



justice, peace & creation concerns ecumenical earth

climate change / water / biotechnology / economic globalization & ecology

documents, resources, links

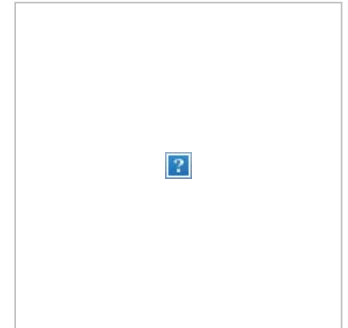
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Economