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Sustainability and Ecological Civilization: An Outline for Getting From Here to There

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Industrialism and business as usual is the path to ecological destruction.

Imperative task for the 21st century is to move toward a sustainable ecological civilization.

Working definition in a market society of ecological civilization (or ecocivilization) is to make economic growth mean ecological improvement through the pursuit of sustainability.

This means the pursuit of profit must result in a reduction in pollution, depletion and ecological damage and a restoration of the living world or so-called natural capital.

To accomplish this requires new market rules, laws, regulations for the market to send clear price signals for sustainability. Sustainable good and services must become cheaper than comparable polluting goods and services; gain market share; become more profitable than polluting alternatives.

A sustainable social order must also be just and fair. Long term success of a sustainable social order cannot be based on wealth and waste by a minority and poverty and depravation by the majority.

Therefore, a sustainable social order must encompass ecological and social justice and a global convergence on a decent life for all globally.

Thus the market rules, laws, and regulations of an ecological civilization must define by law, and constitutional amendment if necessary, for that fiduciary responsibility means the pursuit of ecological improvement and sustainability as result of actions and support for social and ecological justice by individuals, business, non-profits, and government

Sustainability is a basic co-evolutionary force between the ecosphere and the planet where the ecosphere in response to all changes behaves in ways that re-shapes the planet in the interest of life.

Self-conscious human action has become a crucial part of sustainability as an expression of the dynamic of sustainability that has shaped the earth and life from oxygen atmosphere to soil.

The global transformation to an ecological civilization cannot rely upon action from government or Paris Climate Conferences. Action by each of us where we live, work, go to school is crucial.

The ecological transformation must address all aspects of human action including industry,

agriculture, aquaculture, forestry.

Addressing climate change is a necessary and urgent focus for the pursuit of sustainability to bring human related greenhouse gas emissions as fast as possible to a sustainable level.

This means concrete reductions to about 3 tons of carbon equivalent emissions per per person per year or 21 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalents per person year for a population of 7 billion, **and** at the same time remove carbon dioxide from atmosphere and ocean through sequestration in biomass and in soil in similar amounts of 3 tons per person per year to reach a pre-industrial level of under 300 parts per million of carbon dioxide.

Methane as powerful green house gas is a crucial and accessible target for immediate action in addition to carbon dioxide action.

The global average of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions is about 5.4. But the average of big and rich polluters is much higher and poor nations often much much lower, already far below 3 tons per person per year. For example in the U.S the average is around 17 tons per person per year.

Each of us as individuals, families, neighborhoods, towns, cities, states need to develop and implement our own long-term plans for 3 tons of carbon per person year emissions and 3 tons of carbon per person per year sequestration.

A reasonable planning horizon is eight four years plans totalling 32 years to reach these goals by 2040.

The place to start is where we are. The first step is to understand our carbon dioxide and other green house gas emissions and then to make plans to reduce it and make economic growth mean ecological improvement.

Transforming fossil fuel energy globally to renewable resources is the best example of ecological economic growth leading to ecological improvement. This means trillions of productive investment that create jobs, strong communities.

There are similar opportunities in almost all aspects of ur lives for productive and transformative ecological investment.

Our plans will inform what tools we need to accomplish these tasks, for example, revolving loans funds, community revenue bonds to invest in sustainability, tax credits, ability to take advantage of tax equity financing on a community level. Financing engineering can be democratized and employed for ecological ends.

Good tools are available on line from WRI (World Resource Institute, see this) to determine local carbon dioxide equivalent emissions and to use that information to build plans for the future and make relevant choices.

Now is the time for us to take action and make our communities a model for others around the globe to follow. The future is very much in our hands. We need no permission from Washington or elsewhere to start moving toward a sustainable ecological future now.

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Roy Morrison's latest book is Sustainability Sutra Select Books, NY 2017. He builds solar farms.

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