

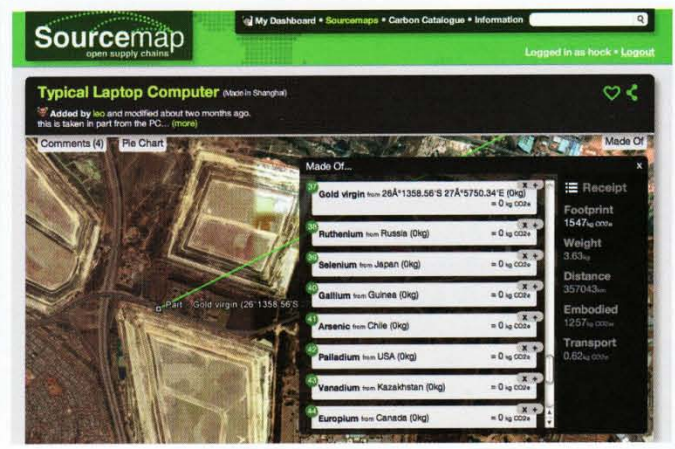
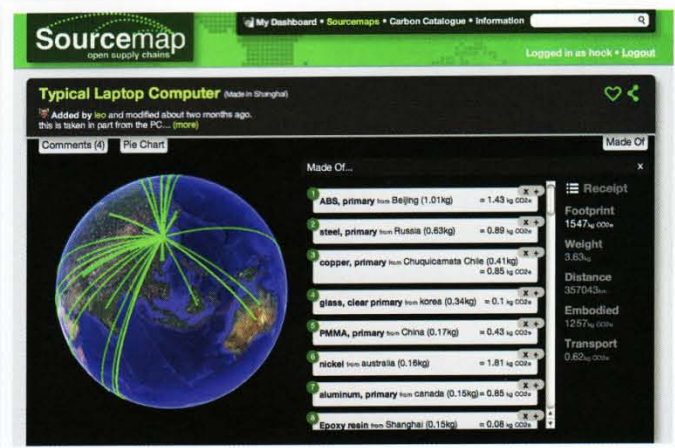
Source-Map

Leonardo Bonanni,
Matthew Hockenberry, David Zwarg
www.sourcemap.org

YOUR COMPUTER'S INSIDES come from more places than you will likely ever see—there's cadmium from Africa, barium from China, titanium from Australia, and on and on. That's why upward of 90 percent of the carbon produced in making a product comes during its part sourcing. And the burgeoning trend of "green" products? "All of these carbon calculators make it look like the consumer is responsible," says Leonardo Bonanni, a designer, artist, and doctoral candidate at MIT's Media Lab. "But by the time they see a product, they can't change the social impacts."

Designers can. Few others are as well-placed to slash the carbon produced in building something. This insight motivated Bonanni, along with UI designer Matthew Hockenberry and software developer David Zwarg, to create SourceMap. The group launched the online catalog of supply-chain maps last fall after two years of planning. "It's been a battle," says Bonanni. "Publishing supply chains seemed laughable when we started," because they're usually closely guarded secrets that blind designers to their products' social impacts. Bonanni hopes that increased transparency will change the way design decisions are made. The maps help calculate the carbon footprint of an individual part and a final product. They may be posted by anyone, either publicly or privately, and they've been used by both large corporations and family farmers.

Bonanni is exhorting more businesses and designers to get involved. Volunteers are doing carbon research, and calculators to measure environmental and labor impacts are being created. "This the first time designers are realizing how big their impact can be," says Bonanni. "If everyone could act with a little bit of information, the changes could be vast." —CLIFF KUANG



SourceMap, an online atlas of supply chains, lets designers track their products' carbon footprints based on where they get their materials.



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Feb 28, 2010 10:00 AM in Technology | 4 comments

Can greener gadgets save us from e-waste?

By David Biello



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One laptop per child seems a simple slogan, chock full of benefit. What could go wrong when you put the power of the Internet and solar cells into the hands of children in the developing world? After all, not only does it train the global underclass in the tools of modern production, it also unleashes a creativity that may allow them to leapfrog the old, dirty, industrial development that has fouled the planet.

Unfortunately, those very laptops may end up doing that last thing. "What is the entire country of Uruguay going to do with all those laptops" at the end of their useful life, asked Jeff Omelchuck of the Green Electronics Council at the Greener Gadgets conference in New York City on February 25. "They are a very resource intensive product to make. Will there be recycling? Did we also extend the gift to put in a closed loop infrastructure?"

More than one million such laptops have already been distributed, from Kenya to Uruguay, according to Yves Behar, a designer at fuseproject. In fact, every child in Uruguay now has such a laptop and the program is expanding into high schools. And the designer has begun to work on the next iteration of the machine, one potentially sporting two screens, thin like an iPad, and made completely from plastic: dubbed the XO3.

