Is There a Technology Resistance?

Contributed by Peter Crabb
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The driving force behind the anthropogenic destruction of Planet Earth is locked inside our skulls. Neuroscientists are just beginning to identify the neural networks of the Technological Mind, but one thing is certain: the irresistible impulse to use tools is the product of natural selection over the last 1.5 million years, and so it is probably more deeply ingrained than even our impulse to use language.
Our most tool-savvy ancestors were the ones who best survived the daily threat of predators and who were able to exploit food resources that were out of reach for their hapless untooled neighbors. A feedback loop between tool use, survival, and reproduction drove the evolution of the species in the direction of complete dependence on technology. As descendants of those clever animals, our evolved brains find it difficult even to imagine life without technology.

And so our Technological Minds drive us daily to use tools to do virtually everything we want to do, often to the point of pathological compulsion and environmental devastation. When a large proportion of 7 billion Technological Minds has access to vast tool kits of energy-guzzling, polluting, and dangerous technologies, it is entirely predictable that the nest will sooner or later become fouled. That fouling is abundantly evident today in the form of global warming and climate change, habitat loss, species extinction, and the poisoning of the soil, water, and air—all products of the technological way of life.

An interesting thing about the human mind, though, is that it is capable of astonishing flexibility. Even the relentless Technological Mind must have some room for alternative decision-making and action. This raises the question of whether there are people who intentionally resist the tidal wave of technotoys that floods our lives, or whether just about everyone is mesmerized by the junk technology of our times.

While web sites like Culture Change and Primitivism (primitivism.com) provide wonderful countercultural perspectives on the disastrous technological society, there does not seem to be an organized technology resistance. Perhaps that is because technology is presently the main organizing mechanism for all social movements (Culture Change postings aren’t sent by smoke signals!), and technology resistors (naturally) would tend to decline to be so organized.

Culture Change readers, though, seem to be folks who would be technology resistors to some degree. Perhaps as an electronic community we can put our minds together to collectively think about how to overcome the problems our technologies have created for ourselves, our communities, and the planet.

If you are someone who intentionally refuses to use any of the modern technologies now at our disposal, I would like to hear from you. Please email me (pbcrabb [at] verizon [dot] net) your stories about technologies you avoid using, why you don’t use them, and alternative low-tech solutions that you have discovered. The technologies that you might resist include those involved in:

- Transportation
- Communication
- Work
- Gardening, farming
- Food preparation and preservation
- Landscaping
- Construction
- Education

Entertainment

And anything else you can think of

To get a rough idea about the demographics of technology resistors, it would be helpful if you would kindly include your age and occupation.

An article summarizing readers' tales about their technology resistance will appear in a future edition of Culture Change. Hopefully, these stories will confirm that a critical mass of people isn't going along with the technoflow. And hopefully we can encourage others to resist, too.

EDITOR'S NOTE: the survey took place and was compiled. See the write-up at The Technology Resisters: A Reader Survey.

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Readings

"Technology Traps", by Peter Crabb. Culture Change, Nov. 10, 2008: culturechange.org

"Fall of the Technological World", by Jan Lundberg. Culture Change Letter #204, Oct. 7, 2008: culturechange.org