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PUSH TOWARDS A SHIFT IN PEOPLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS LEVELS: AN ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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Our Environment is our surrounding. This includes living and non-living things around us. The non-living components of environment are land, water and air. The living components are germs, plants, animals and people. All plants and animals adjust to the environment in which they are born and live. A change in any component of the environment may cause discomfort and affect normal life. Any unfavorable change or degradation in the environment is known as 'Environmental Pollution'. We need to protect our environment to live happily. Of all the living organisms, humans have been the main culprit in disturbing and damaging the environment by performing all kinds of activities for their own comfort, without realising the adverse consequences they would have on the environment. For better environment, all its components should be protected from pollution and the surroundings should be clean. We need to take good care of our land, water resources, forests and atmosphere. It is also necessary to ensure a balance between these resources and living creatures to meet our needs. In addition, some physical factors such as hurricanes, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes also cause major damage to the earth's environment. But no control can be exercised over such events and happenings. If we seriously think that we are responsible for causing disturbances in our environment which reduce its quality, then we must do something and take corrective measures immediately to save the environment from further degradation. We must realize that we all are the product of this environment. Our happiness, health and well being depend upon the quality of environment that we have.

Keywords: People's consciousness, Environmental perspective

INTRODUCTION

The nature's own rate of re-absorbing these resources back into its structure and effectively neutralizing them is much slower than our rates of production / consumption. So it is not just the concepts of production and consumption but excessive production and consumption which are

the major contributors to man-caused pollution. To add to that, it is not only excessive production but also inefficient and dirty methods of production which become sources of environmental pollution. And it is not only excessive consumption but also careless and thoughtless disposal of post-consumption waste resources which could

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otherwise be recycled. Our analysis of causes of pollution focuses on:

- Fundamental drivers of pollution,
- Primary and secondary causes of pollution, and
- Sources of pollution

FUNDAMENTAL POLLUTION DRIVERS

The humanity had known pollution, to some extent or another, at least since the times the fire had been invented. But it was only with the onset of the industrial revolution in the 19th century that people realized the seriousness of the pollution problem and its often devastating effects. In the last 200 years or so there appeared several fundamental trends which became the major forces behind the surge in levels of air, water and land pollution throughout the globe.

Industrialization is the first fundamental cause of pollution. Among other things, industrialization set in motion the widespread use of fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) which are now *the* main sources of pollution.

Population growth is the second fundamental

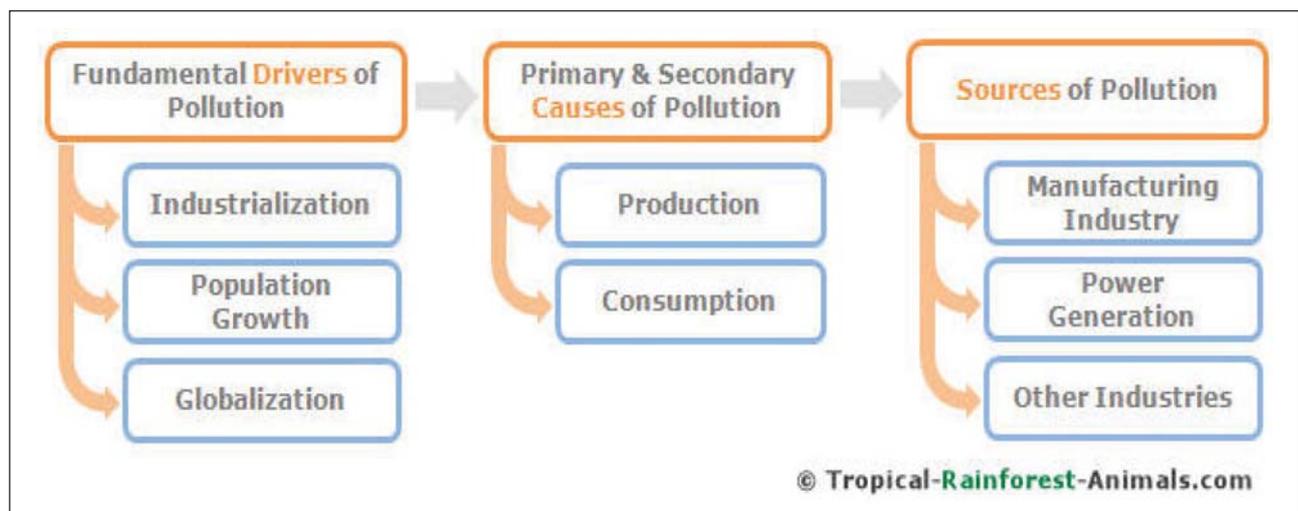
pollution cause. With population numbers literally exploding around the world, the demand for food and other goods goes up. This demand is met by expanded production and use of natural resources, which in turn leads to higher levels of pollution.

