

FROM THE GRAVE TO THE CRADLE: THE ECO-DESIGN CASE FOR RE-EVALUATION OF HEMP

BUILDING GREEN 2009 CONFERENCE

PHILIPPINE GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

I-CITE Auditorium, Eastwood City, Libis, Quezon City.

July 2-4, 2009

John Vermeulen

Eco Village Designer, Technical Adviser

Happy Earth

www.happyearth.info

juanvermillion@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the story of hemp is one of mistaken identity and focuses on the potential of hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) in a social and economic context and how it can help to develop with modern technology into 'new' materials on a national level that will benefit the building industry, with reference to examples from abroad.

The current state of raw material shortages means that designers have an obligation to seek out new ways to source and process materials for a sustainable future. Designers are the "future creators" and should prescribe materials that are not only healthy in the cycle of production but also ensure an afterlife (recycling). Designers should also embrace the task of guiding the consumers in a new way of thinking, mainly concerning our environment and consumer patterns. Hemp is a zero-waste material; the whole plant can be used when harvested which makes it an ideal material to base such an eco-design system on.

In spite of Hemp's impressive potential, it has been ignored for far too long. The main reason for the isolation of hemp is the mistaken assumption that *Cannabis sativa* L. is a drug whereas its vilified cousin, *Cannabis indica* carries the hallucinogenic properties thereby leading to a blanket ban on both. This paper argues the eco-design case for the re-evaluation of the assumptions about hemp and poses a challenge for design education to take a more holistic and proactive stance with respect to eco-design and issues of sustainability. In so doing, design would aid in eliminating some of the misconceptions that have dogged useful products like hemp thereby promoting creative product development in a socially responsible manner.

Keywords: Eco-design, hemp, multi-diversity, socially responsible design, sustainability, sustainable building material, natural material