A humdrum, non-heritage place, given new meaning even in a newsprint come-on.

which have been depopulated. There is scarcely a human figure in any of his frames. This is a capturing of traces, a raising of the commonplace or forgotten to statement of importance. That it communicates to young and old outside of popular photographic conventions is in joy. 

Kenna does come home again. The Middleton Cheney image is from 1974, there are earlier area images: two from Broughton Castle, near Banbury span more than twenty years, but capture the historic park, a dormant reminder of past lives.

Credit to Michael Kenna for the images, Banbury Museum for providing them. Michael Kenna is represented by HackelBury Fine Art and their site details, books and prints are available. It is possible that this Retrospective may have a further UK showing in future.

Subsequently I learned that the Middleton image had an element of chance, not something that is suggested by the array of fifty-plus, 7" by 7" black and white images in the exhibition. Covering some thirty years of professional experience, the visitor can discern change through time, though ‘development’ is not an appropriate term.

Kenna’s work celebrates a passing world with enduring images. His particular skill is in commanding light to frame moments and objects so that the viewer cannot avoid an encounter with time, weather, proximity and light. His pictures have titles, locations and dates, but that is not why you are drawn by them. I watched as a five year old prodded the glazing of his Japanese — haiku inevitable — prints and followed the effects of light on the scene. These images drawn from his Japanese, French, US and other tours minimise geography, and encourage the viewer to do the uncommon, and consider shape and light as the main components of landscape. Working often in early morning or at night, Kenna moves far beyond Bill Brandt, one of his early heroes, and composes a world so far from daily life as to nudge the contrivances of surrealism.

The monochrome response to landscape carries with it a message of commemoration, of lived in places.
expressed at the Rio de Janeiro conference makes landscape an essential consideration in striking a balance between preserving the natural and cultural heritage as a reflection of European identity and diversity, and using it as an economic resource capable of generating employment. Yet one of the most striking features about many landscapes is that they are inherently unsustainable, and reflect cultural and economic circumstances from bygone eras. This challenges us to think about what really mean by ‘sustainable landscapes’ and how landscape policy can make a significant contribution to wider goals.

This bref reflection on the subject is deliberately limited the ‘natural-cultural’ environment. I am not straying into the territory of urban landscape in the sense of built environments and their associated iconographies, which raise quite separate sets of issues. Nor am I concerned with pristine, near-natural landscapes, whose survival depends on strict safeguard and minimal intervention. My comments are confined to landscapes typical of the European countryside, whose condition and character is intimately related to their host economies and cultures. Many of our acclaimed landscapes need to retain traditional, environmentally sensitive farming practices in order to maintain their familiar appearance and biodiversity. However, subsidised small-scale family farms cannot be proposed as a universal solution. Even if the taxpayer could afford it, a Canute-like policy of coconning the entire countryside against endemic economic, social and climate change would be untenable.

One widely expressed viewpoint is that our ‘designated’ landscapes serve as exemplars of sustainability, whose pioneering approaches can be diffused into the wider countryside. Indeed, many examples of short-chain food and timber production, community enterprise, green tourism and site management have successfully been trialled within these areas. However, in practice, these solutions only represent a tiny fraction of the socio-economy of rural areas and are far from being a general solution. Many of us live in areas of non-script or even degraded landscape, betraying the pressures of agribusiness and industrial transition, which are progressively conceding their vestiges of regional distinctiveness to global forces. Then, there are the landscapes of the urban fringe, as well as the official and unofficial green spaces of urban areas, most of which either depend on cash — and energy-intensive management, or else gradually deteriorate and fall prey to development.

In their classic study of agricultural landscapes in the mid 1970s (which has twice been re-visited) and was explored in LRE41, Richard Westmacott and Tom Worthington called for the emergence of new landscapes which were no less valid than the ones replaced. This, essentially, remains the challenge for landscape policy. We need to accept that the ‘drivers’ which produced nostalgic scenery are obsolete, and learn to promote the emergence of distinctive new landscapes that possess a self-sustaining dynamic. I suggest that we need to set ourselves three goals for sustainable landscapes — we must agree on the hallmarks of sustainability, we must identify the drivers capable of producing them, and we must identify the role of landscape policy in effecting felicitous outcomes.

