

# SUN THING

NO. 3

# ENERGY FROM THE SUN AS A PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

Solar panels on the roofs of commercial buildings  
bring energy self-sufficiency.



For more than a decade, we have been building large solar parks abroad. Our experience and know-how will now be used in the Czech Republic. Construction of photovoltaic power plants for commercial buildings\* with turnkey solutions including subsidies, implementation, and optimization with local energy systems and energy storage.

\* industrial and factory halls, shopping centers, hospitals, sports complexes, etc.

For more information, please visit [www.solek.com/strechy](http://www.solek.com/strechy)



# EDITORIAL



Dear readers,

Holding the third issue of our magazine brings me immense joy. This edition of Sun Thing is packed with intriguing insights, fresh perspectives, bold visions, and the drive to forge our own path. As the title hints, our central focus is the Sun, delving into its energy and the broader scope of sustainability.

2023 has been a year of remarkable success for Solek. We've achieved significant business milestones and forged alliances with the world's leading financial institutions. Our group proudly unveiled its inaugural ESG report and secured several key ISO certifications.

We aim to open new markets, leverage new technologies, and push the boundaries of what photovoltaics and renewable energy sourcing mean today. In my answers to 100 questions, you can discover our ambitions to revolutionize energy landscapes worldwide.

After all, the philosophy of the Solek group is reflected in the following pages. Within them, you'll find stories linked by a shared desire to explore beyond what first meets the eye. My hope is that as you engage with the content of Sun Thing, you join us in stepping beyond the conventional confines of the visible, the written, and the customary.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

Zdeněk Sobotka  
Founder, Owner & CEO  
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NO. 3

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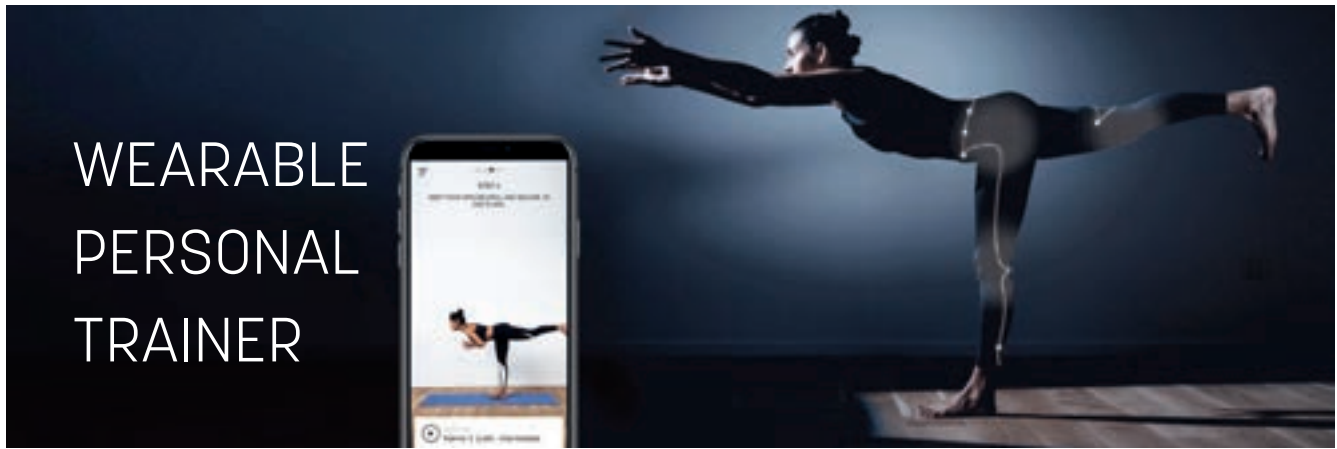


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# SOLEK HOLDINGS



## WEARABLE PERSONAL TRAINER

The landscape of fashion is evolving far beyond its traditional roles of providing warmth and modesty as the smart clothing sector carves out a future more innovative than previously imagined by fashion brands. Now, smart clothing is poised to become the ultimate personal trainer — with embedded AI and textile sensors, these garments can discern improper posture or incorrect movement, offering corrective haptic feedback. This concept has been actualized by New York's Wearable X, whose leggings, retailing at \$280, promise not just style but an enhanced, efficient workout experience. Such fusion of fashion and technology hints at a future where clothing does much more than just dress us.

## Rebellious sneakers


Since 2019, the partnership between Nike and Billie Eilish has produced captivating fashion statement pieces, including their fresh take on the Nike Air Force 1. This year further solidifies their innovative journey with the revamp of the Nike Alpha Force Low, a classic silhouette from the 1980s associated with basketball legend Mike Jordan. This time, the sneakers undergo a transformative eco-friendly makeover, featuring materials like synthetic leather, recycled polyester for the insoles, and an intriguing use of algae-based ink to add a distinctive hue to the midsoles. The Alpha Force Low x Billie Eilish collection, striking in both red and black colorways, continues to blend the realms of music, sports, and responsible fashion in a way that's uniquely Eilish and unmistakably Nike.



## THE CIRCLE OF LUXE

Louis XIII, a name synonymous with luxury spirits, has etched its mark with a sustainable twist. At the iconic Harrods in London, Louis XIII offers a novel service to its decanter owners: the chance to infinitely refill their choice of cognac. The Infinity Experience is a testament to the brand's commitment to tradition, quality, and environmental consciousness. Old carafes are given a new lease on life, reducing the need for new production and thus contributing to a lower carbon footprint. Every aspect, from meticulous cleaning to the engraving, is part of an experience that honors the planet. It's a celebration of sustainability, ensuring the longevity and exclusivity of a truly distinguished product.

# FRAUSCHER X Porsche



Renowned for its high-performance cars, Porsche is now fully geared to pivot exclusively towards electric vehicle production. Yet, the brand's ambition extends beyond terrestrial mobility, now making waves in maritime transport too. In a groundbreaking collaboration with Austrian shipyard Frauscher, Porsche has developed the electric 850 Fantom Air speedboat. This vessel shares its technological prowess from the anticipated electric version of the Macan SUV, such as a 400 kW motor and a 100 kWh battery. The sustainable yet exhilarating venture is set to make its public debut in 2024, marking a new chapter in Porsche's innovative journey.



In an intriguing fusion of design and sustainability, Italian designers Simone Caronni, Paolo Stefano Gentile, and Pietro Gaeli have reimagined fast-food packaging with an eco-friendly twist, developing a french fry container that replaces traditional paper using potato peels. In their design, the peels are molded into a circular shape and, upon drying, they adhere and harden, forming a cone-like structure. This fry packaging is not only made of 100% organic material but is also fully biodegradable. After serving its purpose, it can enrich soil as fertilizer or serve as animal feed.

# What trash?



## ELEGANCE & INNOVATION

Portuguese winery Casa de Cambres Duoro's latest venture with M&A Creative Agency brings a blend of practicality and flair to wine connoisseurs. Introducing the Lamego N2 96 km collection, the design of these Portuguese wines' labels is matched in sophistication by the CPACK Backpack, an accessory crafted from upcycled wine cork stoppers. More than just a carrier, this backpack ensures optimal wine temperature courtesy of cork's natural insulating qualities. Its thoughtful design boasts three compartments, each cradling a bottle securely. A clever transformation reveals its dual purpose: detach the leather straps, and it becomes a sleek wine rack, with the top section serving as an elegant bowl for snacks. This fusion of style and functionality elevates the wine-tasting experience to new heights.





# PARADISE FOUND

Waldorf Astoria, an international emblem of elite hospitality, is set to dazzle the Seychelles with its latest venture: Platte Island. This private island epitomizes luxury and sustainable sophistication, redefining the benchmarks of an exclusive getaway. Just a twenty-minute flight from Mahé, Platte Island is gearing up for its grand debut this winter. In addition to fifty opulent villas, each boasting private pools and bespoke butler services, guests can explore six gourmet restaurants and bars, a cinema lounge under the stars, an upscale spa, and tennis courts. The true gem of this exotic retreat lies in its aquatic adventures across a vast fourteen-kilometer coral lagoon, a sanctuary for turtles and rays. Platte Island also offers unique experiences, including guided excursions with marine biologists and thrilling ocean safaris aboard a sailboat.

# FROM UNDER THE SEA

Oris, renowned for its commitment to carbon neutrality, unveils its new Aquis watch collection, proving that eco-conscious design can exude allure. In collaboration with Bracenet, Oris has designed dials made from reclaimed ocean waste, with each timepiece showcasing a distinctive artistic fusion of blue and green hues, derived from repurposed fishing nets salvaged from the ocean's depths. The collection is available in a refined 36.5 mm and a more robust 43.5 mm steel case. Tailored for aquatic sports aficionados, these watches come equipped with quintessential diving features such as luminescent hands and indices, a secure screw-down crown and case back ensuring water resistance up to 300 meters, and a unidirectional rotating steel bezel, blending eco-innovation with high-end functionality.



# PHOTO FINISH

Snap Inc., the creative force behind the widely-used Snapchat app, has unveiled a new generation of chic sunglasses that don't just shield your eyes but also capture photos and record videos, now with the added dimension of 3D capabilities. The latest in their lineup, Spectacles 3, priced at \$380, may explain their niche appeal over mainstream popularity. Yet, they've certainly carved out a fan base. The ability to instantaneously capture a snapshot from your own perspective or to record your daily experiences for an evening replay holds a unique charm. Looking ahead, Snap is poised to further revolutionize this space by 2024 with the anticipated launch of the fourth-generation Spectacles, this time integrating the wonders of augmented reality (AR).



# 3+1

Within a mere three years of its operation, the renowned Slovenian restaurant Hiša Franko has achieved a remarkable feat this autumn by earning its third Michelin star. Further elevating its status, the restaurant is also celebrated for its commitment to the environment, proudly holding a Michelin green star for sustainability. At the helm of this gastronomic success is the acclaimed chef Ana Roš, who joins an exclusive circle as the eighth woman in the world to earn the full constellation of Michelin stars. Complementing this achievement, Slovenia shines on the culinary map with eight more establishments boasting one or two Michelin stars, six of which lay claim to the green star, underscoring the country's emergence as a premier gastronomic hotspot.

## RESCUE FROM ABOVE



Joby Aviation, a leader in electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft, has made a significant breakthrough by delivering its innovative aircraft to the U.S. military under a commercial contract. These electric-powered machines, primarily discussed for civilian transport, offer new possibilities for military use. Initially intended for representational roles, they hold potential for medical and supply missions in battlefield scenarios, marking a significant advancement in military aviation technology.



# Fitness meets Sustainability



Acer's latest innovation, unveiled at CES, is a sustainable ergonomic fitness workstation. The Acer eKinect BD 3, a fusion of a smart desk and an exercise bike, uniquely transforms physical energy into electrical power. This energy can charge electronic devices like laptops and cell phones through integrated USB and USB-C ports. Its eco-friendly design is complemented by a mobile app that tracks the user's physical activity and the amount of energy generated, promoting both health and environmental consciousness.

