

CES Monthly Musings

*Chronicling the Transition from Economic-Industrial
To Ecological-Cultural Societies*

(May 2013)



**CENTER FOR
EKOZOIC SOCIETIES**
Seeking Well-Being in All Life Communities

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MEETING OF THE ETHICS AND SPIRITUALITY INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, NEW YORK CITY, MAY 14, 2013

Herman Greene

Every once in a while, a meeting stands out as being of potentially great significance. Such was the meeting of the 20 people, listed below, who gathered in the Forum 21 Research Institute's Green Building in New York City on May 14. It is easy to report on what happened in the meeting, but difficult to report on the "event" that took place in the meeting. I'll start with an attempt to convey the event, and then give a report on what happened in the meeting and the next steps.

The Event

I don't know of any better way of conveying the event than a picture of the attendees. The event was the people who were present and the spirit they brought to the meeting.



We were Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Baha'i, interspiritual, and more. What brought us together was a loving concern for the fate of the world and a conviction that ethical and spiritual values are at the heart of sustainable development.

We spoke out of, but beyond, our traditions. We were a manifestation of the fact that the spiritual and ethical essence of humanity is in flux and where vital development of these are occurring includes, but is not limited to, the classical religions. We were religious, spiritual and secular-values based organizations (VBO) and we came to consider "Ethical and Spiritual Values and the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda."

What Happened in the Meeting

Felix Dodds gave the opening talk. He served as Executive Director of the Stakeholder Forum from 1992-2012, and has perhaps been the leading civil society representative in the UN sustainable development process. For example, he co-chaired the NGO Coalition on Sustainable Development (1997-2001) at the UN and chaired the United Nations 64th DPI NGO Conference on Sustainable Societies—Responsive Citizens (2011), and he played a leadership role in securing Rio+20 (2012) and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). He is the author of *Only One Earth: The Long-Road Via Rio to Sustainable Development*

and is co-author, with Liz Thompson and Jorge Laguna Celis, of the forthcoming book *From Rio+20 to a new Development Agenda: Building a Bridge to a Sustainable Future*.¹

Some of his important messages were

- Rio+20 was not a failure. To the contrary, sustainable development, as distinguished from conventional, market-based development, had been relegated to an inferior position during and following the 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit. Brazil picked up the ball and succeeded in pulling off an important summit that moved sustainable development back toward the center of development. Those NGO leaders who dismissed Rio+20 needed to understand the role of Rio+20 in the context of the 20-year history that began with Rio in 1992. Rio+20 set the stage for significant work on the UN's post-2015 development agenda (Post-2015).
- Post-2015 will set the agenda for global development for the 15-year period beginning in 2016. While the process of developing Post-2015 has been difficult to follow, it's not too late to engage significantly in commenting on the agenda. All documents developed thus far are reports, not final outcomes.
- If you want to participate in commenting on Post-2015, comment in writing. Copies of NGO comments already submitted are on the website of the Stakeholder Forum. See <http://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/>, <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/sf/index.php/our-publications/governance-papers/496-post-rio-to-post-2015-think-pieces>, and <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/sf/index.php/our-publications/governance-papers/495-post-rio-to-post-2015-background-papers>.
- Are we "civil society" or "stakeholders"? According to *Agenda 21* we are stakeholders and we must operate from that perspective.
- As compared with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will likely have five new goals: Water, energy, food, health, and education.
- Cross-cutting issues include post-conflict, gender, governance, urbanization, and sustainable production and consumption. Those who don't have specific SDGs for their issues will need to see how to address their issues under the goals being developed.
- NGOs involved in sustainable development tend to speak to progressives/communitarians, but also need to speak to conservatives/libertarians.
- There will be many disruptive technologies and developments as we move forward.
- We are in the planetary phase of development and we need global citizens in a global citizens' movement.

Next, we began to go around the circle of participants to discuss their current activities and concerns and how they felt we could collaborate. After Felix's fine speech, we thought

¹For more about Felix Dodds, see <http://www.felixdodds.net/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Dodds.

what followed would be interesting but not of enduring significance. We were wrong. The conversation was very moving and included insights such as these:

- GIWA-Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (water, sanitation and hygiene). Improve toilets in schools so girls can go to school. This is both practical and spiritual. Imams in India are praying for this.
- We are living in a big transition. We are seeing the human race move from adolescence to maturity.
- What is development for? It is for full human development. What is happiness? It is about wellbeing for all.
- The operating principle of the human race is the recognition of the oneness of human kind—all humanity coming together functioning with different capacities and abilities but forming this one body. This is a practical and a spiritual principle. It is driven in part by technology, science and economics, but there has to be an underpinning of spiritual and moral values.
- We need to grasp the idea of universal participation.
- Development is really taking place on three levels: the individual level, the community level and the institutional/policy level.
- Civil society participation in the UN is critical. We are interconnected communities and each has a responsibility and capability of playing a role.
- This is a learning process for everyone, continuous learning. We have to approach it in a humble attitude of learning, not telling someone else what they need, but discovering together what is necessary to move forward.
- The most productive thing we can do is to engage in discourse.
- The SDGs on their own are not going to be the answer. They need to be animated by a deeper understanding of what development is and what its purpose is.
- From a Buddhist nun: we have been taught to be professional religious, but not how to be global citizens.
- The time for scanning our religious traditions for ecological insights and then proclaiming we are green is over.
- We are in a crisis. With a two-degree-Celsius temperature rise, many of the major cities of the world are gone.
- Leaders in different religious and spiritual organizations haven't made their central task transformative change in relation to the current civilizational crisis, though their traditions were born from their founders who received calls from the radiant source that created and sustains all beings.
- We need to look at our own religious practices. For example, cremating human remains and putting them in the Ganges is questionable today. These practices can be re-adapted in an ecological context.
- The Japanese word for being busy means losing one's mind. We need to be brought back from losing our minds.
- Evolution teaches us that the keys to survival are awareness and a skill set.