First, central to the sustainability of cultural landscapes, is a recognition of the human as well as the ecological. Some models emphasise the accumulation of natural capital — such as biodiversity and pure water — as being indicative of landscape sustainability. Important though this is, it ignores the integral role of human and social capital in providing a source of stewardship and stories. If a rich social capital is enmeshed with a landscape, then it helps alive memories and knowledge which underlie creative economic and voluntary activity. In many places, this is vestigial, as most people have very little contact with or knowledge about the land, and they may even feel alienated from a decaying, impoverished and vandalised environment. A vibrant landscape, in which strong community identity, pride and cohesion are intimately linked to land-care will, I suggest, tend to accumulate character and distinctiveness. We should not always expect such landscapes to epitomise agreed social norms of aesthetic attractiveness — many everyday landscapes are cherished, especially by insiders, despite theirwarts-and-all qualities.

Two key properties recur as being symptomatic of such landscapes. On the one hand, they display a robust functionality. They continue to perform effectively key functions — ‘regulating’ the quality of natural capital such as water, soil and biodiversity; ‘carrying’ key activities such as residence and recreation; ‘producing’ sustainable food; such as food and timber; and ‘conveying information’, such as heritage value and artistic inspiration. Usually, in complex cultural landscapes, these properties interact in time and space, producing the phenomenon of multifunctionality. On the other hand, they possess a strong ‘place consciousness’, whereby people identify positively with an area and understand its past events and myths, as well as its customs and unwritten rules. Often, this will permit an intuitive awareness of physical inter-relationships and cause-effect chains, such as the links between land use and flooding. This combination of functionality and place-ness will typically express itself through distinctive character.

Three key factors ‘drive’ landscape change — economy, culture and environment. They are nothing new, and have been with us since the Neolithic. At present, economic drivers are particularly apparent in the globalisation of investment and trade, strikingly illustrated by the subsumption of external capital into agribusinesses. Cultural drivers equally reflect globalisation, not least the homogenisation and ‘Macdonalisation’ that occurs via the Internet, media, tourism and retail chains.

Environmental change is now most urgently reflected in global shifts affecting the climate. The major difference between past and contemporary landscapes is clearly the balance between ‘local’ and ‘global’ in their driving forces. Hitherto, even international influences such as empire were relatively sensitive to local character, not least because people lacked the technologies to overcome the friction of distance and physical environment. Notwithstanding the capacity of some former communities to ‘foul their nest’, cultural landscapes have generally emerged slowly and painstakingly, respecting innate environmental potential and social customs, and allowing nature to colonise by stealth. Contemporary drivers, by contrast, do not appear spontaneously to produce landscapes of character or multifunctionality — equally, though, we cannot continue and continually subsidise obsolete practices however pretty their side-effects may be, and we must rely on the vigour and potential of mainstream drivers to produce distinctive 21st century landscapes. This suggests a conscious policy approach to manipulate cultural and market forces to yield new but valid landscapes, paralleling the ways in which planning and urban design seek to enrol the development industry in reinterpreting and reinventing the city.
Some drivers are relatively obvious and have received a lot of attention in the academic and policy literature – such as the potential for traceable, trusted and wholesome foodstuffs to be linked to low intensity, organic farming and local outlets such as farmers’ markets. These can potentially be promoted to an extent where they enter the mainstream: but that will only happen if sufficient, and additional drivers must be identified and captured within landscape policy. For example, there is an ‘energy’ driver, impelled by both market and policy forces, which is leading to the emergence of distinctive character types reflecting wind, water and biomass potential – in a sense, not too dissimilar from arable and industrial landscapes prior to the temporary supremacy of fossil fuel. There is also a leisure and lifestyle driver, leading to phenomena such as equestrian facilities and the sale of ‘home farms’ separate from their field. The impacts of such demands have been widely attested and, despite the professional disdain which they elicit, they do reflect a spontaneous and sustainable input of cash and care. At times, public policy is itself the driver, for example as housebuilders are required to pursue ‘zero carbon’ and ‘sustainable drainage’ schemes, or farmers are pressed to reduce diffuse pollution. These signify deeply significant underlying stories, and unlock substantial additional expenditure from corporations and individuals. Policy drivers may also have major implications for urban and rural landscapes – from green roof to green infrastructure – and herald a shift from traditional urban ‘landscaping’ which has suffered chronically from underfunding and deskilling. In many parts of the world, including the EU, taxpayers are still patrons of environmentally friendly farming – how long this will be able to continue and whether it is being used effectively to facilitate valid new agricultural landscapes are debatable, but it is still an important influence. The ‘conservation, amenity and recreational trusts’ (CARTs) are also substantial patrons of the countryside, and can hold significant sway in radical future landscape options – such as ‘re-wilding’ schemes which envisage large areas of land drainage, or the reversion of farmland to woodland.

The key to future sustainable landscapes appears to lie in ‘smart’ policies which economic and cultural drivers to the functionality of rural spaces. Elsewhere, I have described this in terms of a ‘virtuous circle’ operating between economic and social entrepreneurship on the one hand, and environmental aesthetics and productivity on the other. ‘Virtuous’ is not intended to imply value judgment; it is simply widely used sustainability judgment to contrast with ‘vicious circles’ of environmental deterioration. In other words, a ‘landscape premium’ is produced in which it becomes worthwhile for people to invest in the landscape because it is perceived as a source of profit and pride, creating a continuously self-reinforcing positive loop. This is as applicable to edge cities as it is to national parks. In consequence, I suggest that there are two key challenges for landscape policy.

First, we must seek imaginative ways of facilitating and influencing drivers – both spontaneous and policy-driven – so that they produce distinctive, characteristic and multifunctional landscapes. Given that many of the drivers are external and even global, we cannot retreat into a naive localism. However, this is no different from the built environment, where planning policies manipulate the impact of corporate capital in order to capture local benefits and make distinctive places. Second, we must find ways of weaning the public – or perhaps more accurately, the privileged public and its pressure groups – away from conservatism in landscape tastes. ‘Traditional’ tastes often means Victorian in towns and Georgian in the countryside – this allegedly ‘timeless’ heritage should frequently be allowed to meld into the palimpsest of predecessor landscapes, so long as its legibility remains. We may need to learn to love some distinctly heretical new landscape qualities – whether they derive from wind harvesting, permaculture, horticulture, or whatever other viable land uses currently offered by the arbiters of public taste. Efficiently collaborative policy and decision making approaches are likely to be critical here, including maximum use of the landscape’s potential as an environment for social learning. As Steven Wacrook and Nick Buxton have noted, planners must not only seek to conserve fine landscapes: they must also aim to strengthen, restore or create where more inventive strategies are needed.

In respect of the above, I offer an axiom for the future sustainable landscape:

**Give it structure, water and time and nature will take care of it**
- give it meaning, value and time and people will take care of it.

This may be – indeed is intended to be – contentious, but it is offered as a basis for reflecting on the need to facilitate landscapes of the 21st century which are self-reinforcing, regenerative and memorable.

Reflecting on an Edwardian picture book in the 1950’s John Betjeman still saw, as I did in my youth: ‘The deepest Essex few explore/ Where steepest thatch and flinty fifteenth-century towers’ (1) Though my county experience is more fully, and currently expressed, in a promotional song which was commissioned to reflect on an Edwardian picture book in the 1950’s but still regard as ‘home,’ was a territory of bike rides, roadsides, churches to be sketched, history to be uncovered, worlds to be conjured and re-lived. Full of artists, rather than writers, it was a world to be captured and interpreted. We used to make an annual pilgrimage to the open exhibition at Great Bradf ield and for each view there was a graphic image, Nash (John) rather than Constable (who was, possibly, Suffolk).

From motorway and highway cross-passages it is difficult to believe that Essex remains the stimulus for graphic reflection, but off the road the views soon appear. But who has the willingness to interact, to communicate this array of landscape worlds?