# Royal by design

Since their inception in 2012, the esteemed design duo Bernadotte & Kylberg, consisting of Swedish Prince Carl Philip Bernadotte and Oscar Kylberg, has captivated the design world. Yet, they're now stepping into the limelight with their own label. Having already left their mark through collaborations with Nordic icons such as Georg Jensen, Stelton, Hästens, and Skultuna, the pair is now debuting a line of elegantly crafted scarves and blankets, each piece bearing the B&K insignia. This foray is just the beginning, with plans to unveil a comprehensive collection for the home.





# COMPANION TO THE STARS

Jihee Kim, a student from Hong Kong University, has introduced a novel companion for space travelers: Laika, a robotic dog named after the famed Russian canine astronaut. Designed to alleviate astronauts' loneliness during extended space missions, Laika is inspired by Sony's Aibo robotic dog and incorporates advanced mechanics from Boston Dynamics. More than just a companion, Laika doubles as a mobile health monitoring unit, equipped with depth-sensing cameras, thermal imaging, and technology for simultaneous localization and mapping. This AI pet's most significant feature is its ability to provide emotional support, making long journeys away from Earth more bearable.



**CHIC**  
& intelligent

With 41% of American adults regularly using voice search for its speed and convenience, Amazon's Alexa has become a dominant player, being the primary assistant for a quarter of these users. In line with this trend, Amazon's Echo Frames are set to launch their third generation. Unlike other smart glasses experimenting with AR or VR, Echo Frames focus solely on voice interaction. They feature built-in microphones and special speakers on the sides, allowing seamless communication with Alexa. Users can effortlessly organize their calendar, control smart home devices, create to-do lists, listen to podcasts, and find answers to queries, all hands-free and on the go.



# CZECH

# ELON MUSK

100 questions for Zdeněk Sobotka

IN A RAPID-FIRE Q&A, ZDENĚK SOBOTKA, CEO OF SOLEK, OPENS UP ABOUT HIS VISION FOR THE COMPANY, HIS ASPIRATIONS FOR HIS EMPLOYEES, AND HOW HE FINDS BALANCE IN HIS OWN LIFE.

BY ADÉLA KOZÁKOVÁ PHOTOS BY ONDŘEJ PÝCHA

# 1. How would you describe your company if it were a person?

Like someone who looks to the future with conviction and belief.

**2. How did you get into the solar energy field?**

Thanks to the boom years of 2009 and 2010.

**3. Why did you choose Latin America as the primary market for building solar parks?**

It made absolute economic sense.

**4. What were the biggest challenges you had to overcome in doing business in Latin America?**

The distance and a different mindset.

**5. How do you view the development of the renewable energy market in the Czech Republic?**

Unfortunately, we are still significantly behind others.

**6. Why is that?**

Legislation and mistrust in renewable sources are holding us back.

**7. Is the situation in this field changing?**

Yes. The question is how quickly we can catch up and realize true change.

**8. Do you plan to expand into other countries?**

Yes. We are actively considering entering Canada.

**9. Is there enough sunlight there?**

Surprisingly, yes. Despite its northern location, Canada enjoys more sunny days a year than the Czech Republic. It's also a larger country that needs much more energy and doesn't have inexhaustible water resources, which are currently sustaining them.

**10. So, do you see great potential for your business in Canada?**

Absolutely. Canada itself is willing to invest in solar energy development. The growth is ready to explode, both in photovoltaics and wind energy, with local investors gearing up for the upcoming boom.

**11. How do you see the future of solar energy on a global level?**

The trend towards solar energy is intensifying significantly. In some places, the growth of interest is almost exponential, and this is across continents.

**12. Which country is currently the largest installer of solar panels?**

China.

**13. What advice would you give to young entrepreneurs in the energy sector?**

Focus on innovation and IT.

**14. And what would be your first piece of advice to a new employee joining Solek?**

To take pride in their work, as what they do helps the world and future generations.

**15. What other non-material benefits do you offer?**

There are many, but one of the most important is the opportunity to realize oneself in an international and multicultural environment.

**16. What sets you apart from other companies in the market?**

We are the only company in our field in the Czech Republic that applies its visions so broadly.

**17. How many employees do you have?**

Three hundred.

**18. You mentioned that Solek is a multicultural company. How many nationalities are represented in your team?**

Currently, twenty-eight.

**19. What are your most important personal values that you bring into the business?**

I am diligent and focused on performance.

# 20.

## What is your latest accomplishment?

In recent months, it has undoubtedly been the successful financing of projects in Chile.

**21. What motivates you to keep working on your business every day?**

The trust of people around me and the desire to contribute to a better future.

**22. What are your views on climate change and how does your business address it?**

I'm a pragmatist, not a green fanatic, and I've always been interested in science. Facts can't be ignored. Thanks to science, we can predict what will happen, and the current trend doesn't look good. Most of us should seriously consider whether we want to be part of a change for the better or stand on the wrong side of history.

**23. Do you lead by example in this regard?**

I hope so. I have a photovoltaic power plant, an electric car, and manage energy consumption efficiently at my home.



Additionally, at Solek, we develop software for smart solutions — AI approaches that enable us to work with electricity in the virtual world, significantly saving energy consumption and, of course, operational costs.

**24. Can you tell us more about this project?**

A central software will be installed on your energy source, like solar panels and batteries. The system will ensure that necessary appliances or even your car are charged during hours when electricity is cheaper. In the months, when the yield from the solar panels is lower, the software will advantageously purchase energy from other markets.

**25. What potential does this software have for the future?**

I think it's significant. One of its goals is to connect various consumption points.

**26. Does it have a name yet?**

It does, but I won't reveal it just yet.

**27. When will you introduce it to the public?**

I'm currently testing it at home. We plan to launch it in 2024.

**28. What was your first entrepreneurial project?**

At eighteen, I went to Germany to buy four computers and sell them in the Czech market. Back then, it was quite a unique commodity. I immediately enjoyed it.

**29. What did you do next?**

I ventured into the production of promotional items. Today, we would simply call it merchandising.

**30. How do you perceive collaboration with large investors?**

You learn a lot from them; they are the world's biggest professionals. They execute everything at the highest expert level. They are tough negotiators, but on the other hand, you can always strike a fair deal with them.

**31. Do you ever get nervous when negotiating with them?**

Not anymore.

**32. What role do technological innovations play in your business?**

With the radical advent of renewable sources, a larger-scale transformation of energy is beginning. Technologies are advancing rapidly, and we strive to adapt them as quickly as possible.

**33. What hinders your development?**

Usually, it's legislation, both in the Czech Republic and worldwide.

**34. Is there a solution?**

In recent years, technologies have been advancing much faster than legislation. That's why we're part of the Modern Energy Association, discussing new steps with the government, especially in the area of legislation.

**35. Is this initiative yielding positive results?**

Yes, for instance, I'm pleased with the amendment of the Lex OZE 3 law, which can save billions within our republic and enable faster development of renewable sources.

## Are we catching up with Europe and the world?

Yes. Czech politics in recent years has taken a positive stance towards sustainability.

# 36.

**37. Apart from legislation, what new solutions are emerging?**

Sooner or later, energy will be interconnected with AI, leading to a revolution similar to what we've seen in finance. Just as a new sector called fintech emerged, another new sector dedicated to energy technologies will arise.

**38. What are your company's plans for the next five years?**

We aim to continue growing, though not as exponentially as in recent years. Our development strategy is now more linear.

**39. What goals do you have for those five years?**

We would like to install a total of four gigawatts across two continents, contributing to the greening of the planet.

**40. Name a favorite solar project you've worked on.**

I fondly recall our first power plant in Chile, the Colchagua project. It was a tremendous experience.

**41. What were the positive moments for your company after entering the Chilean market?**

We've been in Chile for a decade. Despite changing governments, the country has maintained a consistent direction in energy policy. Politicians openly discuss solutions with sector professionals and always give companies time to prepare for new developments.

**42. You've scaled back business activities in the Czech Republic in recent years, but you started working on a project a year ago.**

We hadn't returned to the Czech market for a long time, but with recent changes and new laws, we believe there's room to expand our presence in the domestic market.

**43. What project is that?**

It's a one-megawatt solar power plant in Velké Popovice, near Prague. We see it as a trial project to test how local companies work — a test of navigating our business in the Czech environment. We anticipate that there will be much

greater interest in solar energy, as not only large but also medium-sized companies will be driven to purchase green energy.

**44. Is this trial progressing positively?**

We're still in the exploration phase.

**45. How do you contribute to research and development in solar energy?**

Mainly through constant innovation. We actively seek out new technologies and then apply them in practice.

**46. What are the biggest myths about solar energy you encounter?**

That it can be generated at night.

**47. What's your favorite way to relax after a busy day?**

Sports, preferably tennis.

**48. Do you have any hobbies?**

My biggest passion since youth has been astronomy. I subscribe to many newsletters on the subject, and when there's an interesting celestial event, you can't tear me away from my telescope.

**49. It's known that you even have an observatory at home. How much time do you spend there?**

Unfortunately, not as much as I'd like. I get to observe the sky about once a month. However, the light pollution of the city diminishes the experience.

**50. What celestial objects do you enjoy observing?**

I like to study the Moon and the Orion Nebula M42. With a telescope, it's also possible to observe the Sun.

**51. Really? You can observe the Sun?**

Yes, but the optics must have a special solar filter; otherwise, it could end very badly.

**52. Have you tried it recently?**

The last time was during a solar eclipse in Chile. Next year, a similar event will be observable in the USA, and I'd like to take my children there.

**53. How did you get interested in astronomy?**

I was eight years old when I visited the Petřín Observatory with my school.

**54. What was your first book on this topic?**

The Universe is Our World by Czech astronomer Jiří Grygar.

**55. Do your children share your interest in astronomy?**

Not yet. My son likes tennis and is good at math like me. My daughter leans more towards the humanities.

**56. How does your family view your business?**

They all support me. My children often ask many curious questions, such as why there are wind farms abroad but

not in our country. Crossing the border from the Czech Republic to Germany, in terms of wind turbines, is akin to stepping from the grey, post-communist Czechia of the 1990s into the clean, well-kept environs of Western Europe. Today, it's not about the state of buildings, but about the grayness of green sources.

## 57. So, why aren't there wind turbines in the Czech Republic?

Because when someone tries to build a wind farm in the Czech Republic, they encounter resistance from local residents. People fear change, and mayors fear the people. As a result, most projects are preferably rejected due to lack of knowledge. Yet, a wind farm saves electricity and contributes to the development of the entire area. There are, of course, enlightened towns where people are favorable towards wind farm construction.



**58. Do you plan to build wind farms in the Czech Republic?**

Yes.