What bound this group together was not an imperative, but a spirit. It is what will sustain the work of this group going forward and this spirit, which is present in many people and in many places, is needed to change the world.

Next Steps for ESI

In the last hour we discussed potential collaborations and here are some of the potential collaborations presented:

- Authoring a book on ESI (not what this ESI group is about, but rather a call to leaders of values-based organizations) with chapters from the people present
- Commenting collectively on ethical and spiritual values in the post-2015 UN development agenda
- Advocating for culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development
- Developing an education curriculum on sustainable development for VBOs (this is to help enable people to understand how to be global citizens and the relationship of ethics, spirituality and culture to sustainable development).
- Working on the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (WASH stands for water sanitation and hygiene), and support a similar initiative focused on energy
- Hosting ecological civilization conferences
- Engaging teams of scholars in different regions of the world to prepare a vision and pathway to ecological civilization (the transition from economic-industrial civilization to ecological-cultural civilization)
- Promoting the International Ethics Panel for Ecological Civilization, Ombudsmen for Future generations, Trusteeship of the Global Commons, Office of Ethical Assessment in the UN Secretariat and other ethical structures of governance.

* * * * *

Finally, here are the people who were present on May 14 or who were invited and remain interested. If you have an interest in joining or finding out more about this initiative, please contact, the convener, Richard Clugston, at rmclugston@aol.com.

Attendees (20):

Ken Kitatani (Forum 21)
Rick Clugston (Maine Interfaith Power and Light)
Herman Greene (Center for Ecozoic Societies)
Sr. Joan Kirby (Temple of Understanding)
Alison Van Dyk (Temple of Understanding)
Chang Ji (Dharma Drum)
Guo Chan (Dharma Drum)
Peter Adriance (Baha'i)

Dinah Wiley (Yoga in Daily Life)
Larry Troster (GreenFaith)
Patrick Nickisch (URI)
Kurt Johnson (Interspiritual Multiplex)
Judy Kuriansky (International Association of Applied Psychology)
Monika Mitchell (Good Business New York)
George Houston (Sukyo Mahikari)
Felix Dodds (Tellus Institute)
Sharon Hamilton-Getz (World Harmony Council and Forum, and the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns)
Ashley Young (Independent film maker)
Ellen Tabak (Sukyo Mahikari)
Divya Chand (International Association of Applied Psychology)

Others-invited and interested:

Martha Gallahue (URI)
Rebecca Tobias (URI)
Monica Willard (URI)
Cynthia Sampson (URI)
Bruce Kersten
Khenpo Prema Wangdak

CULTURE: KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT HANGZHOU (CHINA) INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS, MAY 15- 17, 2013

This conference was announced in this way:

The International Congress "Culture: Key to Sustainable Development" will be held in Hangzhou (China) from 15 May to 17 May 2013. This is the first International Congress specifically focusing on the linkages between culture and sustainable development organized by UNESCO since the Stockholm Conference in 1998. As such, the Congress will provide the very first global forum to discuss the role of culture in sustainable development in view of the post-2015 development framework, with participation of the global community and the major international stakeholders.

We are proud to publish (1) the declaration that came out of the conference, a declaration that we believe has great significance, as well as (2) a speech prepared for the Conference by Duane Elgin and (3) one given at the conference by Roy Morrison. Duane Elgin was denied a visa and consequently a shortened version of his speech was given by another person at the conference. The version published here was the complete text he prepared.

THE HANGZHOU DECLARATION: PLACING CULTURE AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

(Adopted at the World Cultural Forum in Hangzhou, People’s Republic of China, on May 17, 2013)

We, the participants gathered in Hangzhou on the occasion of the International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” (15-17 May 2013), wish to express our gratitude and acknowledge the generous hospitality and intellectual leadership of the Chinese authorities and the City of Hangzhou in providing a forum to reflect on the place that should be given to culture within the international sustainable development agenda. We especially recognize the efforts and achievements made by the City of Hangzhou to conserve its heritage and promote its vibrant culture for sustainable development.

We recognize the important advances that have been made over the past decade by the international community at all levels in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals.

We consider that in the face of mounting challenges such as population growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, disasters, climate change, increasing inequalities and persisting poverty, there is an urgent need for new approaches, to be defined and measured in a way which accounts for the broader picture of human progress and which emphasize harmony among peoples and between humans and nature, equity, dignity, wellbeing and sustainability.

These new approaches should fully acknowledge the role of culture as a system of values and a resource and framework to build truly sustainable development, the need to draw from the experiences of past generations, and the recognition of culture as part of the global and local commons as well as a wellspring for creativity and renewal.

We recall, in this regard, some of the most important policy documents that have underscored the importance of culture for sustainable development in recent years, including the UN General Assembly Resolutions N. 65/1 (“Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals,” 2010), N. 65/166 (2011), and N. 66/208 (2012) on “Culture and Development,” as well as a number of other relevant declarations, statements and normative instruments adopted at international, regional and national levels.

We recall in particular the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, “The Future We Want” (Rio de Janeiro, June 2012), which highlighted the importance of cultural diversity and the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development.

We reaffirm that culture should be considered to be a fundamental enabler of sustainability, being a source of meaning and energy, a wellspring of creativity and innovation,

and a resource to address challenges and find appropriate solutions. The extraordinary power of culture to foster and enable truly sustainable development is especially evident when a people-centred and place-based approach is integrated into development programmes and peace-building initiatives.

We also reaffirm the potential of culture as a driver for sustainable development, through the specific contributions that it can make—as knowledge capital and a sector of activity—to inclusive social, cultural and economic development, harmony, environmental sustainability, peace and security. This has been confirmed by a wealth of studies and demonstrated by numerous concrete initiatives.