In 2002 I was at Chelmsford Station and in the waiting room a Ruined Fair in Letterstyle, which exactly communicated my understanding of the county — a collage of commuter/landscape/country town (part of the ‘Making the Connection: Art at the Stations’ project). The medium was utterly appropriate to the cold, hard way in which mass housing and mass movement had transformed the County. Black and white, mechanical and aggressive the London pressure forces this image on the viewer, this is certainly not ‘Britain as a multiform tourist destination’ (3).

Removed from all the neat marshland and new landscapes of north and east Essex, from the beneficial tradition of Bawdon who framed the pleasures of traditional buildings and lifestyles protecting them from London’s advance, was an artist, Michael Goodey, who tried to come to terms with both the aggressor’s and the occupant’s view.

Michael Goodey’s image stuck in my mind and when I learned that he had done more, I hastened to see the results. In Summer 2005 he produced a series of laminated panels in the Colchester area landscape under the title ‘Signs in the Landscape.’ The series consists of ten landscape panels set in Colchester and its surroundings and located on cycle and footpaths. Each panel — using the same Letterpress-derived black and white imagery — marks a key view on the route, merging traditional landscape elements with structures and transport to be seen at that point. The style is industrial, hard-edged, but with sufficient insight to hark back to an Essex landscape tradition.
Having spent some thirty years in ‘interpretation’, now an industry which often owes more to graphic innovation and electronic wizardry, than to any sense of place. I find Michael’s work a breath of fresh air, but there is a bigger and more exciting issue abroad.

In this GIS steered and electronic age how can new generations — in Essex Design Guide homes or otherwise — be re-connected with the remnants of our landscape past? ‘Interpretation’ set out to perform this task, but has been entrapped in stylised media and patterned responses. Michael Goodey’s work breaks through the ‘been there done that’ barrier by using an acceptable process married with a place-based insight, which convinces trail users of the uniqueness of their journey and the place they are at.

Capturing the landscape is personal, but most of us want to communicate the achievement to others, not as an instructive assertion, but rather to enthuse, to stimulate the pleasure of environmental appreciation. Words, images, interpretation, even music may serve, but when it comes to passing on the landscape message to new generations and to new occupiers of space we are increasingly losing the plot.

There must be more ways of taking the graphic off the drawing board — other landscapes, other styles - and setting it in the environment — meanwhile a pilgrimage to Colchester, ‘where the old world meets the new’ is called for.

Notes


Andrew Motion ‘This green and pleasant land,’ Unknown Sunday supplement, 28-V-05.

Jeremy Theophilus notes (4): ‘What marks out Michael Goodey’s approach to this theme is how he has managed to reconnect the aesthetic of the contemporary road sign with the vernacular of those 20th century artists working as printmakers and illustrators, with a particular connection to Essex: Edward Bawden and John Nash especially. There is a similar reductionalist simplicity of form and flattened perspective, combined with hard edges and the use of monochrome.’ (4)

Following the 28km Viewfinder Trail route around Colchester, no longer an Essex distant from Metropolitan influence, one is pulled up short by the succinct encapsulation of a view where tradition and today’s reality fight it out, each sign (directive and accepted as such) demands a reconsideration of the view and some passing thought as to what has been and what is going on.

The sequence of highway-type signs which many interpretation with views has a six year, funded, life and is strongly promoted by Colchester (5) as part of its local leisure programme. Michael, an art teacher, is putting the concept on tour in the hope that other local authorities may pounce.

Motala, on the shore of Lake Vättern and midway between Gothenberg and Stockholm, was founded by Baltzar von Platen, the master mind behind the Göta Canal. The engineering works initially came into being to manufacture lock gates, bridges, and other items required for the Canal; later it built ships and locomotives. Part of one of the buildings houses a display on the history of Motala Verkstad, apparently run by volunteers and only open on high days and holidays; prize exhibits include their locomotive no. 1. Thus, Motala can be regarded as a cradle, if not the industrial past and with the exchange of expertise which took place between the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution.