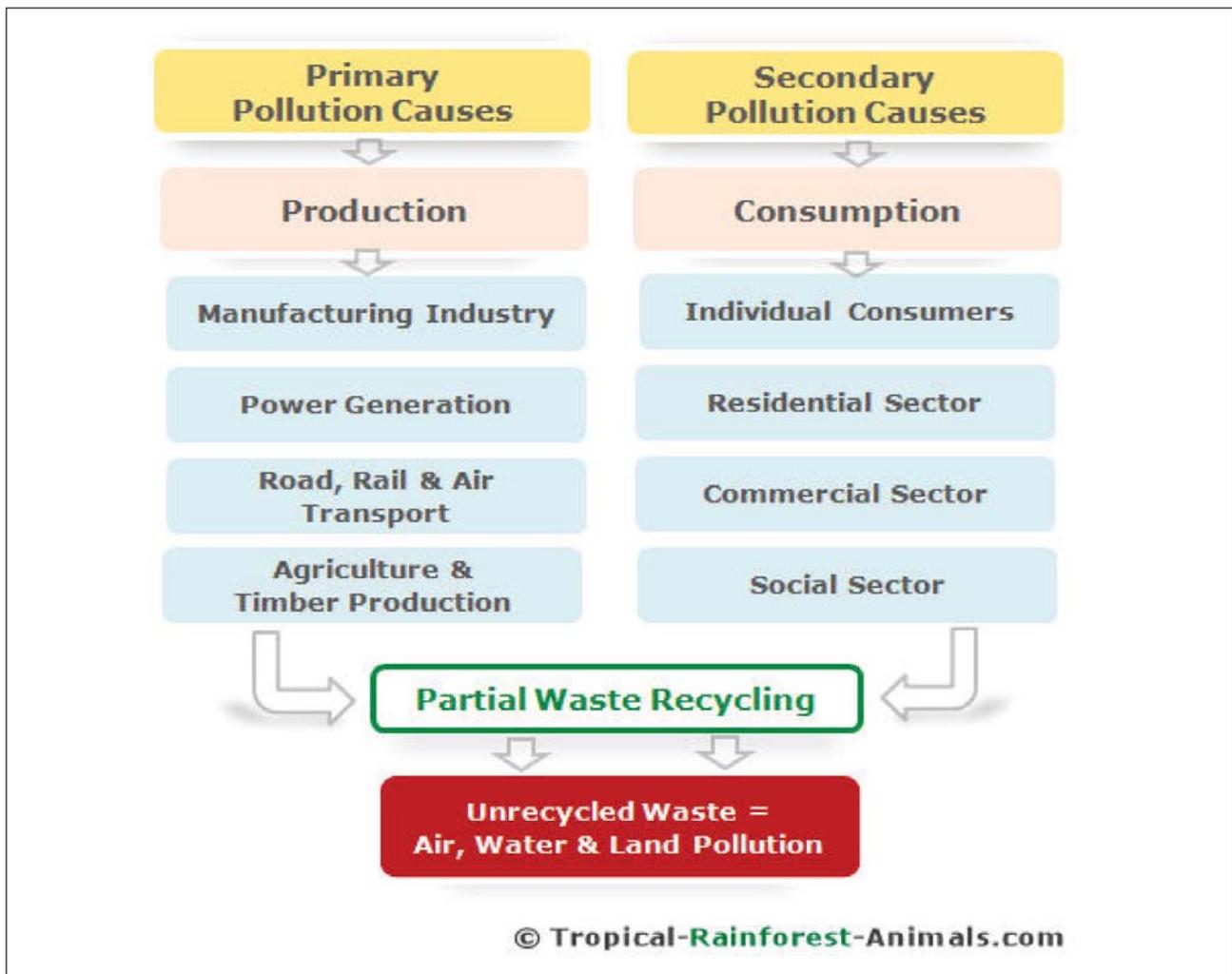
Globalization is another major cause of pollution. Globalization has become an effective facilitator of environmental degradation. Developing countries usually have much looser laws on environmental protection. With this “benefit” as well as the population growth and easy availability of cheap labor, big industry prefers to move its facilities to such “pollution havens” rather than work in more regulated markets.