**59. Do you educate the public?**

If you want to change something, you need to talk about it. The state should play a key role in energy education, but in recent years, the trend of renewable energy popularity is growing, and more people are installing solar panels in their homes.

**60. Has the conflict in Ukraine and the associated energy crisis accelerated development?**

Definitely. This conflict cut us off from cheap Russian gas, and many people realized that instead of replacing one dependency with another, it's best to produce energy locally.

**61. Can Czechia become self-sufficient when it comes to energy?**

While possible, it shouldn't be overestimated. Even renewable sources have their limits. The Czech Republic's central location within continental Europe is definitely an advantage. Like our NATO membership for security, energy resources within Europe should be unified. The notion of independence is naive; as Europeans, we should join forces, sever dependencies on external sources, and connect through a large, integrated network.

**62. Is such a network already in the making?**

Partially, but it's a complex issue, much like road construction once was. Everyone wants to drive on a high-speed highway, but no one wants it cutting through their backyard.

**63. What's your view on the development of AI? Will it impact the renewable energy sector?**

I'm quite optimistic about AI. Sure, there will be hypotheses that don't materialize, but also unexpected developments. Many see AI as a significant risk, but I look forward to a future with AI.

**64. How do you think AI will change our lives?**

Drastically, in my opinion, but the technology also has its limits — for example, it won't replace manual labor, in my opinion. We're in for some interesting changes. Within twenty years, I predict we'll vote on whether to have AI as our government and president. Humans tend to be dishonest, but AI won't be. It won't want to control us, just approach things practically, rationally, and ethically.

# 65. **How do you think AI will evolve the solar energy market in the next decade?**

With its ability to evaluate ideal solutions and optimize processes in nanoseconds, AI will bring tools to save energy and money in our sector.

**66. Do you plan to expand your business beyond solar energy?**

Yes.

**67. How?**

We are working on wind power development and battery systems.

**68. Which new markets do you see as most promising for solar energy?**

There's potential anywhere there's a natural collaboration between governments and businesses. Solek only enters markets with manageable risk.

**69. How do you balance work commitments and family life?**

Unfortunately, work often takes precedence over family.

**70. What's your favorite family activity?**

In summer, we enjoy exploring the Czech Republic, cycling, and attending hockey matches.

**71. What values do you try to instill in your children?**

I teach them the importance of thinking independently and standing firm in their beliefs. In a world rife with misinformation, critical thinking is fundamental.

**72. How have you exemplified this lesson for them?**

I've explained the manipulative designs behind mobile games — how they're engineered to keep users playing and spending. It's crucial to understand if you're following the crowd or leading it.

**73. What's currently on your nightstand for reading?**

Turing's Imitation Game by Kevin Warwick and Humma Shah.

**74. Have you managed to read it yet?**

Not yet.

75. Netflix or Amazon for streaming?

Definitely Netflix.

76. Which series have you been hooked on recently?

"For All Mankind" — it's a great watch.

77. Do you prefer vintage or modern?

I lean towards modern.

78. What's a country you haven't visited but wish to?

Japan is high on my list.

79. Which visited country holds a special place for you?

Chile, without a doubt.

80. Most frequently used app on your phone?

The good old phone call app.

81. And your personal favorite app?

Electricity Maps.

82. Any hidden talents you'd like to share?

Nothing hidden, I'm an open book!

83. A quote or saying that resonates with you?

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

84. If you could dine with any contemporary figure, who would it be?

Elon Musk, he's a real game-changer.

85. Why him?

His work is reshaping our future. He's a true visionary.

86. Tesla or Land Rover for a drive?

Land Rover, especially the Range Rover. But I wouldn't say no to a Tesla either!

87. A book that profoundly influenced your career?

The future: Six Drivers of Global Change by Al Gore. He personally signed the book for me.

88. What is the book about?

It deals with topics that are closely related to my industry — climate change, inexhaustible energy resources, population growth, topsoil depletion, but it also mentions the internet and global trade.

89. What's the bravest decision you've made in your career?

Venturing into business in Chile. That was a leap of faith.

90. What advice would you give your younger self?

Listen more, speak less.

91. Where do you envision yourself in a decade?

Hopefully, orbiting Earth.

92. Do you think a trip to space is feasible?

A week on the ISS would be a dream come true.

93. Do you think a trip to space is feasible?

I'm optimistic about it.

94. The most memorable gift you've ever received?

A book.

95. Who gifted it to you?

My parents.

96. Summer or winter — which do you prefer?

I appreciate the charm of both seasons.

97. Your wine preference: red or white?

Red wine, for its depth and character.

98. Are you more of a night owl or an early riser?

Definitely a night owl.

99. Is there a reason for this?

Because of my frequent online meetings with Chile and the four hour time difference, I work late into the evening.

**If you had to sum yourself up in one word, what would it be?**


Visionary — always looking ahead.

**100.**



# Think Green

**Italian Style**



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IN SOUTH TYROL, ITALY'S NORTHERNMOST PROVINCE, THE TOWERING LIMESTONE SPIRES OF THE ALPS AND FERTILE VALLEYS RECEIVE OVER THREE HUNDRED DAYS OF SUNSHINE EACH YEAR. THIS STUNNING LANDSCAPE HARMONIOUSLY BLENDS WITH A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING, MAKING SOUTH TYROL A BEACON OF INNOVATIVE ECO-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES THAT ELEVATE TRADITIONAL TRAVEL EXPERIENCES.

BY TOMÁŠ NOHEJL & ADÉLA KOZÁKOVÁ PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES & IDM SÜDTIROL

Planning a vacation or a temporary workspace shift? Consider a sustainable, mindful, and responsible approach. Before you set off in your electric car or board a train, choose the Dolomites as your final destination — a place where nature is paramount and beauty transcends all seasons. In South Tyrol, you'll find not just a tourism trendsetter in sustainability but also a leader across various sectors, diligently earning its seal of eco-consciousness.

### Water as wealth

In South Tyrol, water is not just a resource — it's a treasure. The Eggental/Val d'Ega region, certified for its sustainable practices, sets a global benchmark in mindful water usage. Following in its footsteps is Brixen/Bressanone, known for its eco-conscious initiatives like the Brixen Water Light Festival and the Mountain Bike Festival. These events reflect the region's commitment to raising awareness about water conservation and encouraging the use of refillable bottles over disposable ones. The towns of San Vigilio and San Martino, nestled between Kronplatz and Alta Badia, a stronghold of traditional Ladin culture, exemplifies this ethos. Local efforts have revived centuries-old springs, offering locals and tourists alike the luxury of free, fresh water straight from the source, underscoring South Tyrol's dedication to environmental mindfulness and its integral role in the region's sustainable lifestyle.

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## Eco-conscious adventures

In South Tyrol, sports that respect and seamlessly blend with nature are the norm. Contrary to the environmental impact of constructing enormous ski lifts on untouched slopes, the region embraces alternative sports growing in popularity. Triggered by the pandemic and a shift in mindset, the trend of ski touring has been surging, offering freedom to explore beyond machine-groomed trails at one's own pace. Touring cross-country skis, with their robust build and edges, are perfectly suited for the moderate and untamed landscapes of South Tyrol. Traditional cross-country skiing, whether classic or for skating, does require groomed trails and a basic mastery of technique for an enhanced experience. However, South Tyrol offers plenty of such destinations, close to larger ski areas with lifts and cable cars. For a fun, sustainable change, try a snowshoe hike or a simple walk, followed by sledding. In this beautiful and diverse terrain, such activities are not just child's play but an immersive way to enjoy the pristine environment.

## Master of the snow canons

Linger a while longer in the winter wonderland of the Dolomites, where Georg Eisath, known as the father of snow canons and the founder of Technoalpin, the largest company in snow-making technology, has made his mark. In the 1990s, Eisath acquired most of the ski lift licenses in a dilapidated resort near his home beneath the jagged Rosengarten massif. Back then, he took over a family hotel and managed the sole Paolina ski lift. Since then, Eisath has invested nearly fifty million euros, transforming the area into the renowned Carezza ski resort. It now boasts a unique snow-making system with GPS and programmed snowing windows. With the capacity to unleash a full barrage from 200 canons within five minutes when the temperature drops correctly, the resort's largest reservoir in South Tyrol holds 130,000 cubic meters of water, allowing natural water flow in summer. "The opportunity to manage this beautiful, untouched area sounded like a challenge," recalls Georg Eisath, who has since passed most responsibilities to his son Florian, a former World Cup racer with a third-place finish in the giant slalom at nearby Alta Badia.

## King Laurin's domain

In Carezza, skiers and snowboarders enjoy ninety kilometers of slopes across two distinct areas. The resort features two major hills: one with the Pra di Tori slope and the other with the King Laurin cable car, leading to the Kölner Hütte at 2337 meters, a creation of the renowned architect Werner Tscholl. This addition emerged during the pandemic. "We didn't want to wait and see what would happen," comment the Eisaths on the uncertain seasons. The connection between the areas is ensured by longer, gentler valley highways featuring children's snow parks and a unique backdrop of solitary trees that shape the landscape's character. Then there's the steeper Obereggen, linked with Trentino's Pampeago in Predazzo at the end of Val di Fiemme. Children delight in Yetiland and the Alpine Coaster sledge ride. A major attraction and motivational goal is the Latemar Ronda, skiing through the six best slopes: Oberholz, Maierl, Pala di Santa, Torre di Pisa, Agnello, and Five Nations.

## Just you and nature

Eggenalpe, spanning two hundred square kilometers, is predominantly forested, making up seventy percent of the area. With a population density of forty people per square kilometer, the region promises an escape from crowds. Accommodations include merely seventeen high-quality hotels and about 140 smaller guesthouses or farm stays. For those seeking the utmost in eco-friendly experiences, the leading choices include the Natura Pfösl hotel and the organic bike-friendly Steineggerhof. The region also proudly hosts the annual World Cup in Alpine snowboarding at the Pra di Tori slope, a certified 'green event'. A cabin on the local cable car is even named after Czech skier Ester Ledecká in honor of her two victories here in 2015 and 2017 — a rare tribute in the skiing world, previously bestowed only on another Czech native, Bohumír Zeman, for his win in Kitzbühel's combination event.



Hotel Pfösl, nestled in Deutschnofen, sits on a sun-drenched plateau amid vibrant meadows and lush forests, with the majestic Latemar and Rosengarten peaks as its backdrop.

The recently launched AMA Stay, located conveniently near Kronplatz, is a haven for workation travel, offering all the essentials for a perfect blend of work and leisure.



## Workation wonders

For those who prefer not to fully detach from work while traveling, the new AMA Stay hotel near Kronplatz offers an ideal solution. Blending understated luxury with the highest standards of modern accommodation, it's designed for the rising trend of workations. You know the drill: an extended weekend is on the horizon, but work responsibilities relentlessly catch up, and business waits for no one. AMA Stay caters to such scenarios with its networking lounge and numerous spaces for focused work, plus a spa with a splendid view for unwinding post-task completion. However, if feeling at home even on vacation is key, consider staying at farms associated with the Roter Hahn group or private apartments, which in South Tyrol are typically family-run. The South Tyrolean sustainability seal, with its three levels, indicates the extent of their commitment in this regard.

