

## Reflections on the WFC Justice Commission

*By Hans-Peter Duerr, July 2007*

As mentioned in our small-circle meeting on "Crime against the future" on the occasion of the founding of the World Future Council (WFC) in Hamburg I consider the issue "Crime against the Future" or its more positive formulation "Future Justice" as **one of the central issues well destined to be approached by the WFC.**

Its importance in this context is closely connected with the very commonly raised question:

**Who in the human society is actually most suited to optimally foresee the future in order to give the best advice and guidance what should be done to achieve sustainability or at least to prevent irreversible disaster, and where and how do we start to achieve this?**

Obviously nobody can claim that this or that person will have this saintly foresights and we, as **the presently chosen councillors will certainly not claim to be such saints.** From my point of view of the cosmos, and more narrowly, our world, uncertain forecasts are not only a matter of human ignorance but a consequence of an essentially open future allowing only the prediction of possibilities rather than certainties for future events. Important in this context is, however, that there remain still strictly valid statements, as e.g. the law for conservation of energy and in a certain sense of matter which do not require saints to realize this.

Looking at our **GeoBiosphere** we recognize that there do not exist unique general rules and recipes what should be considered sustainable but, in fact, there are hundreds millions ways to realize sustainability as demonstrated by the existence of hundreds millions different living species on earth which by their coexistence indicate having been equally successful in their past development. They have, however, in common, that they have learned to obey certain important, so-to-say, **taboos**, i.e. not to destroy or to tilt the common playing field and not to violate certain fair rules to be observed by all players of the different games. Beyond obeying these tabus all games will be characterized by a combination of a continuous process of differentiation but aiming ultimately at a cooperative integration (win-win-game) of all variants without sacrificing their diversity (Paradigm of the Living).

Translated to the level of human beings and their societies this means that **we have to concentrate our attention on these taboos** by requiring general rules to be strictly observed and appropriately punished if violated. In the natural process this punishment is effectively executed through self organization by being kicked out from the evolution of life because of refusing mutual aid. In the human sphere these taboos were and are still apparent and engraved in our various traditional ethical and moral values and rules. Their necessity is obvious if life is meant to continue. In our secular world they may be rephrased by a set of certain legal frame conditions: "You shall not ..!" Violation of these conditions would be considered as a "Crime against the future", a violation of "Future Justice".

One immediately realizes that, establishing such taboos or **general frame conditions for sustainability**, this does not require saints to point out such conditions and to phrase them, because their validity are evident.

As an example:

**Our Responsibility for the Preservation of the Creation  
With its growing and diversifying Vitality,  
Our Reverence for all Life  
And the Observance of Human Rights  
Shall strictly forbid us Human Beings  
To develop and to operate any Techniques and Technologies  
Which in the Worst<sup>\*)</sup> Case of their Failure  
Can Cause Inacceptable<sup>\*\*)</sup> Damage  
According to these general Basic Principles.**

\*) The worst possible case of failure meaning: "irrespective of its probability to occur"

\*\*\*) "Inacceptable" in particular means that the resulting damage affects to a very high degree Others (now and/or in the future) than the Ones who directly or indirectly take advantage of these techniques and technologies.

One may even argue about such a formulation, in particular with the correct statement that being and remaining alive necessarily requires insecurities and taking unaccountable risks. But taking risks means taking the main risk yourself and not transfer it to others and calling failures simply collateral damage. Metaphorically: You may play Russian roulette at your own head but not at the head of your children and grandchildren!

In this category belong the development, threat and employment of the insanely vicious mass destruction weapons and also the civilian nuclear power plants which, besides other dangers, can provide the explosives.

Obviously the use of non-renewable energy resources is another case of obvious non-sustainability. More general:

**There should be a Taboo  
To take advantage of certain processes  
Where the negative consequences (costs and damages)  
Are not compensated but simply externalized,  
That is, being transferred to neighbors or future generations.**

Our earth, a very locally limited and 20 km thin (atmosphere and reachable depth) skin of the earth globe, is essentially only an open system with regard to the exergy (usable energy) of the incoming sun radiation which can be used "without paying" (free income). This steady exergy input constitutes the necessary source for all life on earth and ourselves allowing a continuous evolution of the GeoBiosphere to more complex system. The growth is not a material growth but one to more complex and more sophisticated arrangements of matter and higher levels of bright consciousness.

By concentrating on the reestablishment of the taboos necessary for the evolution of life and our own survival we provide the preconditions for our participation in this evolution. It plays the role of providing a reasonable even playing field for all forms of life and fair rules for the compatible coexistence of a huge number of possible different games. The fine-tuning of sustainability has still to be achieved by the many different adequate developments of the various species. For the development of the human beings and their various societies and cultures it suggests not to apply a single general and global strategy of sustainability but to seek for the fine-tuning highly

decentralized, subtly diversified approaches being, in a way, complementary to each other such as to provide altogether an optimum mutual balance.

In this complex multifarious and cooperative integration process the highest synergy will be achieved between an unfolding of the various individual human beings and also their cultures in which they are embedded and a simultaneous process of cooperative integration of all to a highly diversified, sophisticated and flexible organism. This simulates in a way what we actually emphasize in our civilization to be our main goal: "Freedom and Democracy", however with the important different interpretation, that "freedom" will always be connected with corresponding responsibilities towards the Whole, in particular the community in which we are embedded, and "democracy" must necessarily include the personal participation in the decision making process and not be simply reduced to casting a vote here and then, hereby effectively delegating once power of decision to some distant and unknown oligarchy. This appears to be a rather complicated process to be practically executed if the number of participants becomes huge. The solution we can learn from nature is: **Subsidiarity and a holon-structure**, where the Whole consists of holons, consisting of sub-holons, consisting of sub-sub-holons etc like the cell-structure and cell-below-structures of our own body characterized by an extreme independence (closure) of the parts (holon) and combined with a vital cooperative connectedness and existential dependence on the superstructure, the Whole.

I may summarize this in the bold statement:

**Crimes against the Future  
are the  
Violations of the Paradigm of the Living.**

***The Paradigm of the Living  
Expresses conditions to guarantee sustainability  
Containing as basic elements:  
The Creative Process of Differentiation  
("free" individual Unfolding, Emancipation)  
Connected with the  
Creative Process of a Cooperative Integration<sup>\*)</sup> of the Diverse  
To generate on a higher level a new, more advanced Whole  
Where the Whole is more than the Sum of its Parts  
(sophistication, flexibility, consciousness).***

\*) For the cooperative integration process to ever have a statistically significant chance to succeed is a possible consequence of the "General Connectedness" of the Wirklichkeit demonstrated in Modern Physics (Wirklichkeit = Potentiality) in contrast to the basic Disconnectedness as assumed by the old Classical Physics (Wirklichkeit = Reality).