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American science education lags behind that of many other nations, right? So why does it produce so many talented young researchers who cannot find a job in their chosen field of study?

Even the cheapest laptop has "more precious gems and metals than any Pope has had," noted Leonardo Bonanni, founder of [Sourcemap.org](#), at the conference. His Web site allows users to track the constituents of any gadget, from a laptop to the carbon footprint of a bomb. "There is no excuse not to know where things come from and what they're made of, especially if you're buying them," he said.

In fact, our gadgets collectively contain much of the world's copper (there's a pound in most laptops), tin from [artisanal miners](#) and lithium, "so much that it could be called a bomb," Bonanni said. And then there's the really rare stuff like indium for screens and super-expensive rhodium for electrical contacts. All told modern electronics require 60 different elements, ranging from the toxic to the treasured—and fuel the same kind of exploitative and annihilating resource-extraction that has been a hallmark of Western consumption since at least the ivory craze of Victorian England. "These materials don't really belong to us, they belong to humanity. We're just shepherding it from one place to another," Bonanni said.

That turns out to be a short process: typical cell phone users replace their phones every 18 months, contributing to a growing pile of [electronic waste](#) (e-waste). The U.S. alone produces roughly three million metric tons of the stuff each year, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). That e-waste is then often improperly incinerated or broken down in places like China or India, poisoning locals.

In fact, the amount of [e-waste](#) looks set to grow exponentially, according to UNEP, as cell phones, laptops and other gadgets proliferate in these same countries. Seven times more mobile phones are set to be hitting the junkyard by 2020 in China, 18 times more over the same span in India. Already, the world produces 50 million metric tons of e-waste a year.

"In addition to curbing health problems, boosting developing country e-waste recycling rates can have the potential to generate decent employment, cut greenhouse gas emissions and recover a wide range of valuable metals including silver, gold, palladium, copper and indium," said Achim Steiner, executive director of UNEP, in a prepared statement on February 22 related to the release of a [new report on e-waste](#). "By acting now and planning forward many countries can turn an e-challenge into an e-opportunity."

One way to address this mounting problem is to design out as much of these materials as possible. After all, "80 percent of the environmental footprint of a product is set by the design stage," noted Sarah Krasley, sustainability manager at software provider Autodesk. And new standards like [EPEAT](#), which plans to launch a consumer system this year, [force manufacturers to make products more recyclable](#) and repairable, backed by the buying power of large consumers like the U.S. government.

"Recycling is not going to change the products but [green design standards](#) like EPEAT can," Omelchuck said. "If purchasers want it, the manufacturers will follow." Already, companies such as HP employ recycled plastics and a closed loop recycling system for printer ink cartridges, according to Maria Tate, a senior industrial designer for HP's printer division.

Ultimately, however, it may come down to something anathema to consumer electronics companies—making products that last, or as wind power kite scientist and serial inventor Saul Griffiths calls them, "[heirloom](#)" [gadgets](#), which can be passed from one generation to the next. At the same time, these greener gadgets will have to embody the sleek, sexy design that currently drives consumer craving. And eliminate or replace the packaging that carries its own environmental cost, such as replacing the Styrofoam that cradles new gadgets with a [biopolymer made from fungi-digesting seed husks](#).

Instead, designers seem focused on creating the next must-have gadget, no matter how many resources it might consume, like the [hackable car](#) Behar presented to the conference that can be reconfigured to fit a variety of needs and relies on open-source elements. Or creating [apps that help users locate fresh, local food](#)—the winner of this year's greener gadget contest—but are hosted on a [device that relies on tungsten, tantalum and tin](#) from resource war-ravaged Congo.



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As for e-waste, there's an app for that, too: [iRecycle](#), which finds the nearest spot to properly dispose of used electronics, at least in the U.S. But one little app telling you where to recycle used electronics doesn't compare to the [environmental and human health costs of making the gadget](#) to run it.

(Full disclosure: this post was written on an Apple laptop and relies on you to have a similar device to read it.)

Image: Courtesy of [StEP-EMPA](#)

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Wayne Williamson at 06:24 PM on 03/01/10

didn't really see anything here that applies to reality...example video with a bamboo keyboard(what?)...reusable components when everything totally changes in 2 years and by 8 years its obsolete.

The best thought was sending the "old" one back to the manufacturer and let them deal with it...still have a hard time doing it with something simple like a toner cartridge....

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al at 12:55 PM on 03/02/10

Anything and everything to avoid the underlying, real, issue; the ever expanding human population. Green gadgets - often no more than a cynical advertising slogan - won't solve anything if there are 10, 50 or 100 billion people. Hybrid cars are just a gimmick. The real issue is too sensitive and way too unpopular to be addressed by our decision makers, or media, for that matter.