## GREEN EFFORTS PAY OFF

In the Dolomites, just five hydroelectric plants supply over five thousand households and businesses with eco-friendly, CO<sub>2</sub> emission-free electricity. Additionally, two biomass heating plants from the Val d'Ega forests provide heat to over five hundred consumers, saving about 1.2 million liters of heating oil annually. The Carezza ski resort and four local hotels have joined the Alliance for Climate Neutrality 2025. They annually measure and strive to reduce or offset their CO<sub>2</sub> footprint as much as possible. The neighboring Obereggen area has operated a certified environmental management system for sixteen years, even sowing its own seed mix on ski slopes to preserve alpine meadow biodiversity. Oberholz mountain hut, a sought-after architectural gem at 2096 meters, is exclusively heated by geothermal energy. In South Tyrol, sustainability isn't just a concept; it's a serious commitment.

## Healthy adrenaline rush

What's next? The allure of South Tyrol is its never-ending array of experiences. Let the architecture of Zaha Hadid, who designed Reinhold Messner's mountaineering museum, enchant you at Kronplatz. Or, visit Tre Cime, arguably the most photogenic spot in the Dolomites year-round, just a four-and-a-half-hour hike from Auronzohütte. For adrenaline seekers visiting in summer, take on the Via Ferrata Brigata Tridentina in Alta Badia, starting at the Pisciadú waterfalls and leading up to the Schotterschlucht gorge. Test your golf skills at Golf St.Vigil, one of the world's most beautiful courses near Kastelruth, surrounded by the scenery of Seiser Alm. Or, simply wander through the surrounding forests and breathe in the healing air. You also can't go wrong by deciding to indulge in the culinary and wine delights of northern Italy.







# CASHMERE CHRONICLES



EVERY GRAM OF CASHMERE IS A TESTAMENT TO A TRADITION SPANNING MILLENNIA, CRAFTED THROUGH MONTHS OF PRECISE LABOR IN CHALLENGING CLIMATIC CONDITIONS. THIS UNFOLDS ACROSS THE EXPANSIVE STEPPES, WHERE TIME SEEMS TO STAND STILL.. TAKE A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE SCENES TO DISCOVER THE ORIGINS OF CASHMERE, CRADLED WITHIN THE RUGGED, NATURAL LANDSCAPES OF MONGOLIA AND INNER MONGOLIA.

BY ZUZANA VACOVSKÁ PHOTO COURTESY OF LORO PIANA

Snow gives way to endless sand dunes, dust rising under the hooves of horses. The air is dense, the sun blazes fiercely, and amidst the scorching plains, white goats seek shade and respite. Long white fur gently falls to the compacted earth of the yurt, as the herder trims it with large metal scissors. A year of waiting comes to an end, for both the herder and the cashmere goat. The goat is relieved of its heavy coat, and the herder harvests a remarkable wool, coveted by humanity for over six centuries. Every morning, Mongolian herders set out on horseback with their flocks across the vast, unending steppes. Untouched snow blankets the ground, the goats' hooves crunching into the radiant white crystals. Silence reigns, broken only occasionally by a man dressed in traditional Mongolian deel, calling back a stray goat, guiding it back to the invisible path towards their grazing destination. Thousands of kilometers from Ulaanbaatar, where the newest smartphones struggle for signal, it's like stepping back several centuries. Life in a yurt, timeless and amidst the beauty of harsh nature, is a stark contrast to what the Western world is accustomed to.

THE QUALITY OF  
THE FIBER IMPROVES  
THE HARSHER THE  
CONDITIONS  
IN WHICH THE  
GOATS LIVE.





## In the land of Genghis Khan

Nestled in the rugged terrains of the Altai and Helan Mountains, the expansive Gobi Desert, and the Alashan region, the cashmere goat thrives, shaping the fabric of an age-old tradition. These lands, spanning Mongolia and Inner Mongolia — an autonomous territory within China rich with the legacy of the legendary Genghis Khan — offer a stark yet majestic backdrop to this story of resilience and adaptation. Despite its vast expanse, Mongolia's population is a sparse 3 million, leaving much of the land to the untamed forces of nature, a realm where cashmere goats reign supreme. In these harsh environments, marked by high plateaus and desert expanses, the goats endure extreme temperature variations. Winters are long and arduous, springs mild yet prone to sandstorms, and summers bring scorching heat. Temperatures fluctuate wildly, soaring to 40°C (104°F) in summer and plummeting below freezing in winter. Remarkably, cashmere goats are adapted to these conditions. Their dual-layered coat is a marvel of nature: the outer layer fends off rain, sun, and dust, while the undercoat insulates warmth — and is the source of cashmere. The harvesting of the undercoat is a ritual steeped in skill and timing, executed with a specialized comb in the early spring. This delicate process, a dance of precision and instinct, is entrusted to seasoned herders. The task must be completed neither too early, to compromise quality, nor too late, to miss the shedding — and it spans six to eight painstaking weeks for each goat. In this meticulous endeavor, patience is not just a virtue, but a necessity, underscoring the time-honored legacy of cashmere.



## 300 grams per year

The journey of raw cashmere from comb to creation is an art form in itself, encompassing cleaning, sorting, dyeing, and the critical stage of spinning. This process is fundamental to the luxurious quality that cashmere is celebrated for. Each fiber, astonishingly six times finer than a strand of human hair and thrice as warm as traditional sheep's wool, is a testament to opulence. The value of cashmere lies in its delicacy and length. The finest quality, Category A, demands fibers no more than 15.5 microns in diameter and at least 35 millimeters long. Naturally available in a palette of white, light beige, brown, and gray, any other shade is a masterpiece of the dyeing process, with the purest white achieved through careful bleaching. From a single goat, only 100 to 300 grams of this precious fiber can be harvested annually. In other words, to produce one exquisite cashmere sweater requires the yield of three to five goats.



CASHMERE'S RAISING POPULARITY  
HAS UNSETTLED THE DELICATE  
BALANCE OF THE ECOSYSTEM  
IN MONGOLIA'S STEPPES.



## Billions in wool

But even the finest natural material is not enough for perfection, and it takes masterful craftsmanship to complete the equation. Perhaps no one understands the art of cashmere processing better than Loro Piana. When Pietro Antonio Loro Piana founded his first business in the Italian region of Trivero in the late 19th century, little could he have imagined that his entrepreneurial journey would extend all the way to the Mongolian steppes. The company's name, Ing. Loro Piana & Co., reflected Pietro's engineering education and the meticulous approach to production that would later define the brand's acclaim. Initially focused on wool cultivation, particularly the method native to the Biella region in Italy, the company eventually shifted its focus to cashmere, primarily sourced from Mongolia. Today, Loro Piana is over three-quarters owned by the luxury conglomerate LVMH. In 2013, Pietro's grandsons, Pier Luigi and Sergio, sold the majority of their shares to Bernard Arnault for \$1.6 billion. This sale catapulted Pier Luigi into the ranks of Italy's wealthiest entrepreneurs, while Sergio succumbed to a long-term illness in the same year.



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## Cashmere through time

A mainstay in garment-making for over six centuries, cashmere has recently witnessed a global surge in demand. However, this newfound popularity has come at a cost, disrupting the delicate ecological balance in traditional cashmere goat breeding areas and inadvertently affecting the quality of the fiber. Addressing this challenge, Loro Piana has embarked on a mission in Mongolia, working hand-in-hand with local communities. Through extensive educational programs, Loro Piana teaches local communities age-old breeding techniques that align seamlessly with natural ecosystems. Loro Piana's foray into Inner Mongolia in 2009 marked a significant turn. Here, they began bolstering the herders of the Gobi Desert, culminating in the Loro Piana Method. This innovative approach to goat breeding not only enhances the cashmere fiber's quality but also addresses the critical balance between fiber fineness and maintaining sustainable herd sizes. The method, originally piloted in the Alashan region, has since been embraced across Inner Mongolia. This delicate equilibrium between luxury and sustainability has been achieved through collaborations with illustrious institutions like Jilin Agricultural University, the Inner Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the University of Camerino, and the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development — a tapestry weaving together tradition, innovation, and ecological stewardship.

# ARCHITECT OF FLAVOR

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RODOLFO GUZMÁN PROMINENTLY POSITIONS CHILE ON THE GLOBAL GASTRONOMIC MAP, PRESENTING DISTINCTIVE DISHES FEATURING SEA URCHIN, SEA SNAILS, AND KOLLOF ALGAE. AT HIS RESTAURANT, THE BORAGÓ, THE MENU EXPLORES RARE INGREDIENTS SOURCED WORLDWIDE, AND ITS STATUS AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S FINEST IS FURTHER ENHANCED BY THE UNEXPLORED BOUNTIES OF HUNTER-GATHERERS.

BY KRISTÝNA TMEJOVÁ PHOTO COURTESY OF BORAGÓ

Foamy waves rhythmically crash against gray rocks in the ancient cadence of the tide. Where most seek only the salty Pacific breeze and ocean vistas, Rodolfo Guzmán finds his greatest treasure — ingredients. On the beaches, he gathers long brown strands of sea algae, plucks tiny green leaves, and small snails from the stones.

"A few years ago, no one even thought these seaweeds had roots, let alone that they were edible. They're full of protein, and their flavor and texture offer immense possibilities," Rodolfo says while pointing to a dark, tentacle-like entity on the sand, reminiscent of a deep-sea creature's appendage.

"We call them 'mutants' because that's how they appear on the ocean's surface. They seem alive, but it's just seaweed. I swear!" he laughs.



BORAGÓ

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## On the edge of collapse

Rodolfo is as much at home in the untamed Chilean wilderness as he is in the kitchen of his renowned Boragó restaurant and its associated laboratories on the outskirts of Santiago. There, Guzmán works magic with ingredients gathered by himself or his team from Chilean mountains, deserts, and coastlines. These unique, rare elements form the foundation of his seventeen-course menu named Endémica.

This year, Boragó holds the 29th spot in the ranking of the world's 50 best restaurants. However, Guzmán's journey to these prestigious heights was anything but smooth. When he opened Boragó in 2007, based on Chilean ingredients and a modern take on local cuisine, no one came. The restaurant faced months, even years, of emptiness, and it was uncertain whether he would have to close Boragó due to debts.

"Did I ever think about quitting? At least five times. I tried to sell the business multiple times; once, it was even a done deal, but the buyer backed out at the last minute. Fortunately," he recounts.

