Culture and Climate Change

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Executive Summary

Modernization over the last 200 years has disconnected humanity from the idea that, regenerating natures resources is essential for human survival and economic prosperity. Reconnecting Humans with Nature is the cultural aspect of the agenda for moving towards delivering integrated solutions to climate change, depletion of natural resources and human development.

The recognition of the right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment as a human right in itself, will be a significant step in fostering the cultural paradigm shift and allowing citizens to challenge society to address effectively climate and depletion of natural resources. More important it will be a European step to recognize the shared human cultural heritage of connecting with nature. Europe can do this on its own cultural terms, and complement the revived traditional and spiritual philosophies contained in the new cultural eco-focus of other parts of the world, e.g. in China and Bolivia/Equador (indigenous populations).

Culture, Media and Education has a key role to play in transforming public eco-engagement to the mainstream. Focus on the creative eco-solutions, instead of the eco-problems, is one answer. Cultural actors in the wider creative economy & trusted role models in culture should be the vehicle. In education a better balance between information/knowledge focus and emotional intelligence/skills including art education, better use of information technology and learning from more complex demonstration projects. Engaging the necessary mass of cultural, media and educational institutions will however only happen when it's legitimized politically broadly by policymakers. This is due to the status and independent identity of these institutions, not least in Europe.

1. The Cultural Disconnect between Humans and Nature

Culture is the mediator between nature and humans. Cultural evolution reflects how the relation between humans and nature has developed. From the dawn of humanity and until recently the relation between humans and nature has been a cyclical relation. Hunter-gatherer, pasturel and agrarian societies have all e.g. incorporated celebrations of the cyclical rebirth of nature through seasons as part of their core rituals and beliefs. This reflected how their daily livelihood depended on the regeneration of natural resources and on nature itself.

Modernization – the time we now live in - has brought an end to this relation between humans and nature. Starting with the industrial revolution in Britain in the 1700 hundred, modernization spread to the rest of Europe, America and Japan 100-150 years ago, and after year 2000 modernization – now under the term globalization – is soon reaching all individuals on this planet, rich or poor. This tiny period of 250 years evolution have changed the mindset and behavior of all persons on this planet.

Humanity's new mindset and behavior now is disconnected from nature: the linear consumption of nature, as if natural resources were eternal. "Buy and throw away" is the modern lifestyle mantra – now embraced as the aspiration of 7 billion people. The time has however come to change this mantra.

Modernization and its mindset has clearly brought material benefits for some time, which is why it has been so successful. But the material and economic benefits are now and in the immediate future turning into economic, human and environmental disasters. Essentially because the natural resources are not eternal, and need to regenerate - not to run out, and thereby safeguard future material and economic prosperity.

Reconstructing a positive cyclical connect between humans and nature of relevance to their daily lives, is the task for the coming decades large scale transition to sustainable living. This will not be a return to our ancestors primitive beliefs, but a common sense recognition that our ancestors had a good point: regenerating natures resources are essential to human survival and economic prosperity.

The disconnect between Humans and Nature, between Culture and Ecology is now so ingrained in contemporary global culture and lifestyle of both developed countries and emerging economies, that it becomes one of the single largest impediments for sustainable economic growth.

2. A New Culture – Nature Relation: Reconnecting Humans and Nature

The last few years scientists, civil society, business and most world state leaders have agreed that climate change and earths limited bio-capacity, implies that the planet must radically change its economic value creating / production system by 2050. The purpose is to avoid absolutely devastating consequences for humans and all life on the planet, gradually starting now, and forecasted to accelerate to the catastrophic by the end of the century. This consensus was exemplified in the UN Climate Summit Decision in 2009 of limiting global warming to 2 degrees celcius maximum.

From a cultural point of view the solution can be said to be a new global culture of recycling nature. From a business and political point of view the solution can be said to be green growth and a global transition to a green/ecological economic system by 2050.