So, we won’t be wrong if we consider industrialization, population growth and globalization the fundamental drivers of pollution, *the very roots of the gigantic pollution tree.*

Primary and Secondary Causes of Pollution

Taking a step down from the fundamental drivers, we can now approach production and





consumption as *primary* and *secondary* causes of pollution.

Causes of Pollution

We refer to production as the primary cause of pollution because the whole cycle of extracting and processing natural resources and then selling processed goods starts from this point. And it obviously comes before consumption.

The production side of the diagram includes manufacturing industries, power generation, road, rail and air transport and agriculture and timber production. In reality, it can be of course broken down into many other industries/sub-industries.

So, how does the production side contribute to global pollution? Let's consider the following example.

A car is a necessity for many people who use it in their everyday lives. In order to produce cars, a car manufacturer needs to:

- Purchase raw materials such as metal, rubber, plastic, wood, paint, etc. Raw materials are extracted from earth in large amounts often damaging the natural system of the area from which they were extracted, as well as surrounding areas, ex. rainforests.
- Purchase energy/electricity which is usually generated from petroleum resources.

Petroleum-based energy generation causes the emission of gases into the atmosphere and often contaminates water and land of the surrounding areas.

- Use this energy to process raw materials into cars. Cars are manufactured leaving behind an environmentally destructive footprint as described above.

That is a very simplified explanation of how manufacturing contributes to environmental pollution.

We'll now have a look at consumption.

We refer to CONSUMPTION as the secondary cause of pollution because this stage comes after, and depends on, production. The consumption side of the diagram includes individual consumers as well as residential, commercial and social sectors which utilize the goods offered by the production side.

And how does the consumption side contribute to global pollution? Let's continue with the example of the car. Each car owner needs to: Fill it with gas / petrol every week to operate it.

The burning of petrol causes the emission of dirty gases straight into the atmosphere. Such air pollution then travels globally affecting many different parts of the planet.

Wash it regularly with detergents - either manually or in a car wash.

Car detergents are often made of harmful chemicals which, when used, are released directly into the environment, ex. via waste water.

Change tires on a regular basis.

A significant percentage of each tire's composite material comes from petroleum derivatives and other chemicals. Old tires often

end up unrecycled and thrown into landfills releasing harmful chemicals onto surrounding land areas and into the air and thus contributing to air and land pollution.

Going back to the production side, the more often tires need to be changed, the more natural resources will need to be allocated yet again for their production and the more pollution will be released into the environment.

Owners of new cars are exposed to "in-car" pollution which is almost always ignored by the public. In-car pollution is caused by the off gassing of chemicals from freshly-produced car components. In this case, the health of new car owners suffers alongside the health of the wider environment.

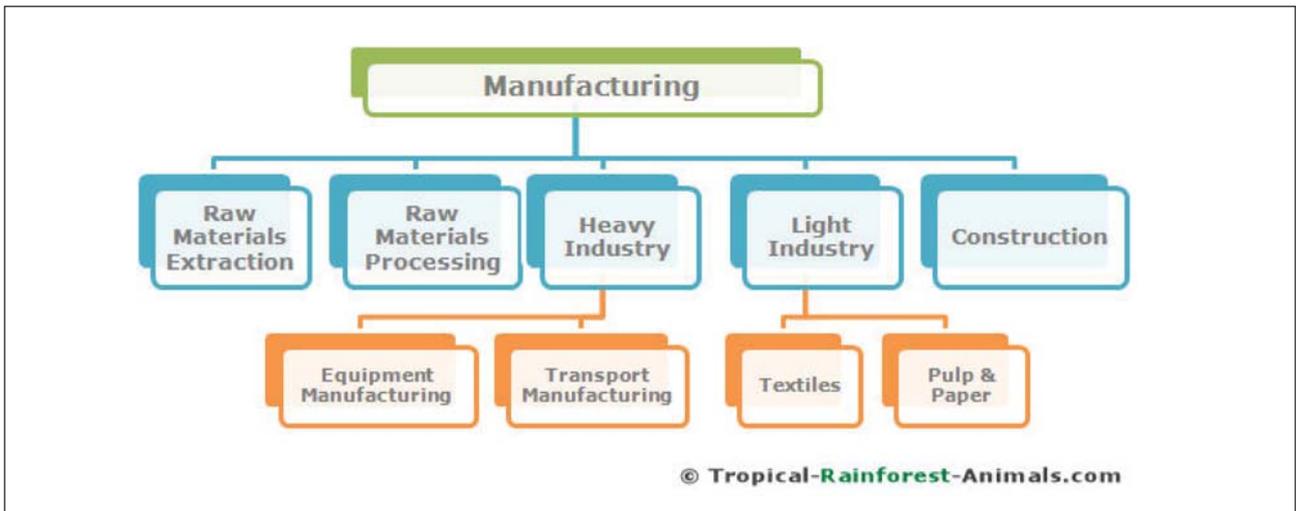
That is another simplified explanation of how consumption becomes a significant cause of pollution. So *production* and *consumption* are the basic causes of pollution. If that is the case, then each industry / sector that "belongs" either to production or consumption becomes a source of pollution.