## Knowledge is key

At a time when owning a luxury restaurant in Chile meant importing fish from Japan and most ingredients from France, Guzmán's approach of foraging for mushrooms and snails seemed like cooking with inferior ingredients, far removed from the realm of fine dining. Yet, while he was struggling with banks and waiting for guests to arrive, Guzmán used the time to build a network of suppliers who would gather obscure weeds, berries, beetles, and sea creatures for him. In his lab and kitchen, he tirelessly tested, modified, tasted, and recorded notes, his mind constantly swirling with combinations of flavors and scents, and ideas on how to blend them to give diners a taste of Chile's natural bounty.

"For example, sea strawberries grow on rocks at the beach. They taste like fruit, look like succulents, smell like red strawberries, but the ocean gives them a salty twist," describes Guzmán, emphasizing that detailed knowledge of ingredients is crucial for chefs' growth. Building on this knowledge is like constructing on solid foundations, which is why his team, including suppliers and researchers focused on edible Chilean flora and invertebrates, now numbers over 200 people.



## Then came the world

Eventually, despite five years of hardship, guests began to find their way to Boragó. Guzmán never deviated from his path, and when his restaurant unexpectedly appeared on the list of the best Latin American restaurants a decade ago, his star began to rise sharply.

"People started coming, and they stayed," says Rodolfo. He utters that modestly, but the reality is that it was his vision that put Chile on the global culinary map, attracting guests from Australia, Asia, and Europe to Santiago, all drawn to his unique menu.

## Mushrooms in the mountains

The charismatic chef is obsessed with flavors and ingredients, much like famed Peruvian chef Virgilio Martínez, founder of Central restaurant in Lima. However, unlike Martínez, Guzmán is also passionate about architecture, and he's enamored with the way architects describe their structures.

In a similar systematic and expansive manner, Guzmán details each dish on the menu, describing the step-by-step process of its creation in his book *Boragó*, published six years ago. He dedicates entire chapters to obscure experiments, like hanging mushrooms 3,500 meters above sea level in winter to later serve them as dried ham.

"I need to thoroughly understand each ingredient to use it effectively in the kitchen," he explains. "Initially, I had one flavor noted for each ingredient in my diary. Now, after years of research, I've recorded 300 different types of umami for a single type of seaweed, depending on how you treat and process it. It's fascinating when you devote time to it."

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50 BEST  
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# HOW HONEST IS SOLEK

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IN JUST FIVE YEARS AFTER ITS EXPANSION INTO CHILE, SOLEK HAS EMERGED AS A KEY PLAYER IN THE COUNTRY'S SOLAR ENERGY MARKET, PARTLY THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF **PABLO CEPPI**, THE DIRECTOR OF ITS CHILEAN OPERATIONS. HOW DOES HE SUCCESSFULLY MERGE PROFITABILITY WITH ETHICAL BUSINESS? AND WHAT FUTURE DIRECTION IS SOLEK CHARTING IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN MARKET?

BY JAN TOMEŠ MILEC PHOTO MARIA KULAKOVA

**Solek has its roots in the Czech Republic. Could you shed some light on how it expanded its operations to Chile or Latin America as a whole?**

Like many European renewable energy companies, after the phase-out of state subsidies for renewable energy projects, particularly solar, around 2013-2015, Solek had to look for opportunities outside Europe. Chile emerged as a natural choice for several reasons. It possesses some of the best solar resources globally, a strong and open business environment that welcomes foreign direct investment, and a growing energy market focused on decarbonization. Additionally, the country offers the right incentives, like the stabilized tariff scheme, making it feasible for profitable projects with diverse financing sources. All these factors led Solek to start investing in Chile in 2018.

**What were your initial projects like in Chile?**

Initially, we began with EPC contracts to construct small-scale projects for a Canadian fund, Carbon Free. We then secured EPC contracts for another 38 MW for a Chilean fund, Rockville, in 2019. Since then, we have doubled the number of projects under development, becoming one of the largest PMGD solar project developers in Chile. As we consolidated our operations in Chile, we started expanding to other Latin American markets, initiating operations in Colombia and exploring opportunities in Peru.

**How would you describe the current landscape of the solar energy sector in Chile?**

The solar energy sector in Chile is experiencing a boom. Today, solar installed capacity constitutes over 23% of Chile's total energy capacity, surpassing hydro, carbon, and natural gas. These sources dominated the Chilean energy mix less than five years ago.

**What has contributed to this boom in the solar sector?**

The boom can be attributed to a favorable investment environment and excellent solar production conditions in Chile. Additionally, the country's commitment to decarbonize its energy matrix by phasing out coal power plants by 2040 has opened significant opportunities for renewable energy expansion. Solek has fully leveraged this opportunity, becoming one of the largest developers of small-scale solar projects in Chile. This growth has put us on the radar of many investors and potential partners. We're now scaling up to utility-scale projects, with our first 95 MWp project commencing construction this year, and aiming to reach 1 GW of installed capacity in Chile by 2027-2028.

**With the global shift towards renewable energy, what strategies has Solek adopted to remain competitive and significant in this evolving industry?**

Solek's competitive edge lies in our ability to quickly adapt to changing market conditions. We provide comprehensive solutions covering the entire project lifecycle, from opportunity identification to development, funding, construction, and O&M. We function as both an EPC provider and an IPP, diversifying not only geographically but also in our service offerings. Our strategy also includes forming partnerships with world-class companies like BlackRock and focusing on innovation, investing in pilot projects in green hydrogen, and exploring energy storage solutions.

**“ COLLABORATION WITH BLACKROCK, ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS, WAS A STRATEGIC MILESTONE. IT BROUGHT US INTO THE SPOTLIGHT OF KEY GLOBAL MARKET PLAYERS AND OPENED UP NEW FINANCING OPTIONS FOR OUR PROJECTS. ”**

**Could you delve a bit deeper into the details of your project with BlackRock and its impact?**

Our collaboration with BlackRock, one of the world's largest infrastructure funds, was a strategic milestone. It brought us into the spotlight of key global market players and opened up new financing options for our development, construction, and operation pipeline. Two years post this transaction, we have more than 500 MW in different stages of development, construction and operation in Chile, with various funding sources, including a 379 million dollar financing facility closed in May, flowing into the company.

**What are the current challenges in the solar energy industry in Chile, and how is Solek navigating them?**

The primary challenge is curtailment due to transmission system congestion, leading to lost production. This issue causes economic difficulties for companies as they struggle to honor energy contracts. Other challenges include community relations and developing projects in less suitable areas. Solek is addressing these by incorporating storage systems in our second stage portfolio development and engaging with communities early to build mutual trust.

**How does Solek balance profit-making with sustainability and social responsibility?**

That's an interesting question because I don't see any conflict between these two goals. On the contrary, by adhering to high ethical standards, we attract more investments and achieve higher profits. We work in the renewable energy sector not only for its business potential but also because everyone in our company feels the need



**“ WE HAVE BECOME ONE OF THE LARGEST LOCAL COMPANIES IN THE SOLAR ENERGY SECTOR SINCE WE STARTED OPERATING IN THE CHILEAN MARKET IN 2018. ”**

to contribute to the energy transition and help mitigate — and perhaps even overcome — climate change. At the same time, we actively engage in collaboration with local communities to achieve positive changes together. We also support diversity, even having a special internal group for this purpose. We support projects like *Energía más Mujer* (Energy and Women), an initiative of the Chilean Ministry of Energy aimed at involving more women in the energy industry. Thanks to these activities, we manage to grow. Today's largest investment firms adhere to very strict Environmental, Social, and Governance strategies and rules, so our activities in this area open up additional financing opportunities for us, like the 379 million dollar financing facilities we secured for various projects which comes from American companies with high ESG standards.

**Could you walk us through the process of how Solek's projects are conceived and executed? After all, they have a significant impact on both the country's landscape and the lives and economy of its people.**

Since 2018, when we started operating in the Chilean market, we have become one of the largest local companies in the solar energy sector. We achieved this through a combination of a bold strategy, constantly seeking new opportunities, and our ability to secure financing through long-term partnerships with key players. From the beginning, we at Solek have assembled a strong team for land acquisition, focusing on areas with sufficient capacity for connection to the energy grid. This step is, after all, the foundation of all our projects. Once we acquire the land, our technical team starts working on the connection. Parallely, we decide whether to retain the project in our portfolio or sell it to one of our partners. Regardless of the decision, our operational team conducts thorough checks, and the teams responsible for construction, procurement, and control ensure the project's realization. Although this might sound relatively simple, with a growing portfolio, new challenges naturally arise. However, because we manage everything in-house, it is easy for us to adapt to any evolving situation.

**In one of your recent interviews, you mentioned that integrating batteries could support the diversification of the energy mix. Could you expand on this idea?**

As the world shifts towards energy transformation, the need for constant availability of renewable energy increases. At the same time, it's essential to stabilize the energy system, which must integrate all these intermittent energy sources. In my opinion, batteries play a crucial role here, allowing us to balance supply and demand and stabilize

the transmission infrastructure. Therefore, we see the need to implement battery systems in all energy markets where renewable energy, especially solar and wind, is being deployed rapidly, as is the case in Chile. It's important to mention that Chile recently passed an energy storage law, establishing rules and market incentives for this technology, whether used independently or as part of hybrid systems.

**How do you see the future of solar energy globally, and especially in Chile?**

I expect the significance of solar energy to continue growing globally, with the development of increasingly smart and efficient technologies. The advancement of energy storage systems will make it common to supply energy according to need, not just during its production. This will facilitate better utilization of transmission and distribution networks and enable the integration of solar energy into a wider range of environments, from urban areas to lakes and transportation vehicles. This will make energy production more accessible and decentralized. Local communities will be able to produce, share, and store energy using microgrids, changing the business model to a demand-side approach. In terms of efficiency, new technologies will allow for the production of solar panels that require less space and produce more energy, a trend that we are already seeing in the industry. As for Chile, I expect the country to continue being a leading global player in solar energy, thanks to its favorable conditions for production and political will to support renewable sources. Future steps in the regulatory framework, like the recently approved energy storage law, will also aid in further developing the sector.

**What role will Solek play in this global development?**

Our goal is to actively participate in the development of these trends. We have already invested in battery manufacturers, such as the Czech company Enposol. In Europe, we focus on rooftop solar systems, explore agrophotovoltaics, and look for various energy storage options. We are also trying to find out how to integrate solar energy into the green hydrogen economy. Chile has great potential for implementing pilot projects in these areas, offering us opportunities for new business strategies. We are already working on several projects, such as a hydrogen-related pilot project in Chile's main port, San Antonio. Operating in both Europe and South America gives us a unique opportunity to combine experiences from different markets, opening up possibilities for testing and implementing our ideas on a global scale.