We recognize that one size does not fit all and that different cultural perspectives will result in different paths to development. At the same time, we embrace an understanding of culture that is open, evolving and strongly framed within a rights-based approach and the respect for diversity, the free access to which enables individuals “to live and be what they choose,” thus enhancing their opportunities and human capabilities while promoting mutual understanding and exchange among peoples.

We believe that the time has come, building on these important statements of principle and lessons learnt, for the full integration of culture—through clear goals, targets and indicators—into agreed development strategies, programmes and practices at global, regional, national and local levels, to be defined in the post-2015 UN development agenda. Only such a concrete political and operational framework can ensure that all development initiatives lead to truly sustainable benefits for all, while securing the right of future generations to benefit from the wealth of cultural assets built up by previous generations.

We therefore call on governments and policy-makers, who will play a role in defining the post-2015 UN global development framework and sustainable development goals, to seize this unique opportunity and give consideration to the following actions to place culture at the heart of future policies for sustainable development:

□ Integrate culture within all development policies and programmes

Development is shaped by culture and local context, which ultimately also determine its outcomes. Consideration of culture should therefore be included as the fourth fundamental principle of the post-2015 UN development agenda, in equal measure with human rights, equality and sustainability. The cultural dimension should be systematically integrated in definitions of sustainable development and wellbeing, as well as in the conception, measurement and actual practice of development policies and programmes. This will require the establishment of effective institutional coordination mechanisms at global and national levels, the development of comprehensive statistical frameworks with appropriate targets and indicators, the carrying out of evidence-based analyses and the building of capacities at all levels.

□ **Mobilize culture and mutual understanding to foster peace and reconciliation**

In the context of globalization, and in the face of the identity challenges and tensions it can create intercultural dialogue, and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable and resilient societies. They should be promoted notably through educational, communication and artistic programmes, as well as through dedicated national councils, to foster an environment conducive to tolerance and mutual understanding. In areas that have experienced violent conflicts, the rehabilitation of cultural heritage and cultural activities should be promoted to enable affected communities to renew their identity, regain a sense of dignity and normalcy, enjoy the universal language of art and begin to heal the scars of wars. Consideration of cultural contexts should also be integrated into conflict-resolution initiatives and peace-building processes.

□ **Ensure cultural rights for all to promote inclusive social development**

Guaranteeing cultural rights, access to cultural goods and services, free participation in cultural life, and freedom of artistic expression are critical to forging inclusive and equitable societies. A rights-based approach to culture and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity should be promoted within national and regional policies and legal frameworks, including consideration for minorities, gender balance, and youth and specific indigenous peoples' concerns. Cultural values, assets and practices, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples, should be integrated into educational and communication programmes, and they should be safeguarded and given adequate recognition. Cultural literacy in schools is an integral part of quality education, and it should play an important role in the promotion of inclusive and equitable societies. Special support should be provided to cultural programmes that foster creativity and artistic expression, learn from the experiences of the past, and promote democracy and the freedom of expression, as well as address gender issues, discrimination, and the traumas resulting from violence.

□ **Leverage culture for poverty reduction and inclusive economic development**

Culture, as knowledge capital and as a resource, provides for the needs of individuals and communities and reduces poverty. The capabilities of culture to provide opportunities for jobs and incomes should be enhanced, targeting in particular women, girls, minorities and youth. The full potential of creative industries and cultural diversity for innovation and creativity should be harnessed, especially by promoting small and medium-sized enterprises, and trade and investments that are based on materials and resources that are renewable, environmentally sustainable, locally available, and accessible to all groups within society, as well as by respecting intellectual property rights. Inclusive economic development should also be achieved through activities focused on sustainably protecting, safeguarding and promoting heritage. Special attention should be given to supporting responsible, culturally-aware, inclusive and sustainable tourism and leisure industries that contribute to the socioeconomic development of host communities, promote cross-cultural exchanges, and generate resources for the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage.

□ **Build on culture to promote environmental sustainability**

The safeguarding of historic urban and rural areas and of their associated traditional knowledge and practices reduces the environmental footprints of societies, promoting more ecologically sustainable patterns of production and consumption and sustainable urban and architectural design solutions. Access to essential environmental goods and services for the livelihood of communities should be secured through the stronger protection and more sustainable use of biological and cultural diversity, as well as by the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge and skills, paying particular attention to those of indigenous peoples, in synergy with other forms of scientific knowledge.

□ **Strengthen resilience to disasters and combat climate change through culture**

The appropriate conservation of the historic environment, including cultural landscapes, and the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge, values and practices, in synergy with other scientific knowledge, enhances the resilience of communities to disasters and climate change. The feeling of normalcy, self-esteem, sense of place and confidence in the future among people and communities affected by disasters should be restored and strengthened through cultural programmes and the rehabilitation of their cultural heritage and institutions. Consideration for culture should be integrated into disaster-risk reduction and climate-change mitigation and adaptation policies and plans in general.

□ **Value, safeguard and transmit culture to future generations**

Heritage is a critical asset for our wellbeing and that of future generations, and it is being lost at an alarming rate as a result of the combined effects of urbanization, development pressures, globalization, conflicts and phenomena associated with climate change. National policies and programmes should be strengthened in order to secure the protection and promotion of this heritage and of its inherited systems of values and cultural expressions as part of the shared commons, while giving it a central role in the life of societies. This should be achieved by its full integration in the development sector as well as in educational programmes.

