

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT CES? WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR CES?

By Herman Greene, Founder and President, Center for Ecozoic Societies

We invite your comments and questions on this article. Please send them to ecozoicsocieties@gmail.com.

I was recently asked, “What is different about CES?”

My response was, “Our Ideas.”

So how does that make CES different?

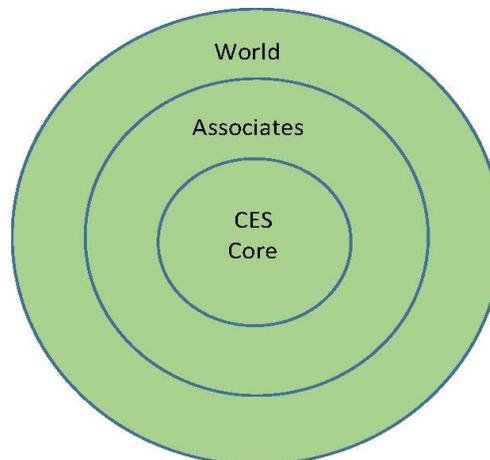
There are many organizations concerned about ecological well-being, but there is only one organization, CES, that has been organized and operates for the purpose of developing and promoting the particular set of ideas with which we work. I’ll come back to this.

As we enter 2016 (our 16th year of existence), we are making one key change and considering a second one:

First, we are re-imagining CES as an association. Specifically we are saying

CES is an association of people dedicated to research, education, art, and action for the transition to ecozoic societies.

As “an association” we think of CES as three concentric circles: (1) An inner **core** of people in North Carolina and elsewhere who, working mostly as volunteers, do the day-to-day work of CES, (2) **associates**, including members of CES, who are supported by the work of CES, see it as a resource, make contributions to it in the form of articles, poems, music, art, commentary, or donations, or otherwise engage in its programs or work, and (3) the larger public of the **world** where we and our associates are one of the many clusters of activity bringing about a transition to ecozoic societies.



Second, we are considering a new mission statement, which is

The mission of CES is to enable the transition to ecozoic societies by establishing the priority of ecology and culture over economics and industry in the global development discourse and imaginary. We carry out our work through research, education, art, and action, and through providing services to our members and others. Our work is organized around the categories of publications (print, online and social media), education and events, art and action, and global services.

Ecozoic societies are societies of life. They focus on the flourishing of life on Earth (ecology) and full human development (culture). Building blocks of ecozoic societies include the new story of an integral, evolutionary Earth community, bioregionalism, and ecological spirituality.

[Please note that this mission statement has not been approved by the Board of CES and is subject to change. The current mission statement of CES is: “*The mission of CES is to advance new ideas and new ways of living for an ecozoic (ecological-cultural) age, through publications, education, arts, and action.*”]

Our Ideas

I said I would return to the “ideas of CES.”

Internally in CES we have had some differences concerning what the focus of CES’s action in the world should be. Some have wanted CES to focus on its publications and educational programs—in other words its ideas—and others have wanted the focus to be on hands-on activities and demonstrations projects. We support on-the-ground action, work with groups engaged in action projects, and sometimes initiate action, but going forward the clear focus of CES will be ideas, a particular set of ideas and their applications and implications. These ideas are not fixed, they are constantly under development and refinement.

A reader of this article might wonder if this means CES has some special knowledge or has a specialized language. We don’t have special knowledge in terms of knowing things from a superior position. We have just worked hard for 15 years to build up a body of knowledge. Some of this knowledge is original, but most of it involves synthesizing ideas of others. Our primary source is Thomas Berry, but we draw on the work of many others. We seek to provide useful guidelines and understandings for the great transitions humanity is undergoing. A few of our terms, such as “ecozoic,” are specialized, but most are not. We intend for our work to be clear and to be experienced as opening up, not as confining.

Saying CES is about ideas is not a one-way street. We don’t just put out ideas, we invite the sharing by others, especially our associates, of ideas with us and with others through our

publications and programs, and not just in prose. Thomas Berry wrote that bringing humans into a new mode of civilizational presence involves

- Critical reflection,
- Story; and
- Shared dream experience

Many of our deepest thoughts, as well as our stories and dream experiences are beyond expression in prose. Artistic expression often provides the clearest insight. This is the reason we say our work is research, education, **art**, and action. By art we mean the multiple modes of expression beyond prose, such as poetry, story-telling, music, painting, rhythm, liturgy, and so on.