Whatever point of view, the key solution will be to construct a modern and global, cyclical relation between humans and nature: Renewable energy, re-generating natural resources and implementing ecological economics. With some more words:

- A reconstructed global production system where all waste is used as a resource for the next link in the global production chain, establishing circular loops for all production on the planet. This is needed to achieve a global ecological footprint at 1,4 global hectar/person assuming a global population of 9 billion in 2050. This is what is available globally at that size population. 1,4 gha/person will be a reduction by a factor of 4 compared to existing footprint in developed countries – Europe is today using between 4 and 8 gha/person.

- A reconstructed global renewable energy production, a solution to the climate change crisis if begun now. This is needed to achieve a global reduction of carbon footprint of 50% in 2050 compared to 1990 levels. This will be a reduction of 80%+ , i.e. also a reduction by a factor of 4, from the current level in developed countries.

- A reconstructed world economic system which values assets regenerating earths bio-capacity, and give dis-incentives (e.g. tax) to any commodities and dynamics, which diminishes this capacity. By building its value creating mechanisms on optimizing resource-efficiency of the pertinent natural resources of the planet such an economic system should also stabilize the world economy, compared to continuing a system allowing dynamics of un-sustained bubble - speculation to govern macro-economics.

- A new partnership with parts of the world (LDCs) needing special assistance to increase their Human Development Index.

The old mantra of "buy and through away" will be replaced with "lease and recycle":

- Recycling will replace throw away. Recycling cannot be done only through individual initiative. It requires that the entire global production of everything is restructured. Some call this the Cradle to Cradle philosophy.

- Leasing products and services will replace buying. Leasing is much more efficient, because it puts the responsibility for recycling on the enterprise leasing the product, not on the individual person buying. The leasing enterprise, will have a large quantity of components to recycle in new forms, when otherwise thrown out. This requires large scale agreements with those who can use the waste in other products and R&D to be able to use the waste in new products. A whole new set of business opportunities, which only enterprises, not individuals, can develop.

This is in its totality a vision, but most of the elements in the vision have already been tested in real life or are in the process of being developed by the world's leading scientists and engineers in different fields. What needs to happen now is to make larger integrated demonstration projects in cities/regions around the world, showing that solutions can work in practice.

An organization, like the Ecological Sequestration Trust, is working on doing exactly this and is furthermore developing open source planning tools for integrated planning, which has so far been missing sadly. Apart from the technical and integrated planning challenges, a challenge is to ensure public support for new solutions. This will be done by the Trust through cultural planning and engaging the cultural sector in the given area. This will showcase how important culture is for successful development.

All this boils down to a global paradigm shift: A new culture-nature relation, which connects humans and nature.

This new culture-nature relation builds on cultural heritage and belief systems across all cultures and religions: Recognizing the recycling of nature's resources, as a fundamental universal principle of vital importance for human and all life.

As a universal principle, which safeguards human rights and freedoms, the natural consequence would be to include it in the Universal Human Rights Charter.

3. Re-thinking Human Rights

The Human Rights system of the United Nations is used as a normative and legal system. It is as such an instrument to foster change though normative arguments, political reform and ultimately legal action. It has been built over 60-65 years - since the second world war - as a global rights based system which can be taken to courts. For this reason it is superior to other current global discourse on e.g. cultural rights, environmental rights, rights of nature, animal rights etc.

Though the original Human Rights Charter does not mention environment (nor nature, ecology or climate) with a single word, the Human Rights system have since 1972 cautiously added bits and pieces on environment. It is now commonly recognized - e.g. by the United Nations Environment Programme - that the Human Rights interrelate to environment protection in the following ways:

- The environment as a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of human rights (implying that human rights obligations of States should include the duty to ensure the level of environmental protection necessary to allow the full exercise of protected rights);
- Certain human rights, especially access to information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters, as essential to good environmental decision-making (implying that human rights must be implemented in order to ensure environmental protection); and
- The right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment as a human right in itself. This is however still a only a debated approach, and e.g. the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2010 rejected a proposal from the Parliamentarian Assembly of Council of Europe to add a protocol to the European Human Rights Convention on this matter.