□ **Harness culture as a resource for achieving sustainable urban development and management**

A vibrant cultural life and the quality of urban historic environments are key for achieving sustainable cities. Local governments should preserve and enhance these environments in harmony with their natural settings. Culture-aware policies in cities should promote respect for diversity, the transmission and continuity of values, and inclusiveness by enhancing the representation and participation of individuals and communities in public life and improving the conditions of the most disadvantaged groups. Cultural infrastructure, such as museums and other cultural facilities, should be used as civic spaces for dialogue and social inclusion, helping to reduce violence and foster cohesion. Culture-led redevelopment of urban areas, and public spaces in particular, should be promoted to preserve the social fabric,

improve economic returns and increase competitiveness, by giving impetus to a diversity of intangible cultural heritage practices as well as contemporary creative expressions. The cultural and creative industries should be promoted, as well as heritage-based urban revitalization and sustainable tourism, as powerful economic sub-sectors that generate green employment, stimulate local development, and foster creativity.

□ **Capitalize on culture to foster innovative and sustainable models of cooperation**

The great and unexplored potential of public-private partnerships can provide alternative and sustainable models for cooperation in support of culture. This will require the development, at national level, of appropriate legal, fiscal, institutional, policy and administrative enabling environments, to foster global and innovative funding and cooperation mechanisms at both the national and international levels, including grass-roots initiatives and culture-driven partnerships already promoted by civil society. In this context, consideration should be given to the specific needs of different cultural sub-sectors, while opportunities should be provided to develop capacities, transfer knowledge, and foster entrepreneurship, notably through the sharing of best practices.

We, the participants, share in the ideals of “Diversity in Harmony” and “Harnessing the Past to Create the Future” expressed by our Congress;

We commit ourselves to developing action plans based on this Declaration and to working together for their implementation towards 2015 and beyond;

We believe that the integration of culture into development policies and programmes will set the stage for a new era of global development;

We recommend, therefore, that a specific Goal focused on culture be included as part of the post-2015 UN development agenda, to be based on heritage, diversity, creativity and the transmission of knowledge and including clear targets and indicators that relate culture to all dimensions of sustainable development.

GREAT TRANSITION STORIES FOR BECOMING A GLOBAL ECO-CIVILIZATION

Duane Elgin

Humanity's Journey to Great Transition

In recent speeches, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has described our world as moving through a time of “Great Transition”:

Throughout the ages, people have said that the world is in the midst of big change. But the level and degree of global change that we face today is far more profound than at any other period in my adult lifetime. I call this period the Great Transition.

How can the people of Earth make this “great transition” by coming together in common effort while respecting and honoring our diverse cultures and traditions? One important way is to recognize that, despite our many differences, we have been on a common journey.

According to genetic evidence, all of the humans alive today apparently descended from a very small community of several thousand persons living in southern Africa around 65,000 years ago. Around this time, members of this community moved out of Africa and spread rapidly around Earth. In the space of roughly 65,000 years, we have developed from a small band of hunter-gathers to the edge of a planetary-scale civilization of more than seven billion humans. This is an extraordinary story of success that has led to enormous challenges for our future.

Looking back, we see that we are all cousins on a common journey. Looking ahead, we see that we are coming back together into a global eco-civilization after an epoch of geographical separation and that new challenges face us as we move from separation to community.

We cannot avoid the urgency and importance of the collective effort of imagining and building a global “eco-civilization”—one which honors that we all inhabit the same Earth and want the ecosystem to be strong and resilient to sustain a global civilization into the distant future. We already see portents of the looming challenge of coping with simultaneous climate disruption, unsustainable populations, peak oil and the end of cheap energy, a massive extinction of plant and animal species, the depletion of topsoil and fresh water in glaciers and aquifers, and many more. Humanity is over-consuming Earth and creating the conditions for our breakdown as a functioning global civilization.

The collapse of civilizations is not uncommon. Throughout history we have seen the rise and fall of numerous great civilizations. From the Roman Empire to the empires of Mayans, Aztecs, Easter Islanders, Anasazi, Mesopotamia, the Soviet Empire, and so on, more than 20 major civilizations have collapsed through history, often due to climate change and unsustainable agricultural practices. Collapse is nothing new.

Today is different. The circle has closed. When we put the adversity trends of climate disruption, peak oil, population growth, species extinction, and more together, I estimate that by the decade of the 2020s, the human community will encounter the perfect storm of a world in systems crisis. We will be pushed either to pull together and work collaboratively for a promising future or to pull apart in conflict as we seek to continue a separated existence. I fear the latter course could lead to a new dark age for the entire Earth community

Frontiers are gone. The world is an integrated system—economically and ecologically. Never before has the entire planet been at risk of collapse—taking *all* of the world’s civilizations down at the same time. The key point is that the transition we are in now *is* truly a *great* transition, *unprecedented* in human history and profoundly *determinative* of our long-range future. And we are so inside of this great transition that it is only now becoming perceptible.

If we misjudge our situation, the results will be catastrophic. There are no “do-overs.” We cannot bring extinct species back to life. We cannot re-freeze the Arctic and recreate the climate of the past ten thousand years. We cannot refill oil wells that are pumped dry. We cannot refill ancient aquifers of water that are pumped empty. We cannot give back responsibility for caring for billions of people beyond the carrying capacity of Earth. Therefore, our first requirement—as individuals, communities, nations, and a species—is to step back and take an unflinching look at what is happening with key trends such as climate change and running out of cheap oil.

Once we have a working grasp of individual trends, we can then explore how they interact with one another in mutually reinforcing ways to produce a world in systems crisis—ecologically, economically, politically, culturally, and more. We can continue the inquiry and look even deeper and ask, “What does this interacting pattern of trends say about us as a species?” What is the underlying narrative or story that we humans are living out with our lives? How can we explain to ourselves in a way we all comprehend what is happening to Earth? As we understand and describe to ourselves the magnitude of transition and choices before us, we can mobilize ourselves more swiftly and effectively.

