



Toward an Ecoculture of Mind

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It all looked so familiar. Looking out across rural Scotland, and having lived in Ireland these last 19 years, at the same dark blocks of monoculture forests spreading out before us.

Afterwards looking to current Scottish government policy it was encouraging to find the situation is changing, with an ambition for Scotland to have 25% forest cover by 2050. Yet for all the words of multi-purpose forests, much of Scotland's forest policy, as in Ireland, appears to facilitate the economic imperatives of a predominantly monoculture timber growing industry, with little mention of more ecologically based forestry.

Writing in 2011, Scottish nature writer Jim Crumley in *The Great Wood*, concludes sadly that for Scotland's forests there should be a great deal more than the 'endless conveyor belt of Sitka spruces that mostly get pulped' (170). And for forests all over the world there must be a great deal more when the Earth is in an ecological emergency. Unfortunately modern industrial society is centered on the urban and the technological, which has largely eclipsed us from 'seeing' the

Earth. Recently accepted UN ecological boundaries, and which we have already gravely exceeded, remind us that for life to continue to thrive on Earth, that we need to urgently attend to our actions have caused this predicament.

Looking at forests that support much of the Earth's biodiversity and climate can be useful to explore this; to question how Western society has so completely valued monoculture production over ecological viability. Somehow this is connected to how we perceive, or not, the natural world around us. Environmentalist Vandana Shiva has commented recently on the 'monoculture of the mind as a gaze that is unable to see relationships'. Increasing tree planting is a start but we also need to develop an ecological gaze, an ecoculture of mind, to develop forests that provide environmental, cultural as well as economic values.

References:

- 1 Crumley, J. (2011) *The Great Wood: The Ancient Forest of Caledon*, Edinburgh: Birlinn