Environmental rights have in parts of the world gained important recognition with legal enactment, but the wider global dimension is not covered, which makes the interrelation between the Human Rights and Environment important.

With 40 years increased focus on environment worldwide, from a layman perspective it is very difficult to understand that the right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment

is not already since long been ratified in an addendum to the protocol of the European Human Rights Convention as well as the United Nations Human Rights Charter:

- Universal joint action is the only way to mitigate Climate Change and reduce the loss of natural resources – national action is not enough, this is common knowledge. The rejection to have an addendum, implies that citizens can only indirectly use human rights instruments to challenge lack of actions in Europe in support of lowering carbon and ecological footprints. This appears outright "old fashioned" and inconsequent – if the convention was being born now it's difficult to imagine not to have included the right to a health environment as a human right.
- Why this political lack of will to create a legal framework in Europe and globally to challenge in-action. The scientific facts of the consequences of climate change, and the loss of natural resources, shows that it should be in the interest of politicians and society across parties to allow instruments to challenge societies. This has been done in the social and economic area over the last 30-40 years with success, why should it not be done in the area of environment which increasingly will be the defining matter for economic growth, water/food, security/survival, health and wellbeing.

An addendum to the European Human Rights Convention, could elaborate details on what a secure, healthy and ecological balanced environment implies. This could e.g.:

- Clarify the notions, which may be helpful in introducing an addendum to a global level. E.g. a notion like ecological balanced environment could be clarified by elaborating on the principle of recycling nature's resources.
- At the same time it offers Europe to reinforce its values, such as the value of diversity and pluralism. This may e.g. be to stress cultural and biological diversity as key to safeguard in an ecologically balanced environment.
- Bring Europe in the front of defining globally an area of vital importance for both European and Global identity and future normative development

4. Cultural perspectives on Ecology from other parts of the world

China: A new Confucian ecological turn make China rediscover its soul

Over the last 30 years an amazing range of works from "Cultural China" and sinologists have increasingly emphasized "*The Ecological Turn in New Confucian Humanism*" as Harvard/Beijing University professor Tu Wei-ming termed it already in 2002. He cites how the whole Confucian triad of heaven, earth, and humans rests on a seamless yet dynamic intersection between each of these realms. Without harmony with nature and its myriad changes, human society and government is threatened. Tu Wei-ming predicts that "The New Confucian ecological turn has great significance for China's spiritual self-definition, for it urges China to return to its home base and rediscover its own soul. A sustainable future of the global community will benefit from it".

3 years later in its 11th Five-Year Plan the Peoples Republic of China made its 180 degree turn and praised ecology as its new direction. In its recent 12th Five-Year Plan, China has taken a great leap forward in firming its eco-direction. Furthermore this has spilled back to the cultural area. The plan heralds culture as one of the pillars for a sustainable development, and asked stakeholders in the cultural sphere to come up with new approaches and provide advice to people on how to face and solve the environmental challenge.

Bolivia: Nature granted legal rights building on indigenous concept of Mother Earth

Law of the Rights of Mother Earth is a Bolivian law (number 71), that was passed by Bolivia's Plurinational Legislative Assembly in December 2010. This 10 article law is derived from the first part of a longer draft bill that is scheduled to be considered by the Assembly in 2011

The law draws deeply on indigenous concepts that view nature as a sacred home, the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) on which we intimately depend. As the law states, "Mother Earth is a living dynamic system made up of the undivided community of all living beings, who are all interconnected, interdependent and complementary, sharing a common destiny.

The law also establishes the juridical character of Mother Earth as "collective subject of public interest", to ensure the exercise and protection of her rights. By giving Mother Earth a legal personality, it can, through its representatives (humans), bring an action to defend its rights. Additionally, to say that Mother Earth is of public interest represents a major shift from a anthropocentric perspective to a more Earth community based perspective. [5] .

The law would give nature legal rights, specifically the rights to life, regeneration, biodiversity, water, clean air, balance, and restoration. It calls for public policy to be guided by *Sumaj Kawsay* or *Vivir Bien* (an indigenous concept meaning "living well," or living in harmony with nature and people), rather than the current focus on producing more goods and stimulating consumption.

In practical terms, the law requires the government to transition from non-renewable to renewable energy; to develop new economic indicators that will assess the ecological impact of all economic activity; to carry out ecological audits of all private and state companies; to regulate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; to develop policies of food and renewable energy sovereignty; to research and invest resources in energy efficiency, ecological practices, and organic agriculture; and to require all companies and individuals to be accountable for environmental contamination with a duty to restore damaged environments.

Ecuador adopted similar rights of Nature in its Constitution in 2008.

The United Nations General Assembly in 2009 passed a Bolivia-led resolution proclaiming April 22 as "International Mother Earth Day." The measure was endorsed by all 192 member states. But Bolivian President Evo Morales envisioned much more, vowing in a speech to U.N. delegates that a global movement had begun to lay "out a Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth."

From this it appears that increasingly – at least in China and Bolivia/Equador - cultural heritage is used to legitimate ecological turns in policies. Nationalist uses of cultural heritage can be dangerous, but in the case of ecology, the turn is no easy "scapegoat" for other problems. Rather, it builds legitimacy in wider parts of the population to act for a sustainable future – green growth – in spite of the embedded challenges.

Europe – given its history of internal conflicts – do not have a Confucius or *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) shared among all Europeans. But we do have much else, notably the Human Rights as a shared value framework, which has helped us overcome and address the horrors of the Second World War. The Human Rights in Europe has high cultural value as a common value-framework for citizens. This is perhaps the most important reason, why European politicians should consider positively an ecologically balanced environment as a human right.

This would be a step towards a similar addendum at the global level. In spite of global differences, the Human Rights system of the United Nation's, is global. What could be better than the peoples of the planet agree to a healthy ecology as a Human Right. It would respond to what the world needs today, and it's a winner: Recognizing nature's regeneration as being of vital importance for human and all life, is already recognized by lay people around the world as common human cultural heritage – why make a problem of it ?

The Council of Europe have exploited cultural heritage to build cultural understanding with "cultural routes" projects. Lets now build a "global cultural route" based on shared human heritage of connecting with nature.

5. Role of Culture, Education and Media

It lies at the core of the European cooperation to encourage its citizens to participate in building Europe. This is also an essential part of enjoying human rights.

With a looming European and Global crisis, due to strained financial and ecological resources, and a real failure in addressing climate change effectively, other tools to engage citizens in macro-problem solving, which may shift the mainstream perception and political environment deserves consideration.

So far direct citizen engagement in accelerating the delivery of integrated solutions to address climate change, depletion of natural resources and new sustained economic growth over the coming decades, has not been a strong European priority. Europe has led efforts for international green growth and has taken active part in the Education for Sustainable Development Efforts as a consequence of the Aarhus Convention. But in relation to public engagement the effort is in closer to be on the side than to be at the heart, even if action can be fostered with relative modest means. Citizen participation in eco-matters therefore is still limited to special interest/advocacy NGOs and some researchers/educators.

Accelerating change however requires mass participation. This in turn may help legitimize broad based political support for change. This is why leading institutions in culture, education and media, should consider to engage in eco-social agenda's as part of their normal daily practices.

Engaging Culture, Media and Education can be accelerated if stimulated and legitimized politically.

1. *Focus on creative solutions and vision to deliver - not the problems.*

Martin Luther King is famous for his statement: I have a dream. Martin Luther King did not say: I have a nightmare. The lesson being, that to engage the wider public in an issue of paramount importance to them, you need to invoke the positive vision – the ability of us all to make the impossible, possible.

The positive vision is:
(a) the transition to a sustainable society - based on an economy of renewable energy and recycled natural resources - is possible to achieve with adequate citizen support,
(b) it will achieve prosperity and self-reliance in harmony with nature,
(c) the investment to do it will bring measurable economic, social and health benefits short term (this decade) and long term (coming decades/2050 being final goal).