Visions of Transition to a Global Eco-Civilization

What visions of humanity’s journey are powerful enough to transcend age-old differences and bring us together in a common venture of inhabiting Earth in ways that are sustainable? What narratives can step outside our many differences and honor our common journey as humans and our unity within the Earth system? An invisible bond of mutual understanding is the social glue that can hold some form of “civilized” world society together when stretched to the breaking point by multiple crises.

Transition stories serve as important beacons of hope. Without a common story to guide our efforts we are lost, confused, and disoriented. However, if we can imagine it, we can build it. A great transition story can awaken our collective imagination and orient our actions.

With a common story, we can see our place and our part; our lives become more meaningful; change is less overwhelming and stressful; and we can see how to cooperate more readily.

Because no single story is adequate to communicate the richness and diversity of the human journey, I and a team of editors have gathered together an “ecology of narratives” of more than a dozen stories of “Great Transition.” (See www.GreatTransitionStories.org) These stories are drawn from a range of trusted sources including biology, cosmology, mythology, technology, and psychology. Importantly, these narratives are not “owned” by any one part of the world or people—they are drawn from the collective wisdom of humanity. All of these stories have four key qualities; they are universal, simple, emotionally powerful, and evocative of our higher potentials. To illustrate, here are four stories of great transition:

- Humanity Is Growing Up
- The Global Brain Is Waking Up
- Humanity Is on a Heroic Journey
- We Are in a Process of Planetary Birth

Story 1. Humanity Is Growing Up

Over tens of thousands of years, the human species has been learning and maturing. Most people recognize intuitively that the human family is growing up and can relate to the following questions: “When you look at the overall behavior of the human family, what life-stage do you think we are in? If you estimate the social average of human behavior around the world, what stage of development best describes the human family: toddler, teenager, adult, or elder?”

My informal surveys with groups around the world over nearly two decades indicate that *the vast majority of people share an intuitive sense of the human family’s level of maturity.* Whether in the United States, England, India, Japan, or Brazil, people have responded in the same way: *at least two-thirds say that humanity is in its teenage years.*

The speed and consistency with which different groups around the world have come to this intuitive conclusion has encouraged me to explore many parallels between humanity’s current behavior and that of teenagers, including the following:

- Teenagers are rebellious and want to prove their independence. Humanity has been rebelling against nature for thousands of years, trying to prove that we are separate, superior, and independent.
- Teenagers are reckless and tend to live without regard for the consequences of their behavior. The human family has been acting recklessly in consuming natural resources as if they would last forever, polluting the air, water, and land of the planet, and bringing extinction to a significant part of animal and plant life on Earth.

- Teenagers are concerned with appearance and with fitting in. Similarly, many humans seem focused on expressing their identity and status through material possessions.
- Teenagers are drawn toward instant gratification. As a species, we are seeking our short-term pleasures and are largely ignoring the needs of other species and future generations.
- Teenagers tend to gather in groups or cliques, and often express “us versus them” and “in versus out” thinking and behavior. Much of humanity is clustered in ethnic, racial, religious, and other groupings that separate us from one another, fostering an “us versus them” mentality in today’s world.

Although many people see our species behavior as rebellious, reckless, and short sighted, many others point out beneficial aspects of the adolescent stage of development. Adolescents have substantial energy and enthusiasm and, with their courage and daring, are ready to dive into life and make a difference in the world. Many teenagers have a “hidden sense of greatness” and feel that, if given a chance, they can accomplish wonderful things.

Overall, the archetype of a maturing species explains a great deal about our current behaviors and contains within it the promise of a hopeful future. As we move beyond our adolescent consciousness and grow into our early adulthood as a species, we will develop greater capacities to consciously work to restore the resilience and integrity of our Earth’s ecosystem, consider the impact of our actions on the rest of life as well as generations in the future, and bring fresh awareness and sacred regard for the living universe that is our home.

Story 2. The Global Brain Is Waking Up

After experiencing tens of thousands of years of geographic separation, the human species is moving with lightning speed into almost instantaneous global communication and connection. Humanity has developed immensely powerful electronic tools that are supporting a quantum increase in our collective communication—and our collective consciousness—as a species. Our ability to communicate has enabled humans to progress from nomadic bands of gatherers and hunters to the edge of a planetary civilization. Just as we are in the midst of an unprecedented revolution in the scope, depth, and richness of global communications, the impact of this revolution on our future will be equally unprecedented. Perhaps most importantly, the spectacular growth in global communications offers humanity the possibility of communicating our way through this time of supreme planetary challenge.

The awakening of collective consciousness is a theme in all of the stories of great transition. In this narrative, the Internet, television, cell phones, and other social media all combine to provide the technological infrastructure that supports global awakening. The “global brain” is a metaphor for the worldwide network formed by people coming together with communication technologies that connect them into an organic whole. As the Internet becomes faster, more intelligent, more ubiquitous, and more encompassing, it increasingly ties us together into a single communications system that functions like a “brain” for planet Earth.

In particular, television combined with the Internet is creating a transparent world that is bringing a new level of accountability and ethicality into institutional conduct. Just as a rising tide lifts all boats, so too does a rising level of global communication lift all injustices into the healing light of public awareness. What we see and hear through the new media may challenge the emotional intelligence and maturity of the species. As our social consciousness awakens, deep psychic wounds will emerge that have festered through history. We will begin to hear the voices that we have ignored and the pain that we have not acknowledged. Awakening will bring with it awareness of the dark shadows of human history in the form of racism, ethnic conflict, and religious discord. Yet, as uncomfortable as this process will be, it is a vital stage in our collective healing, which will enable us to move on consciously in our collective journey.

