

Protecting the Body of Mother Earth Global Climate Justice post-Cochabamba

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Andro-centrism or eco-centrism?

Our colleagues will report on outcomes of the COP17 summit just held in Durban.

My focus is the two cultural paradigms that underlie climate politics and the need for strategists in the global climate justice movement to be clear on the fundamental contradiction between them.

The first paradigm is andro-centric. In the dominant Euro-American tradition - religious and secular, philosophic and economic - 'Man stands over and above Nature' which is 'his' property and resource.

The second paradigm is eco-centric. This is held by people responsible for the labour of social caring and subsistence and who know that humans are themselves nature - nature in embodied form.

This insight - coming from women's, peasant, and indigenous activism - deepens the socialist analysis of capitalism in a way that balances the emphasis on unjust relations of production with attention to 'relations of re-production'.¹

Women care givers, peasant farmers, indigenous gatherers are not just victims of exploitation, but skilled workers who think differently about the meaning of value and of security.

In the context of climate politics, the andro-centric paradigm is sometimes known as ecological modernisation but it is economic - not ecological in any way.

By contrast, the eco-centric paradigm favours economic provisioning methods that hold the regenerative humanity-nature metabolism together - Protecting the Body of Mother Earth.

Production or re-production?

The small nation of Ecuador marked this radical conceptual shift in its 2008 Constitution - a document that defies the old 'man over nature' hierarchy by giving juridical rights to nature.

Article 71: Nature or Pachamama, where life is re-produced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution ... Every person, people, community or nationality, will be able to demand the recognition of rights for nature before the public [institutions].²

¹ Ariel Salleh (1997) *Ecofeminism as Politics: nature, Marx and the postmodern*, London: Zed Books / New York: Palgrave..

² For excerpts from the Ecuador Constitution (2008): <www.therightsofnature.org> (accessed 15 November 2011).

The Manifesto composed for all life by the First Continental Summit of Indigenous Women in Peru also speaks an inclusive and seamless politics of sex, class, ethnicity, and species justice.

*We join our wombs to our mother earth's womb to give birth to new times in this Latin American continent where in many countries millions of people, impoverished by the neo-liberal system, raise their voices to say ENOUGH ...*³

In April 2010, the World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, proposed an economic model based on the principle of Living Well. To quote:

We are all valuable, we all have a space, duties, and responsibilities. We all need everybody else. Based on complementing each other, the common wealth, organized mutual support, the community ... develop[s] ... without destroying man and nature ...

*... what matters the most is life. But ... the two development models, the capitalist and the socialist need rapid economic growth ... societies must work to set new standards of universal economic sufficiency.*⁴

The ni-Vanuatu of the South Pacific point out that their customary provisioning methods are a source of both sustainability and resilience.⁵ In the words of the international peasant organisation Via Campesina: 'Small Scale Sustainable Farmers Are Cooling Down the Earth!'.⁶

Moreover, IBON in the Philippines observes that only the labour of people working hands-on in the landscape can begin to repair the damage done by mining, deforestation, agro-industry, urbanisation, and manufacture.⁷

This year, Vandana Shiva, an ecofeminist from India, and Canadian water activist Maude Barlow introduced a draft Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth at the UN:

*... affirming that to guarantee human rights it is necessary to recognize and defend the rights of Mother Earth and all beings in her and [recognising] that there are existing cultures, practices and laws that [already] do so ...*⁸

But achieving constitutional 'rights for nature' is just a beginning. Global climate justice requires on the ground material changes, particularly in the global North whose profit oriented relations of production threaten relations of re-production worldwide.

³ 'First Continental Summit of Indigenous Women', *Lucha Indigena*, Llapa Runaq Hatariynin, 34-Inti Raymi 2009. Translation by Marilyn Obeid, Sydney.

⁴ Evo Morales (2010) 'People's World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth Rights, Cochabamba, 19-22 April': <www.boliviaun.org/cms> (accessed 24 February 2010).

⁵ Ralph Regenvanu (2010) 'The Traditional Economy as Source of Resilience in Vanuatu' in T. Anderson and G. Lee (eds.), *In Defence of Melanesian Customary Land*, Sydney: AidWatch.

⁶ Via Campesina (2007) 'Small Scale Sustainable Farmers are Cooling Down the Earth': Online posting <via-info-en@googlegroups.com> (accessed 5 November 2007).

⁷ IBON (2010) *Primer on the Climate Crisis: Roots and Solutions*, Quezon City, IBON International.

⁸ Cormac Cullinan, 'The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth' in Maude Barlow et al, *Does Nature Have Rights?* Ottawa: Council of Canadians, 2010.

Ecological modernisation or Living Well?

The Cochabamba Peoples Conference was a turning point in climate justice politics - generating impressive recommendations on deforestation and agriculture, the structural causes of climate change, historical responsibility for debt owed by the industrial North to the rural South, and an International Court of Climate Justice.

But the discussion of climate mitigation, adaptation, financial provision, technology transfer, and capacity building - firmed up at Cancun and carried on to Durban - does not prove helpful for Protecting the Body of Mother Earth.

In fact, the conclusions of the Cochabamba working group on Intercultural Dialogue to Share Knowledge, Skills and Technologies contradict the objective of Living Well, giving legitimation to the ecological modernisation agenda of the global North.⁹

Now ecological modernisers promote productivism, business-as-usual, as the way to reduce the carbon footprint: 'green jobs' for the manufacture of globally competitive innovations and services; retrofits, renewables, and efficiency audits.¹⁰

At Cochabamba, a capitulation to ecological modernisation set in on the question of 'Enhanced action on technology development and transfer', where an urgent need for development opportunities to 'catch up' with affluent consumer nations was expressed.¹¹

*... enhancement, development, demonstration, deployment, diffusion and transfer of new and existing innovative technologies is urgent and essential to strengthening developing country Parties capacities in particular those listed in Art. 4.8 of the Convention.*¹²

Here, 'development' and 'technology transfer' are understood in eurocentric terms and assumed to be necessary for dealing with climate change. But the word 'strengthen' in this text refers to economic not ecological capacity.

Economic or ecological capacity?

Moreover, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, an error of judgment is made when development and tech transfer are treated as ecologically, socio-economically, and culturally neutral processes.

The causal link between consumer economies and climate destabilisation, the entropic effects on nature of mining, manufacture, transport, electrification, and planned obsolescence are sidelined and mystified by modernisers.

But reliance on so-called 'technological efficiency' for environmental benefits simply displaces the material turnover and environmental impact of fuel inputs

⁹ CMPCC (2010) 'Final Conclusions, Working Group 13: Intercultural Dialogue to Share Knowledge, Skills and Technologies', World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, Cochabamba, April. Online posting <boletin@cmpcc.org> (accessed 5 May 2010).

¹⁰ Arthur Mol and David Sonnenfeld (eds.) (2000) *Ecological Modernization Around the World*, London: Frank Cass. See also: World Watch Institute (2009) *Towards a Transatlantic Green New Deal: Tackling the Climate and Economic Crises*, Brussels: Heinrich-Boell Stiftung; UN Environment Programme (2008) *'Global Green New Deal'*: <www.unep.org> (accessed 10 September 2009).

¹¹ CMPCC (2010), Clause 41.

¹² CMPCC (2010), Clause 43.

and carbon outputs from one geographic location to another.¹³

And the 'technology' of carbon capture and storage (CCS) is quite literally an expensive (read profitable) exercise in shunting carbon around the ecosystem.

Further displacements, social ones, occur in the financialisation of climate politics with permits to pollute and tradeable offsets. Schemes like the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) or REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) appropriate common livelihoods in the global South.¹⁴

At Cancun, a Green Climate Fund was proposed - reparative grants or loans to be made available for the global South to purchase of the North's renewables.

Some activists, unaware of the systemic costs to nature of technology transfer anticipate benefits from such a fund. But its green gifts are unlikely to arrive without 'conditionalities' on the sovereignty of land, seed, water, and air.

Use of the terms 'poor' and Less Developed Countries (LED) in mainstream climate politics is heavily colonial and manipulative - patronising peoples of the South, particularly mothering women as ignorant contributors to the climate crisis or pathetic climate victims.

Yet as global footprint analyses reveal, per capita carbon emissions from the periphery of capitalism are way below those of wealthy urban high tech consumer nations.

The South's acceptance of financing from developed country parties amounting to a set percent of their GNP may compensate the debt of imperial plunder, but ultimately, it can only sacrifice local eco-sufficiency to the logic of global markets.

So too, the trade in technologies for 'adaptation' will undermine the symbolic integrity of cultures still relatively free of the competitive, reductionist, commodifying, digitised, mindset.

Global governance or autonomy?

The Cochabamba recommendations - insightful and otherwise - emerged in the shadow of a new order of global institutions for earth system governance, one that threatens the autonomy of communities everywhere.

This hegemony, known as ecological modernisation, falsely poses as 'environmental management' and it disempowers publics North and South with the jargon of risk analysis and biosecurity.

Living Well notwithstanding, the Intercultural Dialogue at Cochabamba accepted this transnational program of neo-liberal control when it conceded to a Technology Executive Board; Technical Panels for adaptation and mitigation; Innovation Centres, and A Technology Action Plan.

¹³ Richard York and Eugene Rosa (2003) 'Key Challenges to Ecological Modernization Theory', *Organization & Environment*, Vol. 16: 273-88; Richard Heinberg (2009) *Searching for a Miracle: Net Energy Limits and the Fate of Industrial Society*, San Francisco: International Forum on Globalization and the Post Carbon Institute.

¹⁴ Ana Isla (2009) 'Who Pays for Kyoto Protocol?' in Ariel Salleh (ed.) *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*, London and New York: Pluto Press; Climate Connections (2010) 'Shell Bankrolls REDD': Online posting <aa@globaljusticeecology.org> (accessed 8 September 2010).

These agencies would lock in with a Multilateral Climate Fund composed of Regional Groups of Experts in Investment and Development and a compliance mechanism to remove trade barriers.¹⁵

The infrastructure, to be phased in at the Durban COP17 also marshals academics, and operates as

(b) Broker and technology accelerator: a proactive role of stimulating technology development and transfer through catalysing collaboration between the private sector, public institutions and the research community...¹⁶

The World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF) will conduct 'needs assessment' and fund technology transfer projects in conjunction with advice from business, the EGTT, UNEP, UNDP, UNIDO, the World Bank and UNFCCC among others.

The GEF will 'support technology centers and networks at global, regional, and national levels', fostering green capitalist pilots like CO2 Capture and Storage from Sugar Fermentation in Brazil; Green Trucks in China; and Renewable Wave Energy in Jamaica.¹⁷

The GEF and technocrat elites of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), International Energy Agency (IEA), and World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) will shape details of the new umbrella of governance.

The complexity of this ethereal multilateral bureaucracy gives the lie to the material urgency of climate change and dispels any vision of grassroots self-determination.

Going forward to Durban, emissions reductions remain voluntary; resourcing for the mooted Green Climate Fund is vague; and the egalitarian principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' swings on the uncertain future of the Kyoto Protocol.

Occupying the Agenda of COP17

Human rights cannot be met without establishing the Rights of Mother Earth.

For this reason, the Global Climate Justice movement will put eco-centrism before andro-centrism, relations of re-production before production, Living Well before ecological modernisation, ecology before economics, and autonomy before global governance.

In a democratic UNFCCC negotiation, COP and CMP, Ad Hoc Working Groups and Subsidiary Bodies would be advised as follows:

¹⁵ Third World Network (2010) 'Divergent views on bodies of the UNFCCC technology mechanism': <www.twinside.org.sg> (accessed 31 August 2010); see also Third World Network (2009) 'WIPO: Traditional Knowledge Committee ends with uncertainty over its future': <twinside.org.sg> (accessed 31 August 2010).

¹⁶ Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action, Fourteenth session under the Convention, Bangkok, 5-8 April 2011, and Bonn, 7-17 June 2011 Item 3.5 of the agenda - Technology development and transfer.

¹⁷ Global Environment Facility (2010) 'Implementation of the Poznan strategic programme on technology transfer': <www.thegef.com/gef/ccpublist> (accessed 31 August 2010).

- that ecology and economics are different material orders such that problems in nature cannot be fixed by money.¹⁸
- that the global North's ecological modernisation agenda (adaptation, tech transfer, efficiency etc.) is inappropriate to long term ecological resilience because it is framed by the short term interest of capital accumulation.
- that the response to climate change by counting, commodifying, and trading in units of gas is ecologically reductionist and should be replaced by an holistic scientific analysis of the humanity-nature metabolism.
- that culturally autonomous eco-sufficient communities in the global South have already pioneered sophisticated technologies for low carbon, ecologically regenerative economies.
- that the Cochabamba model of Living Well can guide the socio-ecological conversion of climate polluting industrial nations toward sustainability.
- that educational training as 'capacity building' for this transition in the North can be provided by peoples of the global South.
- that UNDP will be critical in facilitating this new intercultural dialogue which is based on the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', consistent with a revitalised Kyoto Protocol.

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¹⁸ Ariel Salleh (2010) 'From Metabolic Rift to Metabolic Value', *Organization & Environment*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 205-219.

