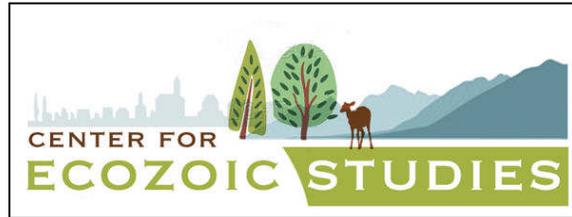


# CES Monthly Musings

April 2010

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*Seeking integral community  
in an ecological age . . . .*

**“Ecozoic” means “house of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” means a society of life.**

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**The “Ecozoic Era” is a time of mutually enhancing relationships  
among humans and the larger community of life.**

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**The “Great Work” is living the promise of the ecozoic.**

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**In this issue:** “Integrating Development and Climate Change Ethics,” “Ecological (or Climate) Debt,” and “Wolfgang Sachs on Absolute Ethics,” each by Herman Greene.

## **INTEGRATING DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ETHICS**

On April 15-16, 2010, I attended a conference at Penn State University sponsored by the Rock Ethics Institute, <http://rockethics.psu.edu/>, on “Integrating Development and Climate Change Ethics.”

The theme of the conference was:

Climate change raises many civilization challenging ethical questions for the human community. Yet, the study of climate change ethics as a serious focus of ethical inquiry is less than a decade old. The study of the ethical obligations of citizens of the world to assure that the poorest people of the world are able to live a life of dignity is often discussed under the category of development ethics. Development ethics as a focus of serious inquiry has a longer history than climate change ethics. Up until recently climate change ethics and development ethics have developed independently of each other for the most part. Because climate change can adversely affect the ability of human development prospects and climate change policies should take into account human development needs, there is a need to integrate climate change and human development ethics.

## ECOLOGICAL (OR CLIMATE) DEBT

One of my biggest takeaways from this conference was gaining an understanding of “ecological debt.” The rich nations (sometimes called the “North,” the developed countries or the first world) have used up the carbon “sinks” of the atmosphere and exploited the world’s natural resources at a time the poor nations (sometimes called the “South” or the developing countries or the third world or even the “two-thirds world”) have growing populations and are undertaking their own development.

While this claim is little known to people in the North generally, it is a really big issue in the South. A good statement of this claim was made in Bolivia’s submission to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)] last fall:

The climate debt of developed countries must be repaid, and this payment must begin with the outcomes to be agreed in Copenhagen. Developing countries are not seeking economic handouts to solve a problem we did not cause. What we call for is full payment of the debt owed to us by developed countries for threatening the integrity of the Earth’s climate system, for over-consuming a shared resource that belongs fairly and equally to all people, and for maintaining lifestyles that continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of the poor majority of the planet’s population. This debt must be repaid by freeing up environmental space for developing countries and particular the poorest communities.

There is no viable solution to climate change that is effective without being equitable. Deep emission reductions by developed countries are a necessary condition for realizing the Earth’s climate. So too are profoundly larger transfers of technologies and financial resources than so far considered, if emissions are to be curbed in developing countries and they are also to realize their right to development and achieve their overriding priorities of poverty eradication and economic and social development. Any solution that does not ensure an equitable distribution of the Earth’s limited capacity to absorb greenhouse gases, as well as the costs of mitigating and adapting to climate change, is destined to fail.

Posted at <http://www.ecologicaldebt.org/News/EVO-MORALES-to-the-AWG-LCA-under-the-UNFCCC.html> .  
Read full text at <http://www.ecologicaldebt.org/documentos/bolivia250409.pdf>

## WOLFGANG SACHS ON ABSOLUTE ETHICS

Wolfgang Sachs, Head of the Berlin Office of the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy was a featured keynote speaker at the conference. Thomas Berry often cited Dr. Sachs book *Planetary Dialectic: Explorations in Environment and Development*, and *The Jo’Burg Memo* (2002) prepared for the Second World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, of which Dr. Sachs was coordinator and editor (full text available at [http://www.worldsummit2002.org/publications/memo\\_en\\_with.pdf](http://www.worldsummit2002.org/publications/memo_en_with.pdf) ). I have read both of these and consider each a classic. I have also read *Fair Future: Resource Conflicts*,

*Security and Global Justice* (2007), by the staff of the Wuppertal Institute and co-edited by Dr. Sachs and Tilman Santarius, and highly recommend it. Dr. Sachs also edited *The Development Dictionary* (Second Edition, 2010), the Preface of which will be referenced in the text below.