For the first time in human history, we are acquiring a way to listen to and talk with one another as members of one family. For the first time, all the human cousins can communicate with one another. In awakening to ourselves as a planetary species and seeing ourselves directly and as a whole for the first time, we see that we have the potential for an evolutionary leap forward. The question is whether we have the collective maturity to seize this precious opportunity.

When the people of Earth are not simply receiving media, but are also capable of offering their collective voice for change, then a new and powerful force for creative transformation will be awakened in the world. When people are empowered to speak, they are also empowered to listen—we can listen, and be a collective witness, to stories of genocide, climate disruption, intense poverty, species extinction, and many more. As the people of Earth learn how to use the new media tools to come together as a global community and express their voices, a new era in human maturity and development will be born.

What kind of communication is required to give the citizens of the world an authentic collective voice? Critically important, it must be nearly instantaneous and global in scope. An authentic “Earth Voice” must reach the vast majority of the people of Earth, and it must reach them virtually all at the same time. Seven billion or more people need to be able to offer their feedback about critical concerns if they are to feel part of an *Earth Voice* conversation. This level of functioning of a “global nervous system” would have been completely unthinkable prior to the emergence of a new capacity for computing and networking that places information in “virtual clouds” rather than on individual computers.

As cloud computing accelerates, by the decade of the 2020s, the world will have the technologies with which to acquire real-time feedback and knowledge of humanity’s collective sentiments—and humanity will move into a new phase of collective transparency, self-reflection and self-discovery. With communication capacities that are intensely interactive, highly intelligent, and virtually instantaneous, the citizens of Earth will have the power to communicate together and express common support for a future of sustainable prosperity supported by a global eco-consciousness.

Story 3. Humanity Is on a Heroic Journey

Another deep story that can assist humanity in envisioning a positive future is to see ourselves as being on a heroic journey of collective awakening and development. With this narrative, we can step back from seeing ourselves as “evolutionary villains” who are ruining Earth and, instead, regard ourselves as “evolutionary heroes” who are facing a supreme test of our collective evolutionary intelligence. We are moving through an unprecedented, collective rite of passage and confronting the supreme challenge of building a new relationship with Earth, with one another, and with the living universe that is our home.

The archetype of the hero’s journey is widely recognized around the world and is found in stories and myths across history. The distinguished scholar Joseph Campbell summarized the hero’s journey as follows: An adventurer hears a call to discovery, separates from the everyday world, and sets out on a search filled with dangers. The hero experiences many difficult challenges and tests, each rich with learning. Ultimately, the hero confronts a seemingly insurmountable challenge—a supreme test that cannot be overcome with physical capacities alone. To be successful, the hero must reach beyond his ego where he or she awakens to a new and more soulful relationship with Earth, with other people, and with the universe. With this profound initiation, the hero then makes a journey of return, bringing these gifts of insight back to the larger community.

The hero’s journey of separation, initiation, and return can be expanded from the scale of an individual to the scope of the entire human community. Looking at the human journey, for roughly 50,000 years we have been on a path of separation. We have been pulling back from nature and gaining ever more power and control as we learned to hunt, farm, domesticate animals, build cities, make wars, and transform the planet. Because our power is now so great, we are obliged to be conscious of our connection with nature and use restraint in the exercise of power.

4. A Planetary Birth Is Underway

The "Planetary Birth" story uses the patterns and archetypes associated with human birth to describe the experience of humanity as it goes through a powerful and difficult process that can be likened to being squeezed through a birth canal. This story offers hope and direction in the face of what many experience as a world in contraction, producing great suffering and confusion.

Storytellers from around the world have long used the birthing metaphor to give meaning to suffering: The pain is worth what is being born on the other side. We can use this same metaphor to understand how to move through the collective pain of our time of global transition. We know from lived experience what giving birth is about. We know how to endure the process and how to help it along. And we know how to love what is born. Below are two perspectives on what humanity as a whole could be birthing.

The following quote is taken from Dr. Betsy MacGregor's book, *In Awe of Being: Stories from the Edge of Life and Death*:

Bringing a new human being into this world is not an easy matter. The ordeal that must be endured is huge, and it can take a significant toll. The life of either mother or child, and sometimes both, may be lost if all does not go well. This is because it is no small thing for two bodies that have lived as one for many months to separate. Tremendous forces must be set in motion in order to expel the infant from the comfort of the womb, and the going can get extremely rough. Powerful maternal muscles create rhythmic waves of contraction that force the baby along, while the youngster's head leads the way, stretching apart tight maternal tissues and pushing past rock-hard bone, bearing the brunt of the work. The amount of pressure exerted on the infant's head is so great that the soft bones of its skull are squeezed hard against each other and made to overlap, only slowly regaining their normal position days after birth. Collections of blood may form in the infant's scalp from the battering as well. For hours upon hours the formidable process goes on, testing the limits of endurance for both mother and child. It's enough to make an observer exclaim, "Good Lord! Why has nature made it so hard for us to enter this world?"

We may ask ourselves, why has nature made it so hard for us humans to give birth a global eco-civilization? Why is it so difficult for us to develop into a mature species that has collective regard for its own wellbeing? Could it be that, without this time of supreme challenge, we might not rise to our collective maturity and promise as a species?

Another view of planetary birth comes from Barbara Marx Hubbard who, in 1966, had a visionary experience in which she witnessed Earth as a whole, living body giving birth to a higher-order planetary life form. She saw humanity come together and play an essential, coordinated role in the birthing process. The result of the "planetary birth" was a harmonious planetary body interacting more fully with the rest of the galaxy through an evolved Universal Human species that saw itself as one. Hubbard writes: "Our story is a birth. It is the birth of humankind as one body. We are one body, born into this universe." Moreover, what is being born is not a helpless babe, but an empowered and awake planetary community: "We are waking up to ourselves as a collective humanity." With the global Internet and communications revolution, the collective consciousness of the species, the "noosphere," is coming alive. We can take a leap forward in love and become co-creative participants in birthing humanity as an integrated and healthy organism.