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dbiello at 06:45 PM on 03/02/10

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Wayne Williamson at 07:42 PM on 03/02/10

dbiello...nice link...i missed that one...

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Sourcemap, le Web 2.0 au service de l'écologie

Par  Marie-Catherine Beuth

04/02/2010 | Mise à jour : 14:21  Réagir

Collaborative, cette base de données permet de connaître l'empreinte carbone d'un produit ou d'un aliment sur l'ensemble de la chaîne de fabrication.

Avant d'atterrir dans les hangars d'un Ikéa aux abords d'une ville française, le lit Sultan Alsarp traverse, en kit, la Chine, la Russie, la Pologne et quelques pays d'Afrique. Bilan : une empreinte carbone de 247 grammes de Co2. Un ordinateur portable ordinaire est composé d'éléments venant de Chine, de Russie, du Chili, de Corée, d'Australie, du Canada... Leur type et leur assemblage revient à une empreinte de 1496,83 g de Co2. Ces informations sont en libre accès sur le site **Sourcemap.org**.

Plateforme communautaire citoyenne, le site permet de recenser et d'évaluer l'impact écologique de tous les composants d'un produit et leur origine. L'internaute «éco-conscient» peut y puiser dans une base de données de composants et moyens de transports pour dresser l'empreinte carbone d'un produit et partager sa mini-enquête avec la communauté, invitée à enrichir à son tour ces trouvailles.

Porté par Leonardo Bonanni, chercheur au MIT Media Lab, le projet permet ainsi de prendre des décisions d'achat non plus en fonction du coût économique mais en fonction du coût écologique d'un produit.

 Par  Marie-Catherine Beuth
Journaliste, Le Figaro

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Don't Miss Greener Gadgets

Click to See Where Everything Comes From

Sourcemap.org from the MIT Media Lab documents the global supply chain of the things we use every day.

February 25, 2010 at 1:51pm by Brian Clark Howard | [comment](#)



Live blogging from the Greener Gadgets Conference 2010 (#GG10 on Twitter)

Ever wondered where your iPod actually comes from? Actually, the flash memory comes from South Korea, the HDD input comes from Japan, chips come from Taiwan, assembly was most likely done in China, and design happened in California.

Looking a bit like Jimmie Kimmel in a black blazer over a black cotton shirt, Leonardo Bonanni showed the Greener Gadgets audience a map that showed the above supply chain, as well as the carbon footprint of an iPod (9.84kg). Bonanni is a PhD candidate at the MIT Media Lab, where he researches and teaches sustainable design. Through the lab he is the founder of Sourcemap.org, an open source site where anyone can share the supply chain of products or activities.

Bonanni talked briefly about the big impact of mining around the world, especially how it is driven by our insatiable appetite for electronics. "Each computer is a treasure of materials, it's a really awesome thing and we should recognize and respect that," said Bonanni. "Every product we only own for a brief time in its lifecycle. It was touched by many people before us, and it's probably going to end up with lots of other people, in lots of other places, when we are done with it. These materials in a sense don't belong to us."

Bonanni said he originally conceived of Sourcemap to help designers understand where materials and products come from, but he says it is finding the biggest use among big global companies, which have struggled to keep on top of increasingly complex supply chains, and which are increasingly being scrutinized for environmental and human rights issues at every step. Tesla Motors has posted an entry of their electric cars, and another company uses the software to track meetings and staff movements, and the associated carbon footprints.

When Bonanni looked to get business cards for his site, and the largely volunteer staff that helps him out, he checked out Moo cards online. He discovered that the printer offered two kinds of cards, and he wondered which had a lower carbon footprint, half-size cards or regular-size cards made from recycled paper. It turns out the half-size cards were a bit better. "This shows that we know little about the carbon footprints of things," he said. "We don't want there to be any excuse for people not to know where things come from."

Another example of a use for Sourcemap is shown by the caterer who serves local food, and who prints maps of the farms that source his ingredients on his menus. He uses Sourcemap's easy interface to locate the farms and keep track of the impact. The end result, is that customers are really ordering from the place, and they can go to that place if they like the food.

Sourcemap is a great web 2.0 application to help us learn more about our increasingly global footprint, and to become smarter, greener consumers and businesses.



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Correspondent Murray Carpenter reports on some of the new technologies that help consumers trace the global journey of their purchases and calculate their environmental cost.

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KATY CLARK: If you're like most Americans, the shirt you're wearing today probably has a label telling you it was made in say Indonesia, or Mexico. And a label on your computer probably tells you that it was made in China. But those country of origin labels don't tell you anything about how the product was made, or about its environmental impact. Murray Carpenter reports from Boston on new web-based technologies that help track the origins, and environmental footprints of consumer goods.