Liverpool, Sweden, was a site of housing for workers at Motala Verkstad. As well as the footbridge, they could cross the canal on a ferry which, I see in an old photograph, operated where our swimmer left her clothes and her bicycle. It could hardly be less like the streets of terraced houses of Liverpool; perhaps a fairer comparison would be with some of Liverpool’s leader suburbs. Liverpool, Sweden, is a long, thin site between the canal and a railway line. Mature trees line the Liverpool bank of the canal; next to them is a small steam ship, a cream painted, classical office building and what

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DIFFERENT JOURNEY
SAME SCHOOL
John Gittins

I attended Albrighton Church of England Primary School at the same time as the editor (BY). We were not in the same class, but we shared the same area of exploration (as the wartime travel restrictions ended) was, geographically, speaking, considerably further afield.

My love of landscape was first developed where the flatland meets the hills in Montgomeryshire. This is where I spent all my school holidays on my grandparents farm. I am Welsh and words like Afon, Capel, Moel, Bentrych, Bangwy and Tan-y-Foel have deep meaning for me. They reflect my 'hiraeth' — a deep longing for my 'Bro' that area with which I identify, and through which I have developed my sense and the linked spirit of place.

I can say with confidence that my thoughts were ‘at best naively’ formed during these visits. I know that Tan-y-Foel and Moel Bentrych in the parish of Llanyrafon, my ‘Bro’, is an area of one square kilometre where my family lived for over 400 years and it is still the place with which I totally identify.

Tan-y-Foel is a small farm of 29 acres of what May & Wells in the Montgomeryshire Report of the first Land Utilisation Survey of Britain published in 1942, describes as consisting of “inferior grassland where arable is less widespread”. The farm also had half of Moel Bentrych (1107 ft/352m) where our flock of Kerry Hill and Clun sheep grazed. The rocks there are Silurian. The Ordinance Survey map of 1942 describes as consisting of “inferior grassland where arable is less widespread”. The farm also had half of Moel Bentrych (1107 ft/352m) where our flock of Kerry Hill and Clun sheep grazed. The rocks there are Silurian.

Referring to my past memories of the place — my family sold the farm in 1966, and moved to Anglesey — I can recall the names of every field: Caer Dan-Twy — fields under the house; Caer Dywly — the wet field; Rhos Fach — Little moor and there were others, 10 fields all in all, all with remembered names. I knew all the names because I was sent twice each day to bring the cows for milking to the farmyard, the Welsh Blacks and Shorthorns were gentle, the one Jersey a devil.

Every day was an adventure, I was able to explore to my heart’s content. As a youngster I could walk up the steepest side of Moel Bentrych with ease. My interest in archaeology was stimulated by wandering around the “Settlement” on the top of the hill, trying to imagine what life was like so long ago. My interest in maps was born climbing onto the top of the Trig Point on the hill to get a better view of the “heart of the land.” When in 1992 the Ordnance Survey declared Trig points redundant for surveying purposes and put them up for adoption, I adopted ours: it is a link with my grandchildren to inherit.

Each year in August, children were challenged to collect wild flowers and enter a vase in the annual Bangwy Agricultural Show. I knew at least 20 different species which came from meadows which had never in living memory been under the plough and form the hill, which until 1970 had not been ‘reclaimed’. With my Observer’s Book of Wildflowers as an aid I was able to meet the requirement to identify and name each of them. One year, was I nine or ten? I won first prize and spent the money on an Ordnance Survey 1” to 1 mile of the Bala & Welshpool area, which map, battered and dog eared, I still have. Other adventures included learning how to dry stone wall and lay hedges. Health and Safety legislation did not exist in those days, but care and skill was intrinsic to craftsmanship. Birds and bird nesting was part of life particularly during the Easter holidays, and the call of the curlew and buzzard took me well away from the rich farmland around Albrighton. The snow, rain and wind in the fields and on the hill developed my love of wild places and this has stayed with me all my life. We ‘felt’ the weather then, and snow meant using quality Hessian sacks over old coats. To my delight my first pair of Wellingtons enabled me to venture into streams and mud during winter months. In summer, shoes and socks always came off for paddling. Woodcock came naturally, well before I joined Albrighton Cub Scouts.