" THE SOLAR ENERGY SECTOR IN CHILE IS EXPERIENCING A BOOM. TODAY, SOLAR INSTALLED CAPACITY CONSTITUTES OVER 23% OF CHILE'S TOTAL ENERGY MIX. "



# **WELCOME TO THE METAVERSE:**

NAVIGATING THE REALM BETWEEN VISION AND REALITY



THE METAVERSE, A TERM AT THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND FANTASY, DIVIDES EXPERTS AND PUBLIC OPINION. ENVISIONED BY TECH LEADERS AS A NEW ERA OF THE INTERNET, IT BLENDS REALITY WITH THE VIRTUAL WORLD. BUT WHAT REALLY LIES BEHIND THIS CONCEPT? AND DOES IT OFFER ENOUGH NOVEL OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR DAILY LIVES?

BY PAVEL ZACH

Imagine a shopping experience in a digital store where you can view and interact with products as if they were physically in front of you. Picture attending a virtual company meeting from your couch — and later, seamlessly switching to a live concert of your favorite artist, all from the same place. These scenarios are just a peek into what the metaverse could offer. Or, more accurately, what metaverse promises at the moment.

Tech leaders like Mark Zuckerberg see the metaverse as much more than digital interaction. It's a place for immersive learning, where students can explore the solar system or historical events in an engaging 3D environment. Companies like Nvidia, known for their graphics processors, and gaming platforms such as Roblox view this as the beginning of a gaming revolution.

And in this evolving digital landscape, numerous startups and companies are emerging, creating the infrastructure for these virtual worlds. They aim to build environments that mimic real life, providing a range of experiences far richer and more diverse than current digital offerings, and reshape how we think about leisure and connectivity.

### Still wondering what it actually is?

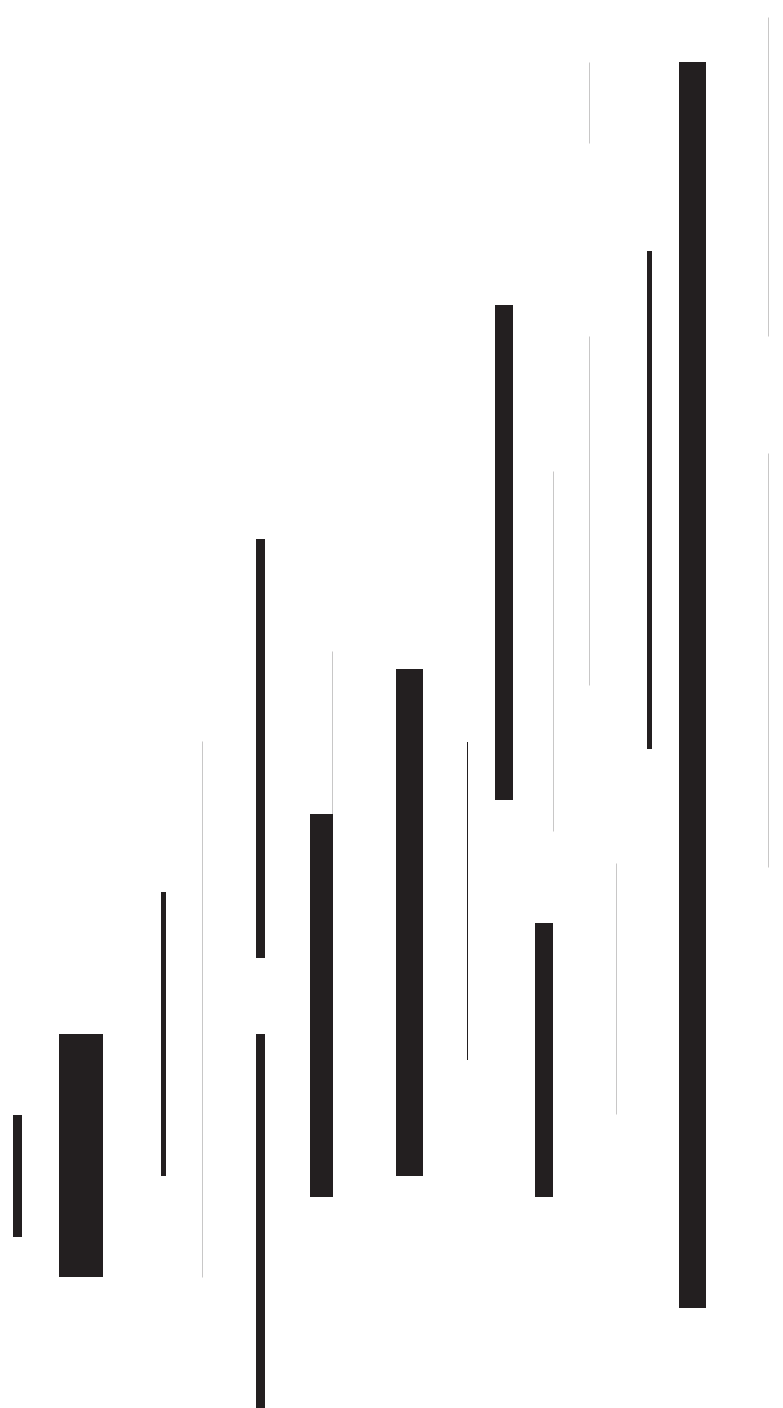
You're not alone. Even its developers haven't agreed on a definition yet. It's been two years since Facebook rebranded itself as Meta, signaling a clear commitment to this surreal reality. However, even they haven't been able to fully articulate what this future will look like. The lack of consensus on defining the metaverse, however, has its proponents. They argue that it's simply too new a concept, still evolving. Some even say the true essence of the metaverse will emerge only with its practical implementation, likening today's technology to where the internet was in the 1970s.

### Internet's unexplored depths

The fundamental idea of the metaverse goes like this: the metaverse, akin to the internet, allows users to connect to diverse online environments, offering deeper, more interactive experiences. Connections are typically made through devices like virtual reality (VR) headsets, augmented reality (AR) glasses, or even standard computers and smartphones equipped with the appropriate apps. Through these devices, users enter a digital world where they can experience and share real-time activities and interact with other avatars — virtual representations of real people. Together, they can participate in various activities regardless of their physical location.

These interactions are often enhanced by advanced technologies, such as haptic feedback, allowing users to feel digital objects through sensory gloves, or sophisticated motion tracking algorithms that accurately record and interpret users' movements in real time. All these technological elements collaborate to create a seamless and realistic environment, blurring the lines between the physical and digital worlds.

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SINCE FACEBOOK  
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## New forms on interaction

While the metaverse is currently a hot topic, it raises the question of how much of its concept is true innovation versus marketing hype. It promises to transform how we interact with the digital world, but in reality, it also faces many challenges in the physical one.

Let's review: Not everyone has top-tier VR headsets at home, which currently start at around \$499.99.

Furthermore, the metaverse requires constant, flawless connectivity, a feat often unachievable even in large cities, let alone rural areas. Additionally, unique use cases that clearly distinguish this novelty from the existing digital infrastructure are lacking.

## Digital gangsters abound

Security risks in the metaverse cannot be overlooked.

To create a virtual avatar, individuals provide sensitive information, including biometric data. It's still unclear how this data will be protected and handled. Another significant concern is financial fraud, particularly in relation to virtual markets and transactions, where cybercriminals can target users' digital wallets and the transactions themselves. An environment where interactions are mediated through virtual representations of people is a prime hunting ground for fraudsters with fake identities, and the potential for one's avatar to be easily replicated or misused poses yet another risk in this virtual landscape.

LUXURY FASHION  
BRANDS LIKE GUCCI  
AND BALENCIAGA  
HAVE ALREADY  
PLUNGED INTO THE  
METAVERSE, CREATING  
PURCHASABLE DIGITAL  
CLOTHING FOR  
CUSTOMERS' AVATARS.

## Not much ado about billions

Despite its challenges, the virtual realm of the metaverse is becoming an important commercial space, with some companies already reaping substantial profits. A notable success story is Epic Games, the creator of the popular game Fortnite, which has transformed the game into something akin to a social platform. Thanks to the metaverse, Fortnite has now become a virtual space for concerts, friend gatherings, and, of course, brand events, opening new revenue streams for the company.

## Nothing comes for free

Luxury fashion brands like Gucci and Balenciaga have already plunged into the metaverse. They've integrated metaverse elements into their marketing strategies, showcasing new products in virtual spaces. Customers even had the chance to purchase exclusive digital clothing for their avatars. Educational platforms, like the popular app Duolingo, are also experimenting with this new technology. They've begun using metaverse elements to provide more realistic language learning experiences, where students can virtually meet and converse with native speakers or learn in contextually relevant scenarios. Every technological innovation has its downsides, including economic risks. The metaverse requires significant investment, with returns not always guaranteed, as demonstrated by the losses of Meta, which suffered a \$13.7 billion deficit in 2022 and subsequently laid off over ten thousand employees.

## Progress, where?

It remains uncertain whether we will spend the coming decades immersed in virtual environments or if the metaverse will be limited to specific applications. The metaverse has the potential to be a breakthrough that bridges the gaps between the virtual and physical worlds, particularly through the integration of artificial intelligence, which could enable the creation of dynamic and personalized digital environments. Scientists and developers are also working on Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technology, which would allow for controlling virtual environments through thoughts alone.

## Dawn of a new civilization

The aspects of the metaverse extend beyond technology to encompass social and cultural dimensions. It has the potential to become a melting pot where various cultures intersect and new communities are built, offering unprecedented opportunities for education and artistic creation. Undoubtedly, the metaverse is a concept with the potential to fundamentally change not only how we interact with technology but also the very essence of our daily lives. However, as with all technologies, it's crucial to critically approach and carefully consider all the possibilities and risks associated with this innovation known as the metaverse.

**ESG UNVEILED:**

**ESSENTIAL  
INSIGHTS**

IN RECENT YEARS, ESG HAS TRANSFORMED FROM A BUZZWORD TO A PIVOTAL STRATEGY FOR COMPANIES AND INVESTORS ALIKE. IT'S A TREND SHAPING THE FLOW OF BILLIONS IN INVESTMENT DOLLARS, PRIORITIZING PLANETARY AND SOCIETAL IMPACT OVER MERE FINANCIAL GAINS. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT ESG'S RISING INFLUENCE.