MURRAY CARPENTER: At the Patagonia store in Boston, shoppers are stocking up on gear for the New England winter. Salesman Chris Pirrello shows off a new product that's been selling like hotcakes.

CHRIS PIRRELLO: So this is our brand new Nano-Puff pullover. The entire jacket weighs about nine ounces, and it packs into its own pocket.

CARPENTER: Let's take a look at the computer and see what we can see about where this comes.

PIRRELLO: Sounds good.

CARPENTER: Pirrello walks over to a terminal and pulls up a web page called the Footprint Chronicles, Patagonia's effort to show the environmental impacts of its products. The site shows the jacket was stitched together in Vietnam using fabric and insulation from Japan and China, then sent to Reno, Nevada for distribution. Along the way, it traveled 12,000 miles and used the energy equivalent of burning an 18-watt bulb non-stop for a month. That might not sound like much, until you think about the resource stream of the billions of other products zooming around the world every day.

LEONARDO BONANNI: You'll have a hard time finding any product that doesn't involve a dozen countries or more.

CARPENTER: That's Leonardo Bonanni at MIT's Media Lab, across the Charles River from the Patagonia store. He's in Cambridge, but the world of global manufacturing sits at his fingertips via a website he and some colleagues have designed. It's called SourceMap, and it's a sort of open-source analog to Patagonia's site. Bonanni enters some basic information and pulls up a SourceMap for a typical laptop computer.

BONANNI: We're actually zooming around the earth from satellite imagery, and if we go into this particular supply chain, we can actually go right down and see, in this case, the largest gold mine in the world from the air. And this brings a level of precision in the way we can understand supply chains that many people have never seen before.

CARPENTER: In addition to the huge gold mine in South Africa, the map leads to a massive copper mine in Chile, and lead mines in Indonesia. Links lead to videos of some of the operations. In this case, the laptop involves 43 suppliers from five continents. Where Patagonia's website is a small window into one company's supply chain, SourceMap allows anyone to evaluate the sustainability claims of a growing number of corporations.

BONANNI: We found out there was basically no public resource to allow you to find out what the supply chain is behind a product, or what the carbon footprint is. So while you might be told that something is green, you almost never get to see the math and the auditing underlying those assumptions. And as long as the consumer, or even the designer is not exposed to the underlying calculations, it is very hard to imagine that we are going to have sustainable products on the market.

CARPENTER: The two new website, one open source and the other corporate, are part of a growing movement to use the Internet to illuminate the usually obscured environmental impacts of consumer products. The movement is being led by activists but a growing number of companies are signing up. Brooke Barton is a corporate manager for Ceres, a network of environmentally-minded investors.



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BROOKE BARTON: Ceres is committed to asking all the companies that we work with to unravel their supply chains to understand these environmental and social impacts.

CARPENTER: Barton says niche companies like Timberland, the footwear manufacturer, are leading the pack in transparency, but bigger firms are getting involved, too. Dole, for instance, now lets consumers use the web to track its organic bananas all the way back to the plantations where they were grown. Barton says even WalMart is starting to put its supply chain online.

BARTON: They have partnered with some environmental groups concerned about the impacts of mining to produce a set of jewelry that allows the consumer to go online and understand exactly which mines the gold and silver was sourced from, where it was processed, and how it got to you as a consumer.

CARPENTER: The movement toward more disclosure of resource use and pollution is being facilitated by ever-better information technology. But Paul Dickinson, of the Carbon Disclosure Project in London, says it's really all about the power of consumers.

PAUL DICKINSON: When we shop, we vote for the corporations who administer the production and distribution of the goods and services that we consume. And I think it's absolutely inevitable that people are going to put less and less money into the problem and more and more money into the solution.

CARPENTER: Back at the Patagonia store in Boston, information from the Footprint Chronicles helps shoppers make more informed choices. But those choices aren't only about where a product comes from. Showing off a down sweater whose travels he looked up on the Footprint Chronicles, clerk Chris Pirello says it's still about where it can take you. The sweater starts with feathers from geese grown in Hungary.

PIRELLO: And then went from Hungary to California, to Japan, to China, to Reno, Nevada.

CARPENTER: And then from Reno to Boston.

PIRELLO: Sure, from Reno to Boston, and hopefully on an adventure after that.

CARPENTER: For the World, I'm Murray Carpenter.

CLARK: You can find links to MIT's SourceMap and Patagonia's Footprint Chronicles at The world dot org.

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In an original twist of the concept of "social visualization" brought forward by **Many Eyes**, **Swivel** and the like, **SourceMap** [sourcemap.org] is a mapping tool meant for producers, business owners and consumers to understand the impact of supply chains. In short, the developers believe that "... people have the right to know where things come from and what they are made of". Conceptualized as an online social network, any member is able to contribute to a shared understanding of "the story" behind specific consumer products. For instance, members can simulate the impact of manufacturing, transporting, using and throwing away products using the so-called "Life-Cycle Assessment" calculator. The resulting "SourceMaps" can then be embedded in external websites, printed onto product packaging or linked through QR codes readable by camera phones.

As a result, one can explore the geographical locations of the parts, and their according CO2 footprints, of products like the **iPhone**, a **Clock Radio**, an **IKEA bed** or a **pair of Nike shoes**.

SourceMap is still seeking **volunteers**, including "Information Visualization Experts".

Via **Treehugger** and **Visual Complexity**

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MEDIO AMBIENTE ►

Tras la pista de la huella ecológica

Laura Plitt

BBC Mundo, Medio Ambiente



La página de Sourcemap busca darle a los consumidores la información que necesitan para tomar decisiones amigables con el medio ambiente.

¿Hecho aquí o traído del extranjero? Ésta es una de las preguntas que se hacen muchos consumidores a la hora de elegir un producto que no resulte perjudicial para el medio ambiente.

La recomendación generalizada es optar por bienes producidos localmente, ya que estos tienen una huella de carbono menor que los productos que deben viajar más para llegar a las manos del consumidor.

Por esta razón, muchas empresas hacen gala de sus "credenciales verdes" para atraer a un público cada vez más informado sobre la problemática del calentamiento global.

Pero ¿cuán verde es un producto verde? Es decir, ¿qué cantidad de gases con efecto invernadero se generaron durante la fabricación de ese producto?

Dónde, cuánto y de qué

La respuesta a esta pregunta es todo menos sencilla. Hay que tomar en cuenta una serie de factores, como de qué está hecho el producto y de dónde provienen los elementos que lo componen. Y, en muchas ocasiones, ni siquiera los fabricantes -y mucho menos los consumidores- cuentan con esta información.

Para esclarecer la incógnita uno de los laboratorios del Instituto de Tecnología de Massachusetts (MIT, por sus siglas en inglés) desarrolló [Sourcemap](#), una página web que ofrece al público una herramienta para decodificar la huella ecológica de un producto.

"Inicialmente fue creada para empresas y diseñadores", le dijo a BBC Mundo Leonardo Bonanni, uno de los investigadores encargados del proyecto.

"Funciona como una suerte de Facebook o Flickr. La idea es que la compañía publique la huella ambiental de los productos que hace para que la puedan ver los consumidores así como también los competidores", agregó.

Para colocar un producto hay que saber de

“

La idea es aprovechar la inteligencia colectiva. La gente, por ejemplo, puede crear un producto o una comida, estimar cuál puede ser su huella ambiental y luego compartir la información con los demás usuarios

”

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qué está hecho, cuánto pesa, e idealmente, de dónde viene. Cuanto más detalles, más precisa será la estimación.

Leonardo Bonanni, Sourcemap

"La idea es aprovechar la inteligencia colectiva. La gente, por ejemplo, puede incorporar a la página un producto o una comida, estimar cuál puede ser su huella ambiental y luego compartir la información con los demás usuarios".

"Si la empresa o una persona no está de acuerdo, puede corregir la información. Se trata, en realidad, de crear un diálogo y hacer accesible la información", explica Bonanni.

¿Cuánto le cuesta al planeta una reunión de trabajo?

La tarea es sin duda ambiciosa. Comenzó hace dos años atrás y aún se encuentra en una fase de prueba. Actualmente contiene información de productos como una computadora típica, un celular o una prenda de ropa. "Si bien no tenemos toda la información del mundo, algo es algo, sobre todo si tomamos en cuenta que antes no había nada", dice el experto.



El sistema funciona de manera parecida a Facebook o Flickr.

Aunque inicialmente fue creada para empresas y diseñadores, el uso que el público le fue dando durante el período de prueba hizo que sus creadores le añadiesen otras funciones.

"Notamos que despertó el interés de la gente que cocina o que distribuye alimentos, por eso le añadimos una sección para ellos. También la gente se interesó en averiguar dónde era conveniente hacer una reunión de trabajo, desde el punto de vista ambiental, y le agregamos una función específica para eso", explica Bonanni.

Lo importante, concluye, es que todos pueden usarla.

El programa final -con todas sus aplicaciones- estará disponible a partir del próximo año.

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Sourcemap.org: Helping to Transform the Materials Economy

WEDNESDAY, 07 OCTOBER 2009 20:02 TNGE



For over half a century now, linear product life cycles have dominated the marketplace and come to define the value sets that characterize modern economics. The average consumer has unwittingly invested untold amounts of time, energy, and income to ensure that the Materials Economy remains a driving force throughout cultures around the world. Product marketing incessantly bombards consumers in an effort to dupe them into believing that happiness and peace of mind are to be found in the latest product trends.

An April 2009 article published on The New Green Economy,

entitled [Transforming the Materials Economy](#), examined the outright unsustainability of the Materials Economy. The article aimed to promulgate the devastating impact that linear product life cycles have had on the both natural and built environments, as well as the bleak future they may lay ahead if these cycles are not radically modified to mirror the circular life cycles as found in the natural world.

A new language of economics however is forging its way into the collective awareness as an ever-growing number of consumers are consciously waning their dependency on such an archaic and pernicious form of economics. Sustainability has begun to reshape capitalism itself, but breaking the habits of old has proven to be a measured, complex process, as the public's understanding of product life cycles remains clouded and deficient.

Hope for such change in consumer values is possible thanks to the ground-breaking endeavor of the team at Sourcemap.org, a social networking site that is helping to transform the Materials Economy by empowering product manufactures, business owners, and consumers to gauge the economic, social, and environmental impact of their manufacturing and purchasing decisions. The website provides its members with tools to create visual maps that chart the impact of product life cycles by analyzing the supply chains behind the products themselves. These maps are then made available to other members, providing transparency with regards to product sustainability.

Leonardo Bonanni is the creator of Sourcemap, a project that is currently the focus of his doctoral work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab. Soon after performing the research that led to the creation of the project itself, Bonanni teamed up with two developers whose collaboration has led to the design of the bulk of what is found on the website today.

Matthew Hockenberry is Sourcemap's principal web developer, and David Zwarg is responsible for creating the site's map visualizations that give Sourcemap its unique and innovative user-friendly format. In an exclusive interview with The New Green Economy earlier this week, Bonanni sat down to share his insight on the project.

Sourcemap is an online forum centered on open supply chains, and reaching a deeper understanding of how supply chains really work is crucial in creating an authentic sense of transparency and accountability. "If we look at the impact of industrial production on the environment, we can trace that impact to a number of different levels," explains Bonanni. "The biggest focus in the press has been at the consumer level, where the consumer is able to choose between one product and another based on their greenness. We wanted to highlight the complexity of those decisions if you consider all of the steps in a product's life cycle, especially all of those steps over which the consumer has very little control."

"A consumer might buy something, use it, and then throw it away or recycle it; but we found that a lot of the impact that products have is actually traceable to the raw materials extraction and the manufacturing, as well as a lot of the shipping that also takes place between various steps of the supply chain. So we really wanted to highlight the complexity of a supply chain so that in one sense we take the responsibility off consumers, while at the same time educating them about the different levels of its complexity, as well as what their role and the role of industries is in shifting current practices into something more sustainable."

Bonanni notes that while Sourcemap aims to reach broadly across the consumer spectrum, it does in fact focus on a specific target population. "We believe everyone has the right to know this kind of information, but we're targeting right now individuals in businesses that stand to make a very large impact. So, for example, if you decide where to travel with your family as a consumer, you have some impact on the amount of possible carbon offset. But if you're deciding where your entire company should hold its yearly meeting, you have a much bigger impact—and that's the kind of people we're targeting."

"Basically only environmental engineers know anything about how to assess carbon footprints. We're trying to make it so that any decision maker at the professional level can make a decision that's beneficial, ranging from something as simple as what food to order when you cater an event, to something as complex as what products should you release on the market."

One of the tools on Sourcemap that makes such decision making possible is the CO₂e receipt feature provided for each supply chain. The receipt discloses the product's total carbon footprint, measured in CO₂e—the carbon dioxide equivalent produced upon manufacturing and processing the product. (CO₂e is the internationally recognized measure of greenhouse emissions.)

Take for example, one source map created by a site member for a popular tennis shoe—the Nike Air Max 180. This particular map shows the final product to be assembled in Vietnam, using nine different components—such as leather, PU flexible foam, and Nylon

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In this case, the shoe's carbon dioxide equivalent comes out to 5.13 kg per pair. The receipt also shows the product's total weight to be 1.59 kg, and that the from start to finish, the product traverses some 30,000 km across the globe before it finds its way into the hands of retailers and customers in Anytown, USA.

"Sourcemap allows you to visualize social impact," says Bonanni, "because wherever you're buying the product is also where jobs are going to be created. And most of the time it's where the infrastructure that you build and the culture as a whole will be healthier. The source maps allow people to decide what location means to them. In some cases, it may mean investing locally, while in others it may mean investing in a particular country if interest that you want to see preserved."

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Where's My iPod Made? SourceMap Has the Answer

BY KIT EATON Mon Oct 5, 2009

MIT's [Media Lab](#) has designed a way to help you understand the economic and ecological implications behind different products you buy--it's an interactive map that displays where each component came from.