One way of understanding history is that it is a long conversation or discourse. The discourse *is* the culture of a certain time and place. It is what makes people the humans, societies and civilizations that they are at that time in place.

In the late modern period, the period beginning in the twentieth century and especially the period following World War II, a globalized civilization has arisen with a discourse that privileges economics and industry. Economics in the preceding sentence stands for the emphasis on economic growth as the key to social improvement in all dimensions; and industry stands for all that is represented by the industrial revolution and its implications for global development and for humans in the context or culture of this mode of development. For a better understanding of this, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transition*, D. Paul Schafer, *Revolution or Renaissance*, and Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development*. The mission of CES is to transform the global development discourse and imaginary to one that privileges ecology and culture. By imaginary we mean all those ways of knowing or imagining beyond prose.

Further Detail on CES

CES serves as a forum for consideration and development of a discourse that privileges ecology and culture. We carry out our work through research, education, art, and action. We invite people to join in association with us, either formally through membership, or otherwise. We organize our work around these categories:

- Publications
- Education and Events
- Art and Action
- Global Services

Publications

“Publications” concerns the various ways CES disseminates ideas. We publish a bi-monthly online magazine called *CES Musings* and a print publication called *The Ecozoic*. We maintain a

website, www.ecozoicsocieties.org, and we post on social media, such as facebook. We may eventually have a CES Press.

Publications has always been the heart of the work of CES. We have high ambitions for *CES Musings* and *The Ecozoic* because we believe there is an absence of publications dealing with the matters of concern to us. It's very hard to describe this area other than by reference to our foundational documents, which are posted on our website. A short way of stating what concerns us is to state these five basic ideas:

The two great transitions of our time are

1. A geo-biological change from the terminal Cenozoic era to an emerging Ecozoic era, and
2. A historical change from economic-industrial societies to ecological-cultural (ecozoic) societies.

In responding to these transitions, humans need to understand

1. The ecological crisis is the primary limiting factor in human development.
2. There are two existential threats to humanity, weapons of mass destruction and the ecological crisis. Only the ecological crisis can be the basis of reforming human societies.
3. For there to be a viable human future and for nature to flourish, we must move from economic-industrial societies to ecological-cultural (ecozoic) societies.

All of our publications concern understanding these ideas and considering their implications for thought and action.

We would like for *CES Musings* to be some combination for our readers of *The New York Review of Books*, *National Geographic*, *The Economist*, and a strong advocacy publication from a particular perspective, such as *The National Review* or *The New Left Review*. To call our magazine "musings" may seem frivolous or indefinite, but the term fits well. To "muse" is to brood, meditate, or consider thoughtfully. A "musing" is a period of reflection or thought. Other definitions include "deeply or seriously thoughtful" and "calm, lengthy, consideration." We currently send *CES Musings* to 1,000 people. Our goal is to reach 10,000 within three years.

We would like for our print publication, *The Ecozoic*, to be a journal concerning the ideas described above. For those who grasp and are grasped by the ideas, they will see many *relata*. For them the ideas will not be constricting, but rather will open up a vast area for reflection.

As to the type of journal we envision, I would pick out *Foreign Affairs*. The articles in that publication are thoughtful, but the presentation is not academic as such. The articles are meant to speak to a broad range of readers and not to a people of a specific academic discipline. Our goal for circulation of *The Ecozoic* in three years is 1,000. Just as with *National Geographic*, which requires subscribers to become a member of the National Geographic Society, CES

requires subscribers to become members of CES. A subscription to *The Ecozoic* is one of the benefits of membership in CES.

Education and Events

We will not go into as much detail in the other categories of CES work in this article. Perhaps we will provide more detailed information about them in future articles.

In the category of “Education and Events,” we organize our work around these subcategories:

- Events, Conferences & Colloquia
- Educational Programs
- Educational Resources
- Presentations and Commentary

Art and Action

In the category of “Arts and Action,” we organize our work around these subcategories:

- Ecological Civilization
- Process-Relational Philosophies and Law
- Artists And Writers for the Ecozoic
- Collaborative Actions for Social Change

Global Services

In the category of “Global Services,” we organize our work around these subcategories:

- Membership Services
- Fulfillment Services for Publications and Other Resources
- Operations and Volunteers
- Finance and Legal

Summary

Ideas change history. At the very least, ideas are among the forces that change history. We offer CES as an association that is organized and operates for the purpose of developing and disseminating a particular set of ideas and their applications and implications. We hope you will join in our association.