wireless internet, mini-bar, private temperature-controlled pool, both a walk in shower and a bathtub, satellite TV and a DVD player. Nevertheless, its 3:1 staff to guest ratio reflects a true Bedouin spirit of hospitality; ensuring every desire is met and exceeded.
Conservation efforts include solar power for a considerable portion of their energy requirements, passive energy conservation through combining traditional with modern building methods, onsite water recycling, wastewater is purified to use for irrigation, all soaps, chemicals and detergents used are biodegradable.

Recommendation: Spending all day soaking in the private pool of a lavish suite. Have a delectable meal on a private deck. Gaze upon a desert whose natural bounty has been restored.

Al-Maha makes a commendable effort in preserving a country's heritage and natural history. *en.v*

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I Can't Go Home

Lebanese directors Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige of "A Perfect Day" embark on their junior project together, chronicling the near-history of the 2006 Israeli invasion on Lebanon. "I Can't Go Home" tells the story of a pregnant woman who heads to Paris in pursuit of a career as a filmmaker only to be exiled there after the eruption of war. She struggles to contact her husband while dealing with isolation and uncertainty. Her medium of choice is a video diary.

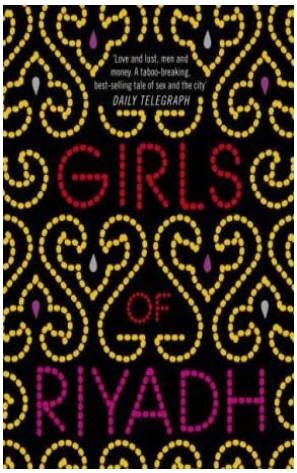
"I Can't Go Home" was selected earlier this year for the Atelier Cinefondation at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

2 *Movies*

en.v

Jani Gal

Following years of absence, Iraq returns as an eligible contender for the Best Foreign Film Oscar nomination. "Jani Gal" (The Agony of a People) couldn't have come at a more apt time. This Kurdish-language film recites the story of separatists from the late 1940's attempting to resist the annexation of their land and culture by Iraq and Iran. A formerly shunned issue is now brought to the forefront as Iraq grapples with self-containment.



Girls of Riyadh

Rajaa AlSanea

The book that follows the quasi-fictional story of four Saudi girls, causing much controversy and a dismissed court case, has finally gotten an English translation. "Girls" depicts the lives of women in Riyadh, dealing with love and coming-of-age. AlSanea became an instant household name with this tell-all, scoring one of the few Arabic bestsellers of its time. This English revisit will surely attain some foreign interest as the Arab world braces for her second effort.

3 *Books*

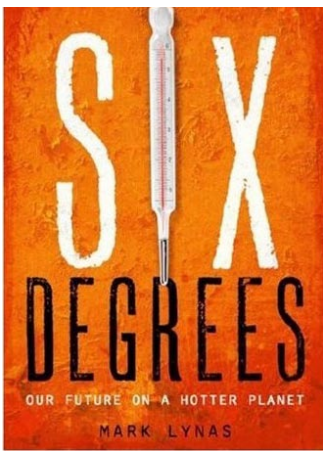
en.v

Water as a Human Right for the Middle East and North Africa

Asit Biswas and Cecilia Tortajada

Many political scientists theorize that if war were to break out in the Middle East, it would be due to the ongoing arms race. Not so, say others. New theories predict that, should a war occur, it would be over water. Right now, over a third of the world lacks access to properly sanitized water. As this number grows, many organizations have proposed the availability of water as an issue of human rights, a notion rejected by many countries. More than anything, this issue affects people in arid locations – including our own oil-rich states.

Biswas and Tortajada's book takes a local approach at a pressing issue in a region of deserts outfitted with inadequate natural water systems. The management of water will become more important as border control and domestic politics will shift towards preserving an essential resource. The authors have already tackled the issue in South and Southeast Asia in 2005, gaining the attention of the United Nations and other organizations seeking implementation of the law, making water a basic human right.