Let's look at pollution sources in more detail below.

Sources of Pollution

Production Side

When we think of pollution, the first thing that naturally comes to mind is manufacturing. And that is no surprise. Images of enormous chimneys emitting heavy dirty fumes into the air are very powerful indeed, and are directly associated with pollution. Manufacturing includes numerous industries which are in fact sources of all types of pollution - air, land and water. We have grouped manufacturing industries into 5 large sectors, as you can see in the diagram below:



Manufacturing Sources of Pollution

So each of these sectors including their own sub-sectors is a *source of pollution*:

- Raw materials extraction
- Raw materials processing
- Heavy industry (ex. equipment manufacturing and transport manufacturing)
- Light industry (ex. textiles and pulp and paper)
- Construction

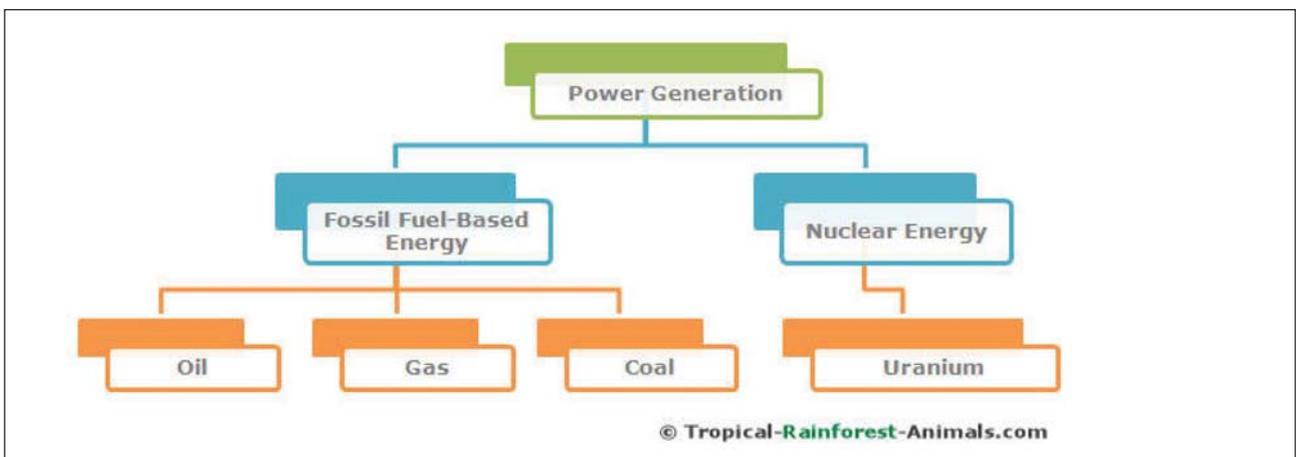
This classification aims to give us an idea of the “pollution’s points of origin” from the manufacturing perspective. It is in no way an exhaustive list of polluting industries.

Power generation is another huge source of

pollution which is nowadays associated with smoky chimneys even more than manufacturing.

The classical example here is the burning of fossil fuels to generate power. Carbon dioxide and other harmful gases are emitted in the process and cause serious ecological damage for many years to come.

Nuclear power is far from being a clean source of energy, even though its lobbyists may claim so. The toxic radioactive waste produced as a result of its generation takes thousands of years to decompose and become harmless. So don’t fall for the lie of looking at nuclear as a “green” source of energy just because it doesn’t emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.