The first language of the area is Welsh. Although I am far from fluent, my knowledge of words and sentences linking daily life in my Bro are very much part of my heritage. My spirit lifts when I see hills, and the word ‘hiraeth’ — a deep longing for my “Bro” that area with which I totally identify, something for my grandchildren to inherit.

Notes on Welsh words and place names

Afon – River. Bro – Sense of Place has long been part of the Welsh rural psyche. It is widely understood and is encapsulated in the word Bro. The direct translation is district but the meaning goes much deeper than that, as it encompasses the love of locality, in physical as well as cultural terms. Capel – Chapel. Ben/Pen – Top. Ty – Mole. Rhydding – name of a river. Tan-y-Foel – Under the hill. Hiraeth – A deep longing for one’s home place, one’s Bro.


Editor’s note: a slim book Welsh place-names and their meanings by Dewi Davies (published by the Cambrian News, Aberystwyth). It lists some 2500 place names rich in the vocabulary of landscape. Does the English language have such a consciousness of place and landscape? Perhaps it does, but one can never tell. Try Ekwall Dictionary of English Place Names (Oxford). The Welsh place names book may be available where I bought it at the Welsh Folk Museum fifteen years ago.

IMPOLITE LANDSCAPES OF FONTAINEBLEAU

My new friend is an accomplished rock climber and launched the discussion of climbing in France, as Fontainebleau. “That is impossible” I reply — for my picture of Fontainebleau and the Forest of Fontainebleau is a place of cultured outlines, extensive parterres, gentility and formal landscapes that are embedded in a few hundred hectares of soft contoured woodland. They hold conferences there. It’s famous, no one talks of rocks! “You are wrong” he says, and hot-kindled with enthusiasm recounts the hundreds of rock outcrops in series of athletic circuits. His landscape so completely differs from mine which is half imagined and never really considered.

My instinct takes me to the geological map of France, Feuille Nord a l’echelle du Millienn – alovely, coloured map. And there around Fontainebleau is the evidence: within the soft rocks of the Oligocene there are hundreds of rock outcrops in series of athletic circuits. His landscape so completely differs from mine which is half imagined and never really considered.

landscape preferences developed in childhood?

I have had a number of responses to the piece about Altrighton (LRE 41 pages 9-10). I am also pleased to have the following piece from a fellow board member who claims he knew me at infant school.

Actually he was in the Miss Bishton’s babies class when I left in 1946, aged seven. I had to tell you this. OK, so it’s a fiasco...

The Mountaineers

Jo and Francoise

Baton Wickes

The list below reflects a choice of exhibitions (there may be many more). Which should be covered by LRE? The Editor would be pleased to hear from visitors who are willing to contribute a review. Other, especially provincial, exhibitions of landscape art are welcome. My thanks to Brian Goodey for the list.

In 2007
10 May Poetic Visions (Scottish Landscape History).
Perth Museum & Art Gallery

6 Jan – 4 Mar. Landscape Photography from the Arts Council Collection.
Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery

Banbury Museum 9th internationally-recognised photographer (photographer was a former Banbury resident) *Reviewed in this issue

Dulwich Gallery, London


21 Feb - 20 May. Renoir’s Landscapes.
National Gallery, London

24 Mar-20 May. Landscape Painters from the Royal Academy of Arts.
Compton Verney, Warwickshire

British Museum, London

April in 2008
National Gallery, London

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

10

SO WHAT IS A (LANDSCAPE*) ACADEMIC TO DO?
Maggie Roe
School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape, Newcastle University

I am feeling guilty or at best increasingly uncomfortable: it’s this thing about climate change and travel, or my environmental footprint and the many miles I have done in the last year. As an academic I am expected to do research, attend conferences and symposia, give papers and teach. If, like me, you are also interested in developing countries and developing links concerning landscape planning issues, this means travelling quite large distances. Last year I spent time in Bangladesh working on a British Council Higher Education Link project with Khulna University. I also spent time in South China — as related to the editorial to the April Regional Special of Landscape Research — and although I came back by rail across Mongolia and Russia – many of the miles I travelled were air miles. So what is an academic to do?