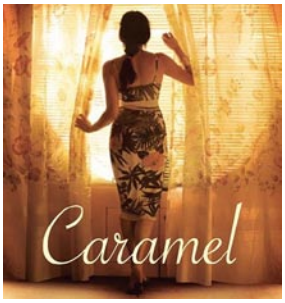
Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet

Mark Lynas

Previously, Mark Lynas dissected the less-talked about implications of humans on this planet, giving a different outlook on climate changes in the natural world – including disasters like 2005's Hurricane Katrina and tsunami. In his new book, Lynas returns with promises to put the acceleration of climate change under the microscope. Climate change is dealt with in six degrees, each of which focuses on a different ecosystem throughout the world. With the topic fast becoming an essential issue, Lynas' book points out that the time to act is now.

4 *Albums*

en.v



Caramel Original Soundtrack

Various Artists

"Caramel" director Nadine Labaki is engaged to Khalid Mouzanar, the soundtrack compiler and music composer for the film – and their chemistry is ever-present. It's a stellar score that fuses classical and oriental beats. The standout track "Sukkar Ya Banat" is crowding the airwaves in France and the Middle East, while the soundtrack tops the Lebanese Virgin Megastore charts.

Leh Kida

Saad Jamaleddine

Following the failed attempt at an Arabic boy band, Saad Jamaleddine spent endless hours in the studio constructing his Arabic dance tune, "Leh Kida". The end product rivals mainstream hits as does his valiant effort at a music video. Using guerilla-marketing tactics, he reaches out to audiences through YouTube, Facebook, MySpace and other online communities.

Living Darfur

Mattafix

This UK-based duo releases a new single dedicated to the Darfur cause. It fuses chill out with urban beats and melodies reminiscent of early Lighthouse Family tracks. The music video showcases the living conditions in the Eastern Chad region and features an intro by Matt Damon. "Living Darfur" will be featured on their highly anticipated second album "Rhythm & Hymns," set to be released in November 2007.

In Rainbows

Radiohead

The kings of experimental rock return with a twist. Thom Yorke & Co. opted to go it alone when their contract ended. Potentially stirring a paradigm shift in selling music, Radiohead informed fans that they could purchase the album for the price of their choice, through their official website. Furthermore, the band took the eco route, avoiding use of all plastics associated with CD packaging. What does Thom Yorke have in store for us next?

a.

b.

Gulf Environmental Art Festival

en.v

In January 2007, the Gulf Environmental Art Festival, an eco inspired festival was held off the coast of Iran. More than just an exhibit of paintings and sculptures, the two-phased approach to art and the environment was a unique way of tackling a hot topic.

More than 30 local artists took part in the festival that is set to become an annual winter event. With a mere $800 budget, the festival was made possible by the cultural office in Hormozgan and the enthusiastic locals who hosted the artists.

The first phase saw participants gathering trash strewn on the seashore, and inventively designing the litter into sculptures of people. By sundown, the trash was disposed of, leaving the beaches pristine. For phase two, artists created sculptures from the natural resources the islands had to offer. Sand, shells and tinted earth from nearby mineral deposits were but some of the resources put to use. To make paint, the artists experimented with Gelak, a red tinted earth indigenous to the islands. To further create associations between art, people and the earth, the festival's meal of choice was red-tinted bread.

Gulf Environmental Art Festival's objective was to encourage individuals to embrace a more organic lifestyle with an emphasis on preserving our natural surroundings. What began as a simple workshop will now become an annual winter event. *en.v*