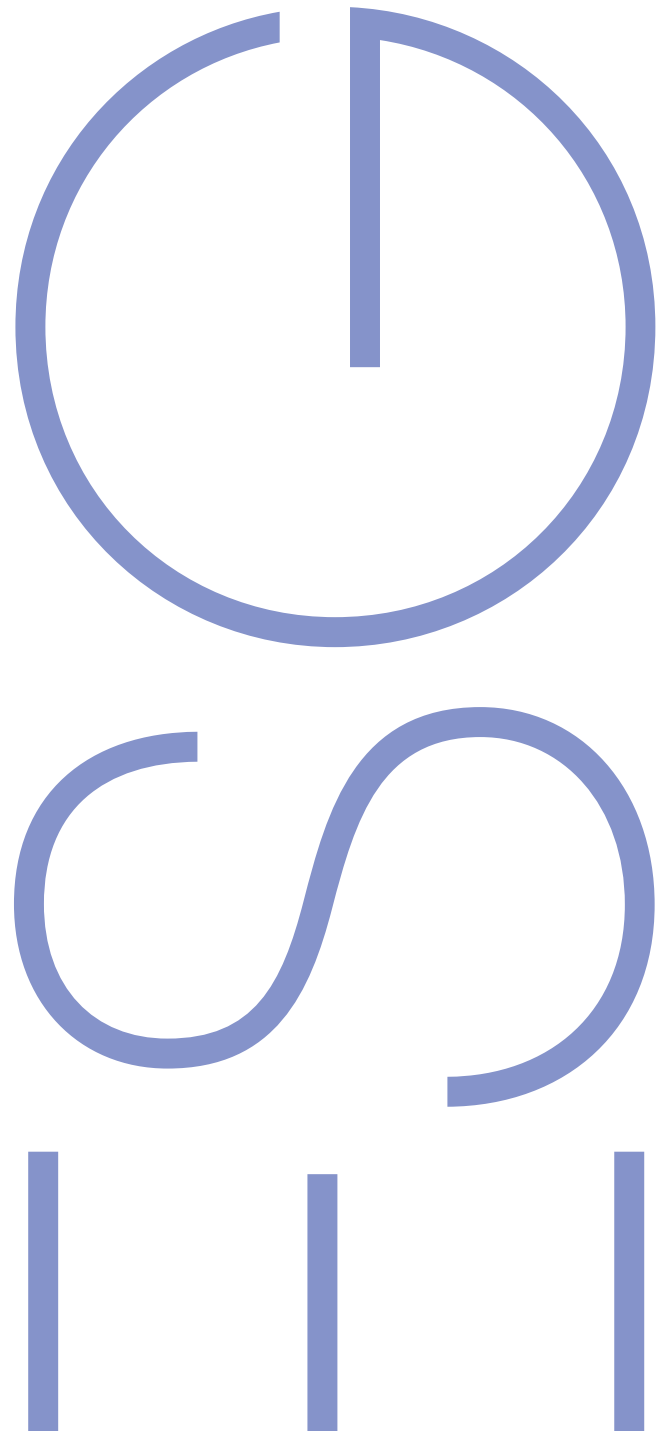
BY TOMÁŠ BENDA

The acronym ESG, derived from the initial letters of Environmental, Social, and Governance, is designed to encourage major corporations to contribute positively to the world. The focus of ESG is on the impact these corporations have on the environment and society, in addition to their leadership and management of internal processes.

The 'Environmental' aspect includes greenhouse gas emissions, toxic substance production, water and energy usage, and waste management. The 'Social' element evaluates how companies manage the health, safety, and well-being of their employees, their commitment to equal opportunities, and product safety. The 'Governance' component scrutinizes the upper echelons of corporate leadership, including their independence, compensation, corporate culture, and shareholder rights, along with tax transparency, risk management, whistleblowing, and compliance.

### Investing in the future

Currently, more than 95% of American corporations report ESG-related information. This data is critical for investment funds in determining whether these companies meet the standards of responsible business practices, and the interest among investors in exclusively ESG-aligned assets has surged dramatically, with nearly 90% of investors now incorporating ESG criteria into their investment choices. Regarding financial performance, there are varied comparisons, often dependent on the comparer's methodology. Typically, the reality is nuanced, often slightly skewed towards ESG. For example, the MSCI World Index's ESG variant, the MSCI World ESG Leaders, has outperformed the traditional index with an annual rate of 8.93% over the last five years, compared to 8.34%. Given the substantial investment influx into ESG assets, it is anticipated that responsible investments will continue to excel, driven by this growing trend.



STARTING IN 2024, THE CSRD DIRECTIVE WILL REQUIRE COMPANIES WITH OVER 250 EMPLOYEES TO MANDATORILY REPORT THEIR ESG OUTCOMES.

IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, THIS WILL AFFECT OVER A THOUSAND COMPANIES. UNDER CSRD, MORE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FIRMS WILL HAVE IMPROVED ACCESS TO BANK FINANCING.

## MANDATORY REPORTING AHEAD

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## 89% OF INVESTORS CONSIDER ESG

A 2022 study by Capital Group revealed this trend.

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## LEAGUE OF RESPONSIBILITY

BASED ON ESG CRITERIA, THE TOP THREE SPOTS IN THE 2023 RANKING BY THE NONPROFIT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION JUST CAPITAL WERE HELD BY BANK OF AMERICA, NVIDIA, AND MICROSOFT.

# EUROPE LEADS THE WAY

Responsible investing is particularly flourishing in Europe. At the end of 2022, Europe accounted for 83% of ESG fund assets, compared to only 11% in the USA. According to a 2022 Capital Group study, ESG is fundamental to the investment strategy of 31% of European investors, compared to just 18% in North America.

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## YOUTH DRIVING THE CHANGE

A study by Stanford University found that about two-thirds of Generation Z and millennial investors are very interested in environmental and social issues, whereas only the same percentage of investors over 58 are somewhat or not at all interested. Younger investors are also more willing to accept lower returns for ESG goals. The average investor between 20 and 30 years old would be willing to lose 6 to 10% of their investments, according to the study, compared to the average baby boomer investor who wouldn't.

# HERE TO STAY

**ONLY 13% OF INVESTORS VIEW ESG AS A SHORT-TERM TREND. ACCORDING TO 56% OF INVESTORS, ESG PORTFOLIOS WILL BECOME THE NORM WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.**

**Enhance your ESG portfolio by incorporating corporate bonds from SOLEK HOLDING, a seasoned player with 13 years of expertise in the design, construction, and management of solar power plants across Europe and Latin America.**

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Yield: 9% p. a.  
Maturity: December 6, 2024

## Long-term survival

**77% OF ESG FUNDS THAT EXISTED 10 YEARS AGO ARE STILL ACTIVE. ONLY 46% OF TRADITIONAL FUNDS HAVE SURVIVED THE LAST DECADE.**

**MORE STABLE  
BY 20%**

Research by Morgan Stanley showed that ESG funds had 20% less downturn than traditional investment tools between 2004 and 2018. Additionally, Fidelity International reports that companies with high-quality ESG ratings have seen their dividends grow by more than 5% on average over the last five years.

## NUMBERS CAN BE DECEPTIVE

**ESG ratings can vary depending on the fund or agency. For instance, the Saudi Arabian oil company Saudi Aramco is rated as a high risk by Sustainalytics, but average by MSCI and Refinitiv stock indexes.**



# Crime & punishment

ACCORDING TO A PWC SURVEY, 76% OF CONSUMERS WILL STOP BUYING FROM COMPANIES IF THEY FIND OUT THEY BEHAVE POORLY TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT, THEIR EMPLOYEES, OR THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH THEY OPERATE.

## GOOD FEELING in return

In 2021, 7 out of 13 ESG index funds achieved returns over 30%. The overall average return was 29.19%. The S&P 500 Index grew by 28.66%.

# A NEW

## standard

Analytical firm PwC estimates that institutional investments focusing on ESG will increase by 84% in 2026, representing 21.5% of all managed assets.

## FAKE IT AND YOU WON'T MAKE IT

A study by NYU Stern School of Business found that companies focusing on ESG improve their financial performance over the long term. However, if a company only claims to have an ESG strategy but doesn't actually implement it, their financial results do not improve.



# MATERIAL WORLD

GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN CONVENTIONAL MATERIALS DOMINATED DESIGN FAIR TREND REPORTS. WHILE PLASTICS HAVE AN IRREPLACEABLE ROLE IN COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION, BEHIND THE SCENES, NEW AND EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS ARE GRADUALLY MAKING HEADWAY. IN THE SPIRIT OF SUSTAINABILITY, WE ENCOUNTER PIECES MADE FROM INDUSTRIAL WASTE, MYCELIUM, OR EVEN SHELL CASINGS. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THESE CREATIONS TRANSITION FROM EXCLUSIVE EXHIBITIONS TO OUR HOMES.

BY JAN TOMĚŠ MILEC PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRANDS AND DESIGNERS

This evolution was already evident with cork, which began appearing at international showcases in Milan, Paris, and Shanghai towards the end of the last decade. Just a few years ago, such furniture was considered a novelty, but today, it has entered mainstream production, championed by designers like the French Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance. For his collection of chairs and tables, he utilized discarded burnt cork — crafting each piece from cork blocks similar to those used in construction for insulation. The Burnt Cork edition by Duchaufour-Lawrance was inspired by his life in Portugal, where he moved in 2017 and established his studio. The ergonomically designed, smoothly curved seats and backrests were created using a unique method that involves blending and binding cork granules in molds. Each component then requires sixteen hours of boiling, followed by six weeks of drying. The designer's commitment to sustainable design doesn't compromise visual appeal, as evidenced by the gradient effect achieved during production using cork granules of varying sizes



Designer Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance's cork furniture, originating from the picturesque hills of Portugal.

## Compromise-free alternative

British mainstream designer Tom Dixon also devoted a series of furniture to cork, exploring its relationship with fire. His collection, including a shelving unit, a stool, and three tables, is made from charred cork — this time to give the material a deep brown hue reminiscent of rosewood.

The line, which is distinguished not just by its shade but also by its rounded silhouettes showcasing the material, has received praise from critics and Dixon himself. "Cork is the material of the future. It's naturally beautiful and sound-absorbing. It's fire-resistant, waterproof, and lighter than water, making it easy to manipulate and transport. It's a designer's dream," Dixon remarked in an interview with Wallpaper magazine. "Plus, it doesn't waste natural resources. Once you plant a cork oak, it continuously produces material for use," he added.

## Furniture from the fields...

The rising popularity of cork is evident, as even the global retailer IKEA has incorporated it into recent collections.

Designers, however, are now scouting for other materials that embody the spirit of sustainability and hold potential for mass production. Straw is one such material, which, despite its inherent flatness and fragility, is being transformed by trendsetters into three-dimensional, functional forms. A shining example is the recent Exquisite Corpse series by Adam and Arthur Studio, featuring three handcrafted furniture pieces. Crafted with the help of artisan carpenters, these vividly colored standalone pieces were adorned with straw marquetry, a technique where thin, flattened strips of rye straw are handcrafted into decorative patterns.

American company Normandie Woodworks also employed this straw modification technique, enhancing a series of cabinets with creamy and milky tones of rye straw. In these pieces, straw ribbons replaced the surfaces and fillings typically made of wood.