I sometimes think back to my period in practice as a green — in at least two senses of the word — landscape architect. I’m particularly proud of one project where I managed to plant (or have planted) 60,000 trees on one site. However this satisfaction was tempered by the fact that the site was part of a scheme which included the creation of a large barrage across the River Tets! As a young and inexperienced — dare I say it — minion, I had little say in the overall ethics of the scheme, only, some say, in the species to be planted. It was my experience, or perhaps my frustration, on this and other projects that set me off towards a career in university work rather than continuing in practice.

This may seem a long way from the issue of travel and personal footprints, but I have to admit to being no clearer about tree planting except I have a gut feeling that planting trees is good. And of course there are many benefits to be gained from tree planting, not just providing a carbon sink while the trees are growing and a carbon reservoir in the very long term.

The Sierra Club of Canada’s discussion paper ‘Forests, Climate Change & Carbon Reservoirs’ provides a concise explanation of some of these terms as well as an introduction to some of the dilemmas. It clearly sets out the risks of assuming plantations are the answer. They are certainly implicated in the latest idea to have captured the attention of the chattering classes in this country, that of offsetting. If we are talking about guilt complexes, why not just pay someone to plant a few trees, or to pay for the odd solar water pump in a developing country as an alternative to a diesel pump?

Of course there are, inevitably, problems with this too, as explained by Dominic Murphy writing about his own guilt complex in the Guardian. He reports that an extraordinary worldwide market in offsetting has sprung up, and it is expected to exceed £300m over the next three years. It’s hard not to be cynical and wonder whether all this money really gets to the place it should. Murphy also reports that WWF, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace are now not supporting forestry projects to offset carbon emissions and that there are indications that offset projects in developing countries are having adverse effects on the local communities. So back to square one.

When it comes to global guilt, of course, some countries are more guilty than others and the Kyoto protocol allows for trading in guilt - sorry, the term is ‘credits’ - otherwise known as emissions trading. Companies and governments can buy ‘carbon credits’ and can also trade ‘carbon equivalents’ to reduce other green house gases (methane, nitrous oxide, sulphur hexafluoride, CFCs and PFCs). As the Canadian Sierra Club report states: ‘Potential buyers and sellers of credits want an easily accessible system in which credits are a privately traded commodity while debits remain a public liability: however this system is unlikely to be in the best public interest’.

So I suppose my dilemma could come down to a question of credit and debit: do I do more good than harm by my travel for work? And perhaps I must just try and plan more overload alternatives to my long haul flights, not only would this reduce my airline miles, but what a wonderful idea to begin to understand global landscapes! Perhaps I can even put a proposal to the Faculty Travel Committee and get them to approve the extra time I will spend out of the office now that idea is just the ticket to send me to sleep.

* [Editor’s note My son travels globally in the pursuit of green energy solutions for capitalist commercial gain. Dear me.]

Well be professionally discredited by discovery of my heavy footprint??

Notes


The photographer Michael Kenna studied here (1972-3), had and has family here. He cut his teeth in local exhibitions and then flew to an international photographic scene of exhibitions and publications. He now lives in Oregon. But, Michael

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Michael Kenna: A Retrospective
Banbury Museum, January 13 – March 4, 2007
Reviewer Brian Goodey

Starting with the place. Banbury is all crosses and cakes, a market town passed-by, somewhere in the middle, an opportunity off the M40. For those who live there, or near, it is, inevitably more – Sir Terry Frost and Anthony Burgess taught here, films are made at Broughton Castle, and commuters flood back to the station on Friday night for their country weekend. That minds-not-born-here, but now working on a British Council Higher Education Link project where I managed to plant (or have planted) many trees, which should be covered by LRE.

The photographer Michael Kenna studied here (1972-3), had and has family here. He cut his teeth in local exhibitions and then flew to an international photographic scene of exhibitions and publications. He now lives in Oregon. But, Michael