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April / May 2010

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T a k i n g I t

S.L.O.W.

The supposed need for efficiency and speed is increasingly encroaching on both work and personal life, and what's more, this fast-paced culture is damaging our environment. But does it really make us more productive or happy? **Laura Dozier**, editor of the book *SLOW LIFE* explores the benefits of slow living.



Sandy Foon



Katipong Panhee



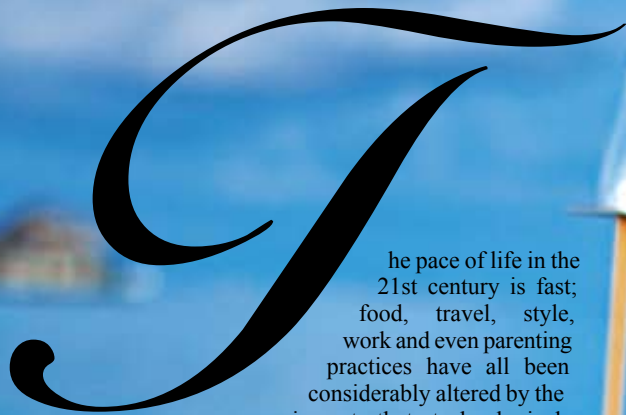
Jörg Sundermann



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The

pace of life in the 21st century is fast; food, travel, style, work and even parenting practices have all been considerably altered by the impact that technological advances have had on our concepts of time and space – not to mention our environment. Perhaps an inevitable reaction to the speeding up of modern lives has been the call to slow down instead.

A concept that developed in the 1980s with a demonstration against the opening of a McDonald's fast-food restaurant in Rome, the original Slow Food Movement eventually inspired an examination of many aspects of life from travel, to finances, to parenting. Promoting a cultural shift to slow down life's pace, the Slow Movement has always shared some common values with environmental activists, but now, taking things slow has achieved another, more eco-focused meaning.

Rather than advocating life at a snail's pace, the Slow Life philosophy (which stands for sustainable, local, organic, wholesome, learning, inspiring, fun, experiences) promotes principles of sustainability and responsibility, for the health of both the Earth and the individual. Living life, not rushing through it, is part of the message; the other part is about living in a more sustainable and wholesome manner. After all, taking time to enjoy the simplest of life's pleasures - be it a hike through a beautiful landscape or the sweet ripeness of a freshly picked summer tomato - can inspire people to protect the environment that provides these experiences.



Yet being green is old news; nowadays everyone from supposed experts to celebrities offer advice on how to live a more environmentally friendly life, along with an abundance of television shows, movies, magazine articles and books addressing the topic. Despite this deluge of information (and to some degree because of it), many people still remain uncertain how they can make a real positive change.

The questions can seem endless: What light bulbs should I use? What car should I drive? And the doom and gloom of some climate change forecasters suggest that you should abstain from lighting your home, driving or using any resources at all.

In the face of this conflicting information, the book *SLOW LIFE* (Editions Didier Millet: 2009), which introduces the concept of the same name, suggests that improving our carbon footprint can be done by each of us individually, one step at a time, with a range of options for different needs, budgets and levels of motivation. The book touches on many aspects, including Slow Food, sustainable style and fashion, green parenting, and energy conservation in the workplace.

Taking a practical approach certainly makes for a less intimidating green immersion tactic. Not quite ready to have a compost toilet at home? Have no fear; there are other ways improve upon the wastage of conventional toilets, which can use as much as 13

litres of water with every flush. Installing a dual-flush toilet or just replacing a worn-out tank can make a difference.

One of the many notable contributors to the book, Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Food Movement, explains, "Life, just like food, is more complex and beautiful than how consumerism's fathers are presenting it. We need to find the strength to change, maybe starting from our plates." The idea, that changing even one part of your life - whether it be the food on your plate or the heating system in your home - can make a significant positive impact, is reiterated throughout *SLOW LIFE*.



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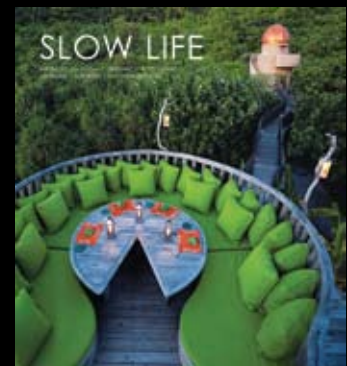


Raymond Hall

The Slow Life philosophy and associated book is actually the brainchild of environmentally sensitive luxury resort and spa brand, Six Senses. Its inspiring business model, which embraces the idea of using business to generate widespread environmental change, is a surprisingly realistic template for many types of corporations and organisations.

Cutting-edge techniques, such as using deep sea water cooling technology at the Six Senses Soneva Fushi resort in the Maldives (see middle left), and significant contributions to carbon offset programmes (for example The Converging World, an organisation that generates clean energy in developing countries) are helping to set new corporate environmental stewardship standards. Eventually, Six Senses hopes to be carbon positive, with the company actually removing additional carbon from the atmosphere in the course of its business.

Living the Slow Life, simply by enjoying every second's worth and making minute, yet crucial changes towards a better world, offers individuals the power to help our environment. It is a way of satisfying the needs of the present, without compromising those of future generations – a message that most of us would be slow to reject.



SLOW LIFE (Editions Didier Millet: 2009) is available in leading bookstores.

www.edmbooks.com

www.sixsenses.com

www.theconvergingworld.org