Specifically designed to be a "collective tool for transparency and sustainability," SourceMap's intended to demonstrate how important supply chains are, and what the consequences of each part of the chain work out to be. It's set up like a social network, so that anyone from producers to end-users can take part (as long as you're a registered member). Check out the demonstration video to get a better insight:

The system's core is a list of "parts", many of which make up a full product. Each part has a start point, and the estimated carbon footprint of getting the specific part to the product assembly line contributes to an estimate for the carbon footprint of the whole machine. A part can have photos, videos and text tags, and it can be described for different portions of a product lifespan--including disposal.

As a tool it has significant promise, and could certainly become an important way for eco-campaigners to get their message across. It's in early stages as an open-source product though, and the MIT team fully expects it to grow in good (and bad) ways. They're accepting of irrelevant mistakes and "downright useless" maps, but that should change once they appoint moderators.

[[SourceMap](#) via [Treehugger](#)]

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See Where Stuff Comes From with SourceMap

by Christine Lepisto, Berlin on 10. 4.09

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Part List [\(Hide List\)](#)

- 1 **ABS, primary** from Beijing (1.01kg) = 1.43 kg CO₂e
- 2 **steel, primary** from Russia (0.63kg) = 0.89 kg CO₂e

Image: [SourceMap](#)

You have certainly heard that buying local is "greener". You have probably also heard counter-arguments: a product made more efficiently but shipped some distance may beat out a local product. But all that talk is merely theoretical if you don't know where your stuff comes from anyhow. And in the new global economy, the "made in" tag on a product does not tell half the story. What is the discerning consumer to do?

Imagine a future in which pointing a PDA at a product bar code returns an instant readout of product source and environmental footprint to inform the buyer's decision. This future could be reality with [SourceMap](#). Designed as a "collective tool for transparency and sustainability," SourceMap aims to be the Wiki of visualizing supply chains.

SourceMap is a project of Media Labs, a division of MIT. Developers have adapted the Google Earth geotagging capabilities to the purpose of charting the components that go into products. After two years in development, the site is live in beta, and a [SourceMap pilot project](#) is underway in Scotland, where businesses can input data on sourcing and supply to share with customers. SourceMap hopes to show that a marketing and social networking advantage justifies the effort of businesses to create transparent reports.

You Can Help SourceMap Track Stuff

Going into the live phase as an open source project, [SourceMap needs volunteers](#). The site will be only as good as its content, and since most people do not know where stuff comes from, SourceMap is looking in particular for

- Product Designers
- Supply Chain and Inventory Management experts

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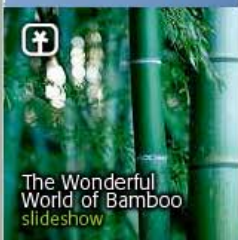


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And to help get the information out there in an attractive and useful interface:

- Illustrators
- Information Visualization experts
- Web Designers
- Web developers
- Mobile developers.

If you have these skills and the will to help, you can join the team by sending an email to sourcemap@media.mit.edu.

If you are interested in such a project, you are probably also the type of person using Firefox or Safari. If not, be warned: SourceMap is beta, and not yet optimized for Internet Explorer. Which is probably just as well, because the site needs some time in the hands of the tech-savvy before it is ready for prime time.

How SourceMap Works

If you just want to browse where stuff comes from, take a look at a [typical laptop computer](#) or an [iPod](#). If you want to contribute to creating a SourceMap, check out the [parts catalog](#) or [transport catalog](#). Each SourceMap combines parts and [transport](#) to fully characterize the final product. Each part and [mode of transport](#) has an average CO2 emission factor associated with it.

What is Next for SourceMap

Currently, there are not many products defined in SourceMap. We are guessing a lot of people will start playing with the site, creating maps like Borjiz's [homegrown tomatoes](#), tied with thread from Taiwan. Or Katherine's [raw granola](#), with groats from China, cinnamon from Sri Lanka and honey from Oregon. This will result in lots of maps that are [dead ends](#) or [downright useless](#). Moderators are urgently needed, and a system to identify useful product maps from stuff "under construction" would be helpful.

Nonetheless, we find that the SourceMap experiment is highly promising. Open source may be a good way to solve the issue of constantly changing supply chain information...if the quality of the information input by site users can be verified and controlled. SourceMap certainly answers the question Jaymi asks about [emissions software](#): "Does it all matter if consumers don't know?"

More on Supply Chain Impacts:

[SourceMap](#)
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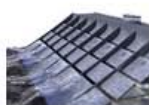
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The Backstory of Stuff: New Sites Enable More Transparency in the Supply Chain

WORLDCHANGING TEAM, 21 SEP 09

by Kirstin Butler

In simpler times, just checking [the tag inside a t-shirt](#) was enough to qualify you as a discerning consumer. Choosing goods "made in the USA" over countries with more lenient labor laws meant that you'd done your due diligence as a shopper. As geopolitics have become more complex, though, so too has the supply and demand of stuff, and now making even the most basic purchases can be fraught with considerably more anxiety.