Here is a report on Dr. Sachs' talk (supplemented):

### **Scenes of Climate Change**

He began by reporting on how climate change is affecting peoples of the world. In fall 2009 he visited Bolivia's Chacaltaya glacier, home o a ski resort in the 1990s. Here's a picture from 2007.



Dr. Sachs reported that when he visited not even this much was left. There were only two patches of ice, each no bigger than a tennis court.

This glacier does not, however, feed La Paz. A glacier-fed reservoir below the Tuni Condoriri is an important source of water for La Paz, especially in the dry season. The glaciers in that mountain chain are also rapidly retreating. Over two million people live in the La Paz metropolitan area.

Glaciers in the Greater Himalayan Mountain range are also melting. Great rivers of the world, the Indus, Ganges, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow rivers, serving Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Southeast Asia and China, are fed by these glaciers. (For an excellent article on this, see Orville Schnell, "The Message from the Glaciers," *New York Review of Books*, May 27, 2010, available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/may/27/message-from-the-glaciers/> ).

This led Dr. Sachs to state that climate change is not about polar bears, it is about people. It's not about economic competitiveness, it's about life and death.

### **What Happened at Copenhagen**

Dr. Sachs made these observations about the December 2009 Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

There were these conflicts: The first was between the old industrial countries and the newly industrializing countries. Under the Kyoto Protocol 40 countries were listed as industrialized (the old industrial countries) and listed on Annex I. These countries were to make by 2012 a 5.2% reduction in greenhouse gases (GHG) over 1990 levels. In addition, 23 of those countries were listed in Annex II, which obligated them to provide financial resources to developing countries to assist in the pursuit of clean development and also adaptation to the effects of climate change. A key principle behind the Kyoto Protocol was that of "common but differentiated responsibilities" based on the understanding that "developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial

activity.” Under this principle, such developing countries as China and India (the newly industrializing countries) were exempted from emissions targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

Dr. Sachs observed that the newly industrializing countries came to Copenhagen seeking to obtain more support from the powerful countries under the principles of the Kyoto Protocol. The powerful countries, however, came to the conference seeking a new legal mode, namely a universal framework to cover all the major emitting countries, including the newly industrializing countries.

The industrial countries showed themselves to be culturally and economically impotent, unable to change. The Kyoto Protocol itself was founded on something of a lie. The measuring date of 1990 was picked for a reason. This was when the Berlin wall fell and the economies of Eastern Europe and Russia collapsed. Because of this, the Annex I countries were able to show reductions over 1990 levels in Copenhagen, but taking into account the emissions of the United States and other factors, there were no reductions. Further, given the ability of Eastern Europe and Russia to carry over the gains resulting from the economic collapse of the 1990s, taking Kyoto forward would actually result in a 2-8% increase in emissions of industrialized countries by 2020, rather than the 25-40% reduction called for.

The United States was something of a rogue country coming into Copenhagen because it alone among the Annex I countries had not ratified the Kyoto Protocol. At Copenhagen, the EU, at the expense of the South, tried to woo the United States into agreement by supporting the United States' call for a universal framework and downplaying economic and technological support under the UNFCCC for non-Annex I countries. The United States advocated abandoning the targets in the Kyoto Protocol by Annex I countries in favor of nationally self-developed targets. Russia and Japan announced they would not continue their Kyoto commitments after 2011 under the current arrangement. The South, however, insisted that the North must lead the way with binding legal targets for GHG reductions. The North failed to put a serious offer on the table during Copenhagen that would meet the needs of the developing countries.

A second kind of conflict occurred among the developing nations between the industrializing countries and the least developed countries, which are also called the “most vulnerable countries,” those island states and African nations who are most vulnerable to climate change. Representatives of the Maldives held a meeting under water to emphasize that their land was at risk of being covered with rising seas. Tuvalu submitted a proposal that it wanted to function alongside of the Kyoto Protocol, a proposal that would impose a binding GHG framework on all countries and call for a maximum temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius as opposed to the 2.0 degree target (450 ppm of GHG) in the Kyoto Protocol. The most vulnerable countries were afraid of triage under which some nations would just have to die while others are saved. China, India, South Africa, Brazil, India, China and Saudi Arabia, all industrializing countries not included in Annex I, resisted this move.