So here are some major *sources of pollution* from the power-generation sector:

- Fossil fuel-based energy
 - Oil-based generation
 - Gas-based generation
 - Coal-based generation
- Nuclear Energy
 - Uranium-based generation

Public transport and shipping are also significant contributors to global pollution levels. All of them use fossil fuels for operation.

Rail transport is probably the cleanest of all the types, and air transport is assumed to be one of the least efficient ones.

Sources of pollution by types of transportation:

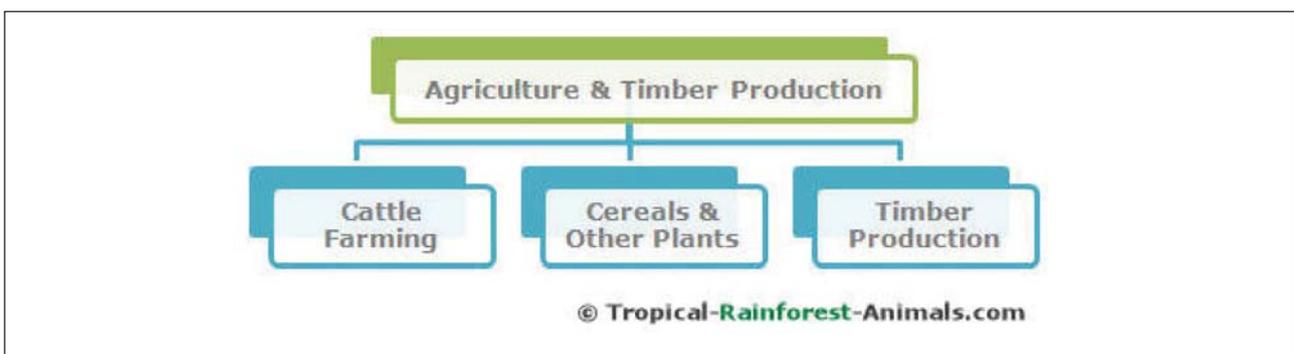
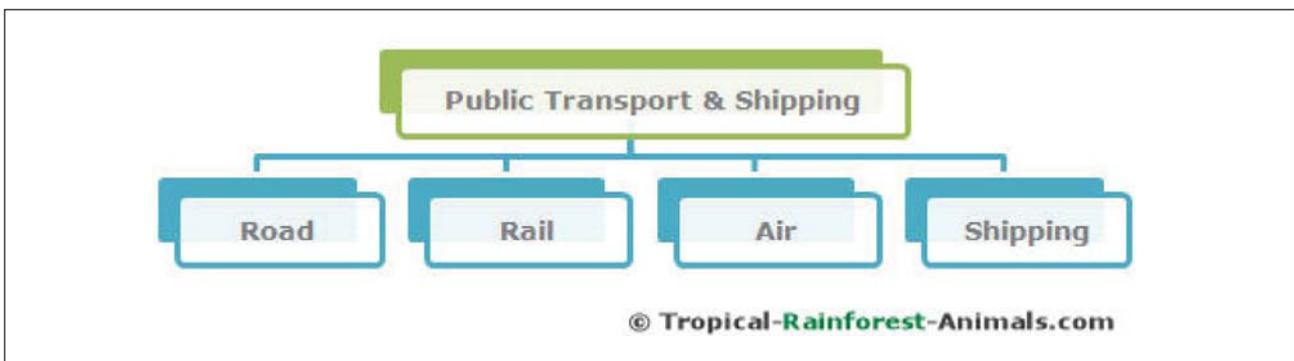
- Road transport
- Rail transport

- Air transport
- Sea shipping

The public often doesn't realize just how significant a source of pollution agriculture and timber production have become. Livestock farming uses vast amounts of resources and produces a lot of waste. Harmful fertilizers are widely used to grow cereals and other plants - such chemicals affect negatively the wider environment as well as human health. Timber production is a major cause of global deforestation which releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Sources of pollution from the agricultural sector:

- Livestock/cattle farming
- Cereals and other plants growing
- Timber production



CONSUMPTION SIDE

While production sectors are obvious examples of "pollution creation", consumption presents a more subtle side to this issue.

When we look at individual consumers, a lot of pollution comes from landfill disposal of post-consumption waste which could actually be recycled. At the same time, there are many consumer goods which cannot be recycled - and they end up on the landfill as well.