Stories Offer Beacons of Hope

Humanity has entered a rare period, filled with immense opportunity and danger: We are collectively between stories with a break in the narrative describing the overall human journey. Around the world, old institutions of business, government, education, and more are breaking down. New institutions fitted to the new era are rising up, but seemingly at a slower

pace than existing institutions are breaking down. As a consequence, there is a growing void or felt sense of absence of guiding narratives for nearly all humans who are alive today. For example, the "American Dream" that pulled the United States forward for at least three generations is fast becoming the world's nightmare as the excesses of consumerism produce climate disruption, the depletion of cheap oil, growing income disparities, and more. Now, instead of a different "dream," people want wide-awake visions of real possibility told in ways that are believable and compelling.

We face big challenges and it will take an equally big vision to transform conflict into cooperation and draw us into a promising future. The most difficult challenge facing humanity is not devising solutions to the energy crisis or climate crisis or population crisis; rather, it is bringing stories of the human journey into our collective awareness that empower us to look beyond a future of great adversity and to see a future of great opportunity.

Without stories to orient us, we are literally lost. When we are lost, it is easy to be frightened and to focus on security and survival, to look for threats, and to pull together into "safe" enclaves. Policies for energy and climate will not go deep enough to change our mind and change our direction. A collective and powerful story of the human journey can serve as the social glue to pull us together in common effort and take us in a regenerative direction. We do not seem to have those common stories now; however, the stories we seek are already present in biology, psychology, cosmology, mythology, technology, and more.

It is time to gather wisdom for the human journey from diverse sources so that we can better understand our time of profound transition and the promise that lies ahead. As the UN Secretary General has stated, we are in a period of "Great Transition." This is a rare moment in human history when we are beginning to develop, for the very first time, the "story of, by, and for all of us." There may be no more important task for humanity than to cultivate narratives in our collective imagination that can serve as beacons for guiding us into a promising future. Without a common story we are collectively lost and destined to struggle against ourselves. If we can imagine a common journey into a future of sustainable prosperity, we can build it. With a common story, we can see our supporting roles, our lives become more meaningful, and change is less overwhelming. Our story is our future. Let the stories we tell be worthy of this time of great transition.

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BUILDING AN ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

(Plenary address to World Cultural Forum, Hangzhou China, May 17, 2013)

Roy Morrison

We are in the midst of an epochal transition in human civilization. A new civilization, an ecological civilization, is emerging out of industrial business as usual.

Our century, the 21st century, offers the opportunity for humanity to build day by day, place by place, an ecological civilization—a world that is sustainable, prosperous, peaceful, harmonious, and just for all, not just for the fortunate fraction of people who are affluent. A sustainable world cannot be divided between the polluting rich minority and a desperate, poor majority.

An ecological civilization will mean a global convergence upon sustainable norms for all in energy, emissions, water, and other resources. This process of convergence will help us build sustainability's global infrastructure, transfer resources and knowledge from rich to poor, and establish the economic framework for enduring prosperity. Convergence is not a matter of charity. A sustainable convergence will make us all better-off, and expand global wealth, trade and social contacts many fold.

Ecological civilization means that economic growth results in ecological improvement. There is a decoupling of economic growth from pollution, depletion, and ecological damage. Market rules and the price system send signals for sustainability through ecological consumption taxation and related means to shape consumption, production, and investment decisions. Sustainable goods and services become more profitable and gain market share while polluters scramble to catch up.

We can build, if we choose to, a global civilization characterized by efficient renewable energy technologies, by industrial ecology with zero waste and zero pollution, and by sustainable agriculture, forestry and aquaculture. In ecological civilization, there is no limit to trade in information in a renewably powered cyberspace and cultural exchange is a must.

This is a transition that cannot wait for consensus decisions from United Nations climate conferences. An ecological civilization will arise as an expression of a global movement for change. It can and must be undertaken on all levels, by the firm, the family, the neighborhood, the city, the region, the nation and beyond.

It will occur through simultaneous global movements for climate justice, for building an efficient renewable energy infrastructure, for new market rules making the price system send clear signals for sustainability, and for an overall improvement in efficiency and decrease in waste by orders of magnitude. We must all be involved in these movements, they demand our participation and our skills.

Our fundamental challenges are not technical, rather they concern the will to change. We have the tools and we have the knowledge, but do we have the political and civic will? An ecological civilization cannot be built by privileging established industries and imposing restraint upon newly developing sustainable industries, or by exempting the wealthy from bearing a fair share of the cost of change.

The enormous and self-destructive powers of industrial development are beguiling and terrifying. If we continue to follow this path the profit will be short-term and in the long-term

there will be ruin. To all appearances, we have subdued and humbled nature. But that is an illusion. If we continue to fell the forests, pour poison into the air, water, and soil, sweep the sea of fish, drain the aquifers, obliterate wild habitat, change the climate, and acidify the ocean, we will bring about a tidal wave of death and destruction.

We have a choice between ecological civilization and a future characterized by deepening ecological catastrophe, of drought and flood, of famine, war, epidemic, mass migration of the desperate, of collapsed states, and a world of ghost cities of Peking, New York, Paris, Rio, Johannesburg, Mumbai—some submerged, others home to desperate millions.

So, let us agree, there is an absolute necessity for action, which brings us to the question how do we move from an industrial present to an ecological civilization?

A prevailing view is that nations and firms that go first in taking fundamental steps toward sustainability will be at a disadvantage, and another is that the transition away from fossil fuels and high pollution will be a net cost. Let me illustrate the benefits of leading this transition by focusing on energy, my area of expertise and a critical area to be addressed in the ecological transformation.