## ...and from the test tube

The roots of this straw treatment, however, can be traced back to the 17th century, with a resurgence experienced during the Art Deco movement. So, it's not exactly a groundbreaking novelty, unlike the following material, which has been under development in laboratories for nearly two decades. And judging by the diversity of products made from mycelium — a network of interwoven fibers characteristic of fungi and some bacteria — this experimental substance seems ready for everyday use, at least in households that favor extravagant details. London-based designer Nir Meiri, tired of using synthetic materials, created a functional series of table lamps from such fungal mycelium. The lampshades are crafted from the vegetative part of the fungus, while the base and stand are made of more conventional metal. During production, paper waste is placed in a molded form, into which mycelium spores are inserted and allowed to grow under controlled temperature and humidity conditions. Each lamp is illuminated from below by a separate light source, casting a soft, natural glow through the mycelium shade.



Tables crafted from charred cork by Tom Dixon take on a rich brown tone, reminiscent of the luxurious rosewood.



1.

**1.** Straw reimagined as a futuristic material in Adam and Arthur Studio's Exquisite Corpse furniture collection and Normandie Woodworks' panel cladding and inlays. **2.** Furniture that grows? Designers are boldly experimenting with mycelium for mass production. **3.** Danish designer Bonnie Hvilum crafts unique bowls and plates from clay infused with powdered mussel shells.

## In the shadows

Dutch designer Morgan Ruben has taken mycelium experimentation a step further with his Luminosa lamps, inspired by the way bioluminescent worms attract prey. He cultivated the material in an aluminum leaf-shaped mold mixed with hemp fiber.

"The mycelium grows among the hemp fibers, transforming into a solid mass," explains Ruben. Growing a single leaf takes one to two weeks, depending on the desired color. A lighter leaf forms in a week, while another two weeks yield a darker, marbled shade.

It goes without saying that all products created through bacterial or fungal growth are entirely natural and easily biodegradable, leaving no residual waste, making them current champions of the sustainability movement. And did you know that maison Hermès itself has begun producing men's bags from fungal mycelium to offer an alternative to leather luggage?



2.

DANISH DESIGNER BONNIE HVILLUM CRAFTS BOWLS AND PLATES FROM A SPECIAL CLAY TYPE, MADE MOSTLY FROM POWDERED MUSSEL SHELLS SUPPLIED BY THE RENOWNED COPENHAGEN RESTAURANT NOMA.

### Noma's delightful waste

However, approaches to sustainable design there are many.

While some designers are engaging microorganisms, others are working with materials derived from all kinds of waste. Recycled plastic is already a part of our everyday lives, from utensils to decorations. But what about ceramics made from crustacean shells? Danish designer Bonnie Hvilum crafts bowls and plates from a special clay type, made mostly from powdered mussel shells supplied by the renowned Copenhagen restaurant Noma. In collaboration with marine life experts, Hvilum discovered that heating the shells transforms calcium carbonate into calcium oxide, creating a basic material similar to the ash used in porcelain production.

"When I started heating the shells to 900 degrees, all the organic matter burned off, and I began to understand what was left: pure calcium oxide," explains the designer.





1.

1. & 2. Repurposing waste into chic home accessories is trending, from stylish eggshell claddings to innovative bowls crafted from leftover mussel shells.

## 90 million tons of possibilities

Similarly themed, a collection of cutlery, bowls, and plates was introduced two years ago by Viennese designer Barbara Gollackner. Her collection also emerged from food industry waste, but the creator took an even more radical approach.

"Europe throws away ninety million tons of food annually and also produces about thirty million tons of waste from disposable tableware. I thought, why not combine these two problems and try to make new materials from food waste," commented the designer on the idea for *Dezeen* magazine.

What did she eventually use to create the tableware set? Pork skins or old bread. The raw materials were either dried or boiled, then blended into a smooth paste — which she combined with the previously mentioned mycelium. Gollackner admits that her products are still in a purely experimental phase, but she is gradually reaching prototypes ready for practical use, including dishwasher safety.

## Colors of new visions

But let's go back to more practical realms of design. There, Mexican designer Moisés Hernández has embarked on replacing synthetic toxic compounds used for dyeing wooden furniture with pigments made from insects. This method gave birth to the Grana chairs, which debuted at the 2022 Milan Salone del Mobile fair.

Also premiering there was the *CARrelé* collection by textile designer Elaine Yan Ling Ng, who created an innovative and colorful range of wall tiles from eggshells thrown away by bakeries. Incidentally, these shells would otherwise decompose, contributing to methane emissions.



2.





This table combines veneers from a variety of Tasmanian woods, including Huon pine, eucalyptus, Tasmanian oak, celery pine, sassafras, myrtle, and blackwood.

LONDON-BASED  
DESIGNER BRODIE  
NEILL CREATES  
BEAUTIFUL OBJECTS  
USING VENEERS OF  
TREES IN A FLOODED  
TASMANIAN FOREST.

## Zero-waste progress

All the projects mentioned above share a growing need among designers to minimize the environmental impact of furniture and interior design production.

One such approach is 3D printing, utilized by the Rotterdam-based studio The New Raw to recycle defective items and prototypes. These were chopped into small pieces, melted into printer material, and then used to create the monoblock Ermis chair.

The same zero-waste approach was employed by London's Pearson Lloyd and 3D manufacturing studio Batch.Works. Together, for office brand Bene, they crafted pen cups, trays, and mobile phone stands from discarded food packaging.

## Sources of beauty

London-based designer Brodie Neill demonstrates that virtually anything can be used to create beautiful objects with his crafting of the oval dining table ReCoil from veneers of trees in a flooded Tasmanian forest. The table blends veneers from Huon pine, eucalyptus, Tasmanian oak, celery pine, sassafras, myrtle, and blackwood, all sourced from the Pieman River valley.

In the 1980s, the construction of a hydroelectric dam created a lake, resulting in the loss of a pristine forest area. It was an ecological tragedy whose impact is irreversible. However, thanks to designers who continually push the boundaries of sustainability, we can hope that in the future, not a single tree, shell, or slice of bread will be wasted.



SOLEK's recent offsite in the Czech Republic was a vibrant celebration of culture and collaboration, bringing together teams from Chile, Colombia, and Czechia. In today's digital age, where virtual connections often eclipse in-person interactions, such moments of real connection are invaluable. The event was a testament to the power of personal engagement, enriching our team with a blend of familiar warmth and fresh insights. Nestled in the heart of Europe, our Czech headquarters symbolizes SOLEK's expanding global presence. Welcoming our international colleagues to this central hub was not just a meeting of minds, but a celebration of our diverse, yet unified, global family.

#OFFSITE

## Green beginnings over breakfast

This fall marked a significant milestone for SOLEK HOLDING SE with the unveiling of our inaugural ESG report, which we celebrated over a delicious breakfast. Our Group Compliance Officer Ljuba Kovačević presented the results of our first carbon footprint calculation, among other key metrics from the report. The event sparked engaging discussions on climate change's driving forces and the crucial role of renewable energy in reducing our planet's carbon footprint as Miltos Georgios, Luis Martínez, and Carolina Chandia shared inspiring case studies from our projects in Chile and Cyprus, showcasing our commitment to sustainability.





## Spooky spirits soar

## at SOLEK

Halloween at SOLEK Chile was an absolute blast. The office transformed into a playground of ghouls, laughter, and creativity as everyone brought their best costume game, adding a touch of whimsy to the workday. It was a celebration of spooky fun and team spirit that will be remembered long after the last jack-o'-lantern flickers out.

## EXCELLENCE ACHIEVED

We are happy to share that SOLEK has finally achieved sought-after ISO certifications, culminating a rigorous nine-month process. This milestone is a testament to the exemplary leadership and guidance of our Group Quality & CI Manager, Stefan Tichy. His dedication to embedding the principles of the Quality Management System and continuously improving our management processes and construction of photovoltaic power plants has been pivotal. This accomplishment not only signifies our adherence to the highest quality standards and commitment to environmental protection in renewable energy development but also reinforces our dedication to occupational health and safety. This achievement further solidifies SOLEK's position as a leader in the renewable energy sector, reflecting our unwavering commitment to quality, environmental stewardship, and the well-being of our employees.



RAPID RELIEF EFFORT IN GREECE



In the wake of the devastating floods in Greece, SOLEK sprang into action, providing essential water supplies to the impacted areas near our projects in Domokos. A total of 588 6-packs of 1.5-litre water bottles and 280 24-packs of 500-millilitre bottles were swiftly procured and delivered to the village of Sofiada, offering a lifeline to those in dire need. The local community representatives played a crucial role in storing and distributing the water, ensuring it reached those most affected. The effort was overseen by SOLEK Greece's Georgios Stylios and Konstantinos Papanikolaou, while the procurement and distribution were expertly managed by Vasiliki Stamati and Aikaterini Zygouli. Their dedication and quick thinking provided much-needed relief during a critical time. Thank you to all involved in this compassionate endeavor.

# Wish You a Merry Planet



At a recent SOLEK company breakfast, employees were offered an unconventional perk: the opportunity to take home a tree and plant it wherever they choose. This initiative is part of SOLEK's ESG strategy, promoting sustainability and responsible environmental stewardship. Employees were given the chance to actively engage in improving ecological conditions and contribute to increasing greenery in their communities. This innovative approach not only enhances environmental awareness but also allows staff members to make a tangible, green difference.

# františek jungvirt.

## UNVEILING ELEGANCE IN GLASS

In the chic setting of Prague 5, glass artist extraordinaire František Jungvirt has opened the doors to his own showroom, a space where artistry and elegance converge. Located within the contemporary PARVI Cibulka complex, the showroom is a celebration of Jungvirt's unique vision in glass design. Here, visitors can immerse themselves in a curated collection of his works, from the enchanting vases of the Garden Collection to the avant-garde pieces of the Fashion Glass Series, and bespoke crystal vases created for the House of Lobkovicz. Each visit, personally hosted by Jungvirt, promises an exclusive insight into the craftsmanship and creativity behind each masterpiece. A rendezvous with the artist can be arranged, inviting you to step into his world of refined glass art.

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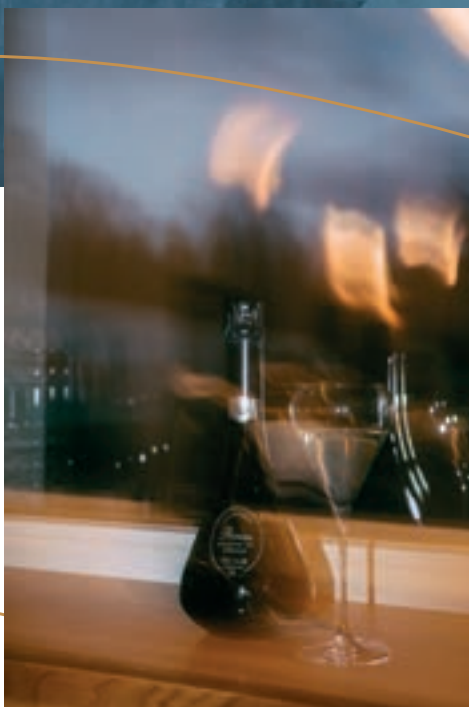
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