Sensing that no agreement was going to be reached on the proposals that the two UNFCCC working groups brought to Copenhagen, Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark, who was the presiding officer at the conference, on December 16, two days before the conference was to end, brought forward a proposal from Denmark that he said substantially carried forward the

proposals from the working groups. The developing countries strongly objected to this proposal, and it was abandoned.

Concerned that this massive conference, which was attended by 120 heads of state and 40,000 other people, would end without an agreement, the Danish launched a “Friends of the Chair” group parallel to the larger conference. On December 17, Hillary Clinton arrived and saved the talks from collapse by backing a \$100 billion-a-year fund for developing countries by 2020. There was no agreement, however, on how these funds would be raised or on whether developed countries would simply re-label development funds as climate funds to meet this goal. On December 18 Barak Obama arrived. After a not-too-well received speech, he wandered into a meeting of the representatives of Brazil, South Africa, India and China (the “BASIC” countries) and reached agreement on the key issues that became the “Copenhagen Accord.”

At 3 a.m. on Saturday, the 19<sup>th</sup> (the conference was scheduled to end on the 18<sup>th</sup>), Prime Minister Rasmussen re-opened the conference plenary and sought support for the Accord. The Accord provoked even more objections than the proposal of the 16<sup>th</sup>. It was criticized on the grounds of process and content, especially by the most vulnerable countries. In the end, after more than 12 hours of negotiations on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Accord was not adopted. Rather, the conference simply “took note” of it. A thorough report on Copenhagen by the Wuppertal Institute, entitled “Something Was Rotten [in] Copenhagen” may be found at [http://www.wupperinst.org/en/info/entwd?beitrag\\_id=1350](http://www.wupperinst.org/en/info/entwd?beitrag_id=1350) .

### **What Is the Moral Community?**

Dr. Sachs next discussed what is the relevant moral community when speaking about climate change and development ethics. Now, he said, we are dealing with biospherical justice. What are humans allowed to do vis-à-vis other species? And we are dealing with intergenerational justice. What do we owe to those who come after us and what can future generations expect of the present generation. We have the power to reap advantages when resources are used and push the burdens and costs elsewhere to some lower group or another generation.

We also have the question of justice within our own generation. There are two ideas of such justice. One is justice as equality, distributive justice. This is relative and comparative in nature. I understand my position only if I look at you. This kind of justice calls for a proportional allocation of prestige, power, resources and assets. The logic is to level the inequalities.

Development becomes a shibboleth for expressing a desire for equality. The Gini coefficient is used to measure differences of income and wealth internationally. Swaziland is compared with South Africa and there is a tremendous drive to overcome the disparities. This offers a narrow vision of a desire for wealth and economic power, even greed.

But we have to remember that achieving wealth when that is the universal measure of worth is also a drive for self-esteem. China wants to grow economically, but it also wants to show the world that it is no longer weak. For 150 years China was humbled by other countries. Now to remedy that feeling of humiliation is the deepest drive.

A second idea of justice is justice as dignity. According to this view when one comes into the world, one has some rightful claims . . . claims for water, a right to work, to eat, to participate, to express oneself. Here the focus is on absolute values not relative values. It doesn't matter what another has, the right to dignity is noncomparative.

These two ideas of justice may collide. They do not live harmoniously with each other. The struggle for development can be conducted at the expense of existential rights. This is in fact what is happening. The drive to develop is at the expense of the weak, the cultures of indigenous people, small farmers who lose their land, urban settlers displaced by high rise buildings. The idea of development through economic growth feeds by eating away at the social and natural heritage. The shiny side of development hides a dark side of displacement and degradation.

This plays out in climate change. The equality principle says--All people have equal rights to the atmosphere, yet fossil combustion is our source of economic power. We use the atmosphere as a dumping ground. Rich nations are rich in fossil resources. So this is a conflict about economic power and who has a right to grow. The situation is such now that even if the industrialized world were to disappear, the South alone could cause ongoing climate chaos.

The Southern countries are fearful that restraints on their emissions will nail them down in a state of underdevelopment. The structures of power are consolidated in the North and they only get the cooperation of the South when fairness becomes a necessity. For the South, the polluters have to pay. Those who are responsible must do more and help out. And for the South as it develops it has a right to emit. All people would have roughly the same claim to fossil resources.