Design Revisited

en.v

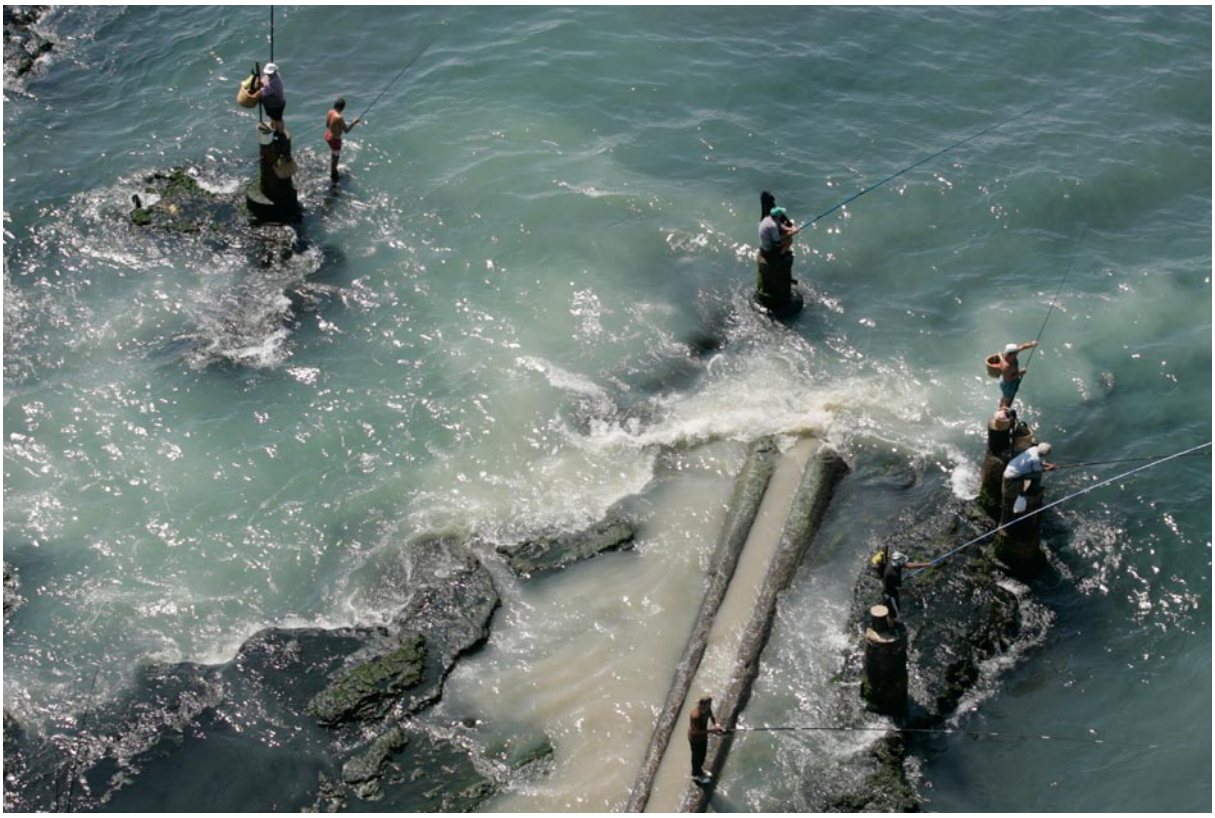
The Dekka Day Bed won the " Bo Bedre's Furniture Award" at the Copenhagen International Furniture Fair in May 2007. Designed by Danish FurnID, the bed signifies a meeting of light and shadow, hard and soft and asymmetry and stringency. Latticework is intricately padded onto a robust aluminum frame and marries both aesthetic and function into a striking piece of furniture. Its design strongly echoes both Danish and Arab sensibilities. Soft curves and calculated irregularities are a Danish signature, where as its hexagon structure strongly roots the chair in Arab culture. The Dekka Day Bed reconfigures traditional simplicity into an outstanding piece of multicultural design.

In 2008, The Bahrain World Trade Center will stand at an astounding 240 meters in height and will be comprised of two identical fifty-story sail shaped towers (similar to Dubai's Burj Al Arab). Providing state of the art office accommodation, balconies on every floor and impressive double height passenger speed lifts, the towers can be called Bahrain's first truly intelligent contemporary building.

Three enormous wind turbines unite the towers while three bridges bind them at 30-meter intervals. The towers' structure is intended to reduce pressure variations between bridges. Combined with increased turbine air speed (height denotes faster speeds), greater efficiency is achieved for powering the towers' generators. Expected to deliver between 11 to 15% of the energy needs for both towers, the turbines prevent about 55,000 Cubic Kilograms of Carbon from being emitted annually.

Initially, the London based design firm Atkins, wanted to incorporate solar panels (originally engineered for NASA in outer space) into the design but found it impractical due to soaring temperatures year round. To be a true sustainable building, one may argue that solar panels should have been integrated. However, most should look upon the towers as a symbol of responsible design and a shift in attitude being adopted regionally. *en.v*

LAND-BASED HUMAN ACTIVITIES ACCOUNT FOR 77% OF ALL MARINE POLLUTION



Previous Page
Men fishing atop rocks while sewage is being discarded around them into the sea, Beirut.

Water storage cylinders on the rooftops of residential buildings in Beirut.

This Page
The shores of the city.

Solar Panels are used to heat water on the rooftops of residential buildings.

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