

Manufacturing and the Environment

Whether mass produced or individually crafted, most of the items that we own began their life as a raw material and were produced using energy derived from fossil fuels. Producing too many things has a negative impact on the environment, here's why:

Running out of raw materials

Raw materials like oil, metals and minerals are becoming increasingly scarce and more difficult to find. This means that mining industries need to go deeper into remote locations which can disturb unique ecosystems and threaten wildlife habitats (World Resources Institute, 2003). Excavating raw materials is also not a long term solution; these resources are finite and will eventually run out which means future generations won't be able to have the things we have today (Hamblin & Christiansen, 2003).

Polluting our environment

Manufacturing often requires large amounts of energy which is mainly derived by burning coal or oil which emit harmful pollution like carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the air. Manufacturers also often use chemicals like dyes for clothing or paints and lacquers. These chemicals can also cause air pollution or can end up in waterways. Among other negative implications, air and water pollution are harmful for the environment; air pollution can cause health implications for factory employees and surrounding residents and wildlife whereas chemicals in waterways can have disastrous effects on plants and animals (Environment America, 2012).

Waste

The more we waste, the more needs to be produced. Manufacturing companies produce a lot of trash in the process of production which can sometimes be recycled but often ends up being sent to landfill and only contributes to the waste problem.