And the dignity principle says—At bottom, this concerns survival rights. Not just distribution of benefits, but also a just distribution of burdens. The most vulnerable nations, those who are likely to carry the heaviest burdens are the innocent ones. So it looks like the winners are the culprits and the losers are the innocent. The most vulnerable strive for rights to water, protection against floods and storms, rising sea level, rights to shelter. Their right to food is endangered. With global warming yields of corn and wheat will fall and before that millions of farmers will drop. They fight for rights to health, against infectious diseases, against destabilizing nature, against political instability and displacement crises. Nature is creative, they seek an ecological niche where people and animals and crops may flourish.

Claims are made under the hidden constitution of the world society. In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Under this, not just states have rights, but also individuals. All persons only by the fact that they are here have basic rights that are not dependent on race, class or nation.

To see the clash between justice as equality and justice as dignity look back to 1992 and after. The debate has been carried by justice as equality. The cosmopolitan imperative to protect human rights has not been mentioned in the climate debate. Only recently have the Maldives and other most vulnerable countries begun to bring this issue to the fore.

Climate justice as equality and as dignity are on a collision course. Equality calls for postponing action on climate until the conditions of equality of development are satisfied. Dignity demands

action immediately unless the future of, for example, the Maldives is to be sacrificed. The struggle for claims for relative power is being played out at the expense of the majority of the world's people. Justice is thought to be carried out in this way, even though many would perish.

### **1.5 Degrees or 2.0 Degrees**

Among industrialized and newly industrializing countries, the common sense notion is that 2.0 degrees Celsius is the allowable peak for climate change. But maybe from a human rights perspective 1.5 degrees is the limit. (We are on track for neither, see the Wuppertal report referenced earlier.)

How much warming can we afford? We can't have global warming that marginalizes human rights. All human beings have a right to hospitality on the globe. If human rights are absolute rights, all countries are obligated to cut emissions even though others may not do it. Each country must go for a global footprint that is sustainable. The core is an obligation to do no harm to others.

Adaptation becomes much more important. The polluter has to pay to pay for damages that have been done. Protect against future damage. Don't tread on another's right to be.

The white elephant is the right to develop. This is a notion of monumental emptiness. Building skyscrapers and building latrines are all treated the same. Normally development is understood as growth. This is not necessary for poverty alleviation.

The important core is human rights—the right to have a decent and gracious life. We must try to de-link the desire for justice from the clutch of development and the demand for growth. There must be a different notion of prosperity in a post-fossil age. The place of economy in society needs to be redefined. The economy needs to be enclosed in society.

When the economic principle and the moral principle meet on a bridge usually the moral principle loses. How do we force the economy to go with the moral principle?

Climate chaos . . . peak oil . . . peak nature, all come together. Maybe that these resource crises all come at the same time is fortunate for bringing about a change in economic interests.

[The remainder of this report consists of quotes taken from the new Preface by Dr. Sachs to *The Development Dictionary* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2010).]

It is the legacy of the twentieth century that the desires of nations for a better tomorrow are predominantly directed towards development as growth. However, the multifaceted crisis of the biosphere turns this legacy into a tragic liability. . . . Development-as-growth cannot continue to be a guiding concept of international politics unless global apartheid is taken for granted. If there is to be some kind of prosperity for all world citizens, the Euro-Atlantic model of production and consumption needs to be superseded, making room for modes of well-being that leave only a light footprint on Earth. . . . For this reason there will be no equity without ecology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Looking at the multitude of post-development initiatives, two themes emerge. First a transition from economies based on fossil-fuel to economies based on biodiversity is paramount. . . . Second, post-development initiatives attempt to push back the predominance of the economic world-view. They oppose the secular trend to functionalize work, education and the land in order to boost economic efficiency, insisting on the right to act according to values of culture, democracy and justice.

For decades development experts defined equity primarily as a problem of the poor. . . . The quest for fairness in a finite world means in the first place changing the rich, not the poor. Poverty alleviation, in other words cannot be separated from wealth alleviation.

Re-linking the desire for equity to community- and culture-based notions of well-being[ , from a global sameness to a diversity of prosperities.] will be the cornerstone of the post-development age.

Herman Greene

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*The mission of CES is to offer a vision, through dialogue, of an ecozoic society and contribute to its realization through research, education and the arts.*

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