As for the wider residential sector, domestic gas heating systems and private transport are no doubt some of the major contributors to global pollution. On top of that, many residential items which can or cannot be recycled (ex., domestic furniture) are also sent to landfills.

Sources of pollution by individual consumers and residential sector:

- Food
- Clothing

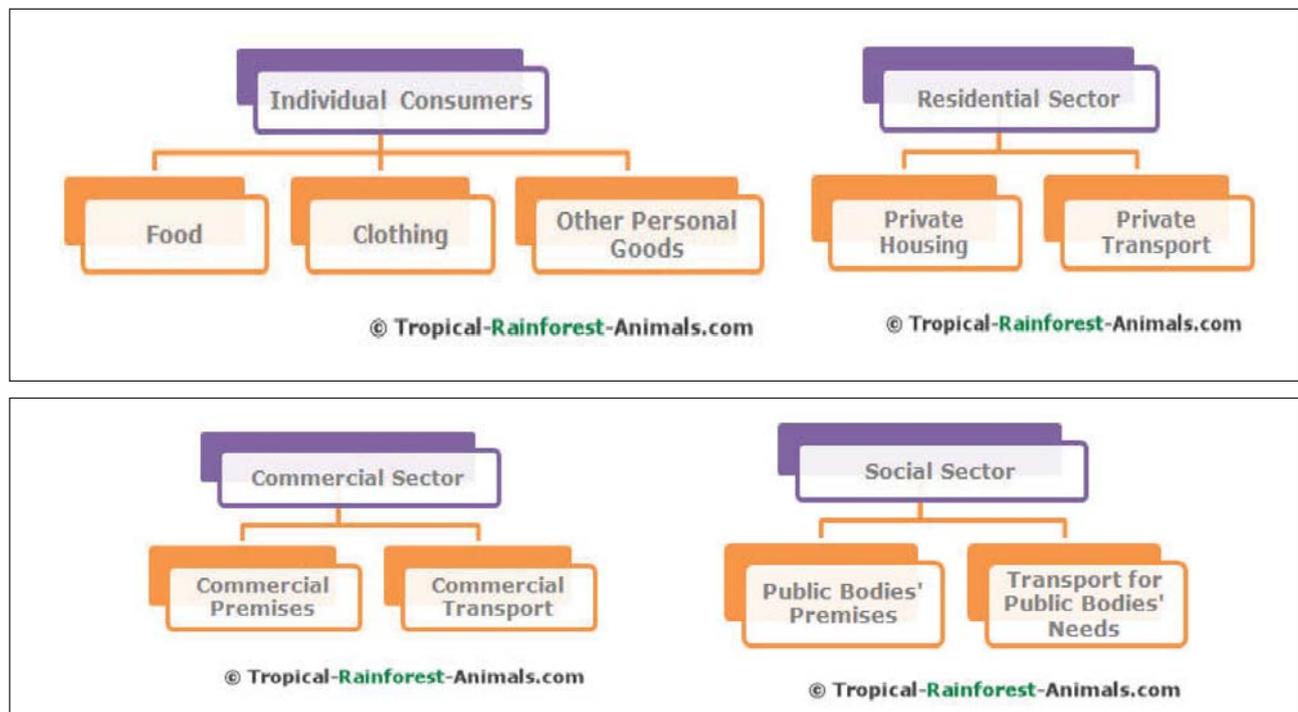
- Other personal goods
- Private housing
- Private transport

We have a similar situation with the commercial and social sectors. Any waste generated from the use of premises as well as transportation all contribute to pollution levels in many different ways.

The social sector may include both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Sources of pollution by commercial and social sectors:

- Commercial premises
- Commercial transport
- Governmental and non-governmental bodies' premises
- Transport for use by governmental and non-governmental bodies



CONCLUSION

Lack of awareness that personal consumption is a major cause of pollution.

Most people seem to believe that technology is the only thing that can help us to reduce pollution levels. But they don't quite think that our consumption (of everything) is actually the original cause of pollution, and if we reduce our consumption - it will automatically reduce pollution as well. So, what we need to do is try to push the humanity towards a tectonic shift in its collective consciousness, and increase awareness of the fact that:

Reduction in Consumption of Everything =
Reduction in Pollution

Public education systems should play a major role in spreading the correct type of information - the concept that caring for the environment is 1,000 times more important than production of stuff we don't really need.

Educated populations will also hopefully push for stronger environmental regulations in their countries.

Therefore: Push towards a shift in people's consciousness levels against environmental pollution.

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