

### A Higher Education Academy ESD Resource

Title: Ecoloqo – working towards a visual language of sustainability

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Funding: £3,684

Keywords: visual language, Web 2.0, websites, design

#### AUDIENCE

This information will be of interest to those seeking to understand how a visual language supports sustainability. As the project is a portal for Graphic Design students, it will be of particular interest to lecturers. Additionally, the resulting website provides a resource for reviewing sustainability-themed websites.

#### SUMMARY

Ecoloqo is working towards a visual language of sustainability for Graphic Design students. If there is a contribution to a visual world that can reflect economic and societal priorities (as some suggest advertising does) then the study of how SD and design are represented in visual media can inform this. A review of the design of sustainability-themed websites was undertaken through a single interactive website acting as both repository and learning space, created to collate, evaluate and archive as an SD portal for Graphic Design students. The project developed a set of themes or tags for use in Graphic Design education to inform the interpretation of sustainability in the use of the internet.

#### RATIONALE

Whatever the definition of SD, it is liable to/will remain cast as theory to the practitioner in design. Graphic designers, in particular, work to the client's brief, and their own practice is as sustainable as any other business in economic terms. SD, however, challenges these assumptions and suggests that an environmental awareness is now part of all practices, and all design.

## THE APPROACH

The main stages of the project were the website development, embedding in teaching practice and review for further activity. This was a staged progression that enabled website development, prototyping and review processes to be aligned with pedagogic consolidation after the initial developmental period; and sufficient multilevel student use enabled a review process to inform its outturn in summer 2007. The main project idea already had a small prototype (see below). From this work it was realised that to develop and make viable for larger scale involvement we need better hosting and support.

The entry page carries a visual component from the record in the bookmarks/link database that runs on the site. Visual reactions to it are used to order and develop evaluations of the designs available at links on the site. As soon as one is selected, its record, the key organizing feature, is revealed and at this second level the tags, context and origin of the visual component are given, as well as the routes used to develop such categories (fora, faq).

The project was therefore designed to incorporate an essential element of external hosting and software development support to give a stable development platform for content-driven activity – the development of a visually-led tagging/theme-based layering within the site model. Once the programming and hosting efforts to support timely use of the site were embedded as a development framework, the site was published and started to interact with its broader audiences. At this stage several more pedagogic opportunities can be exploited.

## THE OUTCOMES

Workshops and conference sessions confirm a great deal of interest in the product of the project, which will take time to settle into use in pedagogy and develop in its own right. The project has enabled a visual appreciation of SD to be raised as a visual culture project.

It has been of great benefit to the Graphic Design course at University College Falmouth (UCF) and will become of more use across Graphic Design courses over the coming year as the dissemination strategy works through the web. It has also enabled a strong interactive relationship to evolve with a local contractor, a very useful outreach and 3<sup>rd</sup> strand element of the project.

The beta site was launched at an institutional day devoted to SD, where it received a great deal of interest and critical acclaim. A number of other institutions have expressed interest and will be interacting with the site in the coming months (Somerset CAT(Graphic Design), University of Plymouth (CSF), Kingston University (BA Architecture), University of Exeter (MSc Sustainable Development)).

## TAKING IT FURTHER: LESSONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- As part of the support and in the development of the site, a large number of URLs have been accumulated which need placing on the site. This will be ongoing. The Graphic Design course has indicated that it will continue to support the project.
- Several courses have already indicated their interest in pursuing the use of the site in pedagogic settings. The author aims to develop a set of guideline or context briefings to assist in pedagogic integration. The author committed to holding a variety of workshops with colleagues at the start of the autumn term (2007), encouraging take-up of membership and use of the site.
- The project was originally modeled at undergraduate level but this was ambitious and the outputs reflect a great deal of staff and contractor time. They needed a greater involvement in CSS than it seems they have and their project management skills were not available to the project but rather acquired by it. Students have, however, been fully involved and integral to the project development.
- Meeting with colleagues at the Bradford ESD conference, the author discovered complementary developments have been in train at University of Plymouth. The author will be exploring the use of L&T funding to establish whether the two developments should seek to collaborate in some way.
- The author is proposing to write up the project as a case study for the Higher Education Academy's Art, Design and Media Subject Centre.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

The full report is available:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/tla/sustainability/esd\\_tridgell.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/tla/sustainability/esd_tridgell.pdf)  
(PDF 68KB)

The Ecoloqo website: <http://www.ecoloqo.net>

The July 2007 conference presentation:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/tla/sustainability/jeremy\\_tridgell.ppt](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/tla/sustainability/jeremy_tridgell.ppt)  
(PPT 444KB)

The prototype referred to in the Rationale:

<http://ccgi.ecologyplus.com/photos/thumbnails.php?album=4>

More information about the iRes research salon:

[http://www.ires.org.uk/news/20\\_06\\_07.htm](http://www.ires.org.uk/news/20_06_07.htm)