The good news is that while the times have gotten more complicated, technology has kept pace. Finally the tools to enable meaningful supply-chain transparency have come of age, and more people than ever before can use them.

Until recently, visualizing global goods' sourcing was the domain of contemporary artists and technoactivists. Tracing an object back to its origins could be a time-consuming and frustrating process that meant doing solitary research and creating original interfaces. But the increased accessibility of online mapping tools and wiki-style collaborations have changed the cartography of consumption.

Enter [Sourcemap](#), an open-source application for collective supply chain research and mapping. When WorldChanging [first reported on Sourcemap](#) last year the project had yet to launch; now its users have already traced the global travels of products as diverse as cars, granola, and lace (even though the site is still in beta mode).

[Introduction to Sourcemap](#) from Matthew Hockenberry on Vimeo.

An MIT-based team built Sourcemap's applications around Google Earth, and its geotagged food, travel, and product maps will look familiar to anyone who has called up a set of road trip directions. Still, while not the exclusive province of programmers, Sourcemap does require some skill with computing language to manipulate data. Most visitors to the site will probably gain the most from [viewing supply chains in progress](#).

Even the pinpoint accuracy of a global map, however, can lack the immediacy of a human story. That's where high-profile advocacy can take up the charge of transparency for more just and sustainable sourcing practices. A great example is the [Enough Project's Come Clean 4 Congo](#) campaign, which seeks to connect the points between your cell phone and conflict minerals.

Where Sourcemap will tell you the carbon footprint of your computer's production, the Enough Project will show you the Congolese miner who gathered minerals for its motherboard. It's one thing to be aware of the abstract threat posed by your devices and gadgets, and quite another to know that they directly support global conflict.

The Enough Project's strategies include [urging companies](#) to pledge that their products are conflict free and providing [letter-writing](#) and [petition tools](#) for congressional lobbying.

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SourceMap

Author(s):

The SourceMap team

Institution:

MIT

Year:

2009

URL:

<http://www.sourcemap.org>

Project Description:

SourceMap is an outstanding venture sponsored by different groups within the MIT. As they state on the site: "When you invite people to an event, buy the ingredients for a recipe, or design the parts of a product, your choices have a significant impact. Some things have vast supply chains that stretch across the world while others are completely regional. Understanding the reach of our sourcing is fundamental to improving economic, social and environmental conditions."

Sourcemap is a tool for producers, business owners and consumers to understand the impact of supply chains. The site is a social network where anyone can contribute to a shared understanding of the story behind products. You can simulate the impact of manufacturing, transporting, using and throwing away products using their Life-Cycle Assessment calculator. This web-based tool uses linked data from geological and geographic resources. Each 'Sourcemap' can be used to help market socially - and environmentally - conscious products and to buy carbon offsets. Supply chains published on the site can be embedded in external websites, printed onto product packaging or linked through QR codes readable by camera phones. As the site grows, suppliers will be able to contribute their products to the Sourcemap database, providing a geographic catalogue of materials and products around the world.

The images shown here are from a [sourcemap](#) of IKEA's [Sultan Alsarp bed](#). You might also enjoy seeing Patagonia's [Footprint Chronicles](#). I truly hope this represents a critical business shift towards transparency and environmental awareness.

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Carbon footprint system piloted

Small businesses in the Highlands and Moray are trialling a new website designed to calculate their carbon footprint.

Sourcemap aims to help firms work out the level of carbon emissions created in delivering goods and services.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Media Lab, a division of Massachusetts Institute of Technology are leading the pilot project.

Several businesses have already volunteered to get involved.

They include Connage Farm Dairy in Ardersier, Cairngorm Brewery, The Lovat Hotel in Fort Augustus, the Spa Soap Company in Strathpeffer, Plexus Media in Cromarty along with Forbes-based Tuminds, Macbeaths Butchers and Open Brolly.

The Lovat said it already offered price reductions to guests who travel to the hotel by public transport, walking or cycling.

It also uses degradable cleaning products and a biomass wood chip burner to heat the property and its water.

'More advanced'

Leo Bonnani, one of the researchers behind Sourcemap, said the Highlands and Moray were ideal for the trial.

He said: "We've been developing Sourcemap over the past two years, and other than some initial testing with food and drink companies in Boston, this is our first full study.

"We've found efforts in local sourcing are much more advanced in Europe than in America, and here in the Highlands there is a growing desire to work more sustainably."

He added: "Local sourcing in the US might mean 1,000 miles while here in the Highlands people are hesitant to get something from out with Scotland."



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Businesses are working out the level of emissions linked to their trade

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