2. *Role of Culture and Media:*

To reach wider audiences images and storytelling by trusted role models and cultural personalities, which communicates the vision, is essential. This goes for film, media, games etc, for music, performing and visual art, for faith, philosophy, literature, for sports, leisure & tourism, for food & fashion, for design, craft and architecture etc.

Combined, institutions in the cultural sector reach all parts of societies and appeal to all. They can make sustainability culturally attractive. These institutions each have different sets of challenges in turning to eco-practices – and building eco-social leadership. Many have started to act on this: From the slow-food movement to high end sustainable Nordic cuisine, from the best selling film Avatar to leading architects and designers, from leaders of faith to artists exploring urban farming and eco-living. But many more must follow to make this mainstream going beyond elites and specially interested. The key is to made ecology part of existing daily institutional practices, not a special add on and to share and develop best practices.

One scenario could be: Every European city acknowledges 5-10 recognized large cultural institutions in different fields with high degree of peer/audience recognition as eco-leaders. This will legitimize institutions to act without being in conflict with their mandate or public support received. Cultural institutions can also become neutral social spaces for dialogue and critique in Europe strengthening civic-government-market dialogue on steps to deliver eco-transition.

In an economic sense the agenda will be to foster a win-win by synergy between the creative economy and the emerging green economy/clean tech sector. Both are among the least affected by the financial crisis, and synergy between the two is a key to future growth.

3. *Role of Education:*

Education for sustainable development (as developed internationally since the Aarhus Convention), will remain crucial. Education however also has an added role beyond education for sustainable development in the cognitive sense, access to information etc. Increasingly the major challenge for education will be to educate students in all subjects on practical solutions globally and locally, including their own community.

A major area to include is all the human and social sciences in order to foster creative and innovative mindset and behavior for supporting new solutions. Knowledge and understanding must be connected to preparing mindsets for positive action.

Formal and non-formal education need to integrate a wider array of methodologies to prepare students to the challenges and opportunities they will face. Among the key to consider is:

- Art Education – creative subjects including music, drama, film/media, design, craft – are all major sources for our future ability to imagine, design and communicate sustainability. The Seoul Recommendations from the UNESCO World Congress for Art Education stressed this in its recommendations (#3), and this should put into practice. Art Education should prepare students to participate and contribute to the merge and growth of the creative economy and green economy.
- Information technology. A major part of solutions for transitioning to an ecological age is to smart technologies, virtual communication and so on. Digital literacy is crucial for an ecological age.

- Interaction with demonstration projects. The coming decade will start witnessing the creation of large scale (500.000 – 2 mil. population) demonstration projects for integrated urban/rural eco-solutions, which will serve as learning repositories for the world. In Europe certain cities/regions will/may later qualify for it, in China, India and elsewhere such eco-cities/regions are developed. Smaller and other partial local efforts can serve a similar function as some have already done.

4. *The partnerships: Cities/regions and culture, education and media*

This in return requires partnerships between cities & regions who have the political responsibility for transforming their cities/regions to sustainable communities, and culture, media and education.

Without partnerships with the overall relevant authorities many institutions of culture, media and education will not find it legitimate to engage, and will simply not know how to contribute to city/region greening efforts, and the intended community benefits will be lost.

5. *Political Legitimization of engagement by culture, education and media:*

Culture, education and media is placed in-between civil society, state and market, and typically see themselves as independent, or at an "arms length" from government, business or sectarian interests.

Some institutions may choose not to engage in the subject for the same reason. This is evidently their right and must be respected. Very many however have an interest, but will hesitate to engage in something, where they may be criticized for engaging actively, since their mandate/core business is in culture, media or education. For these institutions – in fact very many – its of high importance to have a broad based political legitimization of engaging. This may include:

- The introduction of the right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment as a human right in itself.
- The expressed support by UNESCO, Council of Europe and other intergovernmental agencies. The Arhus Convention & the Decade for Education in Sustainable Development is an example that this may work, but is far from sufficient for what is proposed here.
- National government endorsement and support
- City and regional government endorsement and support

Support from the city and regional government is essential for most institution. This is the closest political authority, who directly or indirectly affects the environment in which institutions operate.