The trillions spent on fossil fuels and the trillions of dollars of waste and pollution associated with it represents an enormous opportunity for driving the global efficient renewable energy transformation and the industrial ecology revolution. How can it still be called “economic” to mine more-and-more-expensive-and-difficult-and-unsafe-to-obtain fossil fuels, endure the wildly fluctuating prices of fossil fuels, spend trillions on infrastructure to produce and burn them, and pass on the high costs of air, soil and water pollution related to fossil fuels to the public?

What rational business case can be made for continue in this way if it can be shown that savings can be extracted from the trillions spent on fossil fuels and infrastructure sufficient to build a zero-fuel-cost, zero-polluting, and sustainable future.

The transition to efficient production and storage of renewable energy on a continental scale, can economically and effectively meet all our energy needs. And this transition can be financed largely through the use of market-based mechanisms that mine the savings obtained through performance contracting, and from the higher efficiency of renewable energy production as it comes on line.

Here are four ways to drive a twenty-year global energy transformation:

First, require over twenty years both an increasing percentage of renewable generation and efficiency to replace polluting generation, and a decreasing amount of allowable emissions from coal. Coal must be ecologically benign or stay in the ground. All fossil fuel subsidies should be eliminated or re-directed to zero-emissions development.

A means for increasing renewable generation and efficiency is to use advanced energy performance contracting (AEPC) on a utility scale to finance mass retrofits on city wide and regional scale. In AEPC there is competitive bidding for suppliers to deliver energy efficiency (i.e. “nega-watts”) and renewable energy. Consumers are charged a portion of their energy savings to pay for the contracts.

Second, impose severance taxes on all energy (renewable and non-renewable) to build permanent sovereign funds for global investment in sustainable development.

Third, establish a sustainable per capita, annual global energy allowance of 70 gigajoules (19,443 KWh) of primary energy and three tons of CO₂. Those who consume above the allowance will pay a small tax on their utility bills to be invested in sustainable energy development for the poor. These “Sustainability Assessments to Value the Ecosphere” (SAVE) can be administered by the UN.

Fourth, establish a global organization, the “Global Initiative for Climate Cooling” (GICC), to focus on developing and implementing mechanisms and market rules to facilitate investments in alternative energy. An example of an innovative mechanism is a renewable energy hedges where a renewable energy provider obtains an assured price for delivering power, and the user obtains an assured price for buying power, in each case, over a long period.

In conclusion, we face a fundamental choice between building a sustainable ecological civilization or continue on the path to self-destruction. The time to choose is now. It's time to stand up to preserve our heritage and protect our futures.

The Chronicle (May 2013)

Our readers are invited to present their own reports of what they are paying attention to in the transition from economic-industrial ecological-cultural societies.

Herman Greene – 2052: What Do We Ask of the Future?

I hope for a future that will be good for me, my children and my new grandchild. But I worry. As I am now in the third age of life, I secretly fear economic collapse and loss of social support. I am sometimes caught up in prospects of catastrophe . . . of ecological collapse, of pandemics, of political chaos and the collapse of social systems, of wars both big and small, of the tyranny of the rich and the exploitation of the poor, and of lawlessness on a wide scale. Yet, a child of the '50s, I have never given up on the General Electric, Disneyland wonderworld of the future, this too lies within me. The work that we do through CES is justified on the basis that the primary problem we face is ecological limits and transformative change is needed. What then if humanity can just get by on the course it is on, that we are not approaching some grand cataclysmic finale?

Jorgen Randers book, *2052: A Global Forecast of the Next Forty Years*, paints a picture of a human world of light green change that survives and doesn't dramatically change. Megacities grow larger, wilderness declines further, around 2052 temperature crosses the 2-degree-Celsius-over pre-industrial-level threshold, poverty continues on a large scale, and consumption on the whole increases. The move into cities causes birth rates to decline much more quickly than is conventionally accepted so that population peaks around 2040 at 8.2 billion. Economic growth continues through 2052 but at a declining rate beginning in the 2040s due to a smaller workforce (as population falls and those over 65 increase), weather disruptions, higher resource costs, slower productivity growth as more economic activity shifts to services, and social disruption sometimes caused by gross inequity. Alternative fuels supply 37% of the power by 2052, but fossil fuels continue to provide the majority of power. Global energy use peaks in 2030 and then declines toward 2052 due to greater energy efficiency and the eventual slowing of GDP growth. Disasters occur, but not cataclysm. Beyond 2052, he isn't sure, but he advises people to not teach their children to love the wilderness, but to be satisfied with electronic entertainment and the joys of the city.

Randers bases his forecast on data analysis, interviews with leading thinkers, and his own insights based on lifetime involvement in projecting and thinking about the future. He was a co-author of the 1972 book, *Limits to Growth*, which emphasized the concept of overshoot and collapse. The book called for changes to occur that have not been made. Now he doubts that the really dramatic changes that are needed will be made by 2052, in part because attitudes and cultural values are so slow to change. In year 2100 though, humans will live much more sustainably. The reason? Because that which is unsustainable cannot be sustained. Inevitably humanity's ecological footprint will decline. Satisfaction, if it is to be found, will be in being more, not having more.

This is an unsettling forecast. It is neither wonderworld, nor catastrophe. It is shuffling into the future driven by almost inexorable forces.

There is a salutary function to Randers' book. It gives a clear-eyed picture of where humanity is currently likely headed. It doesn't make up a storyline of techno-optimism or of environmental lamentations and deliverance . . . or doom. His final words to the reader are bittersweet, "Learn to live with impending disaster without losing hope. . . . Even if we do not succeed in our fight for a better world, there will still be a future world. And there will still be a world with a future—just less beautiful and harmonious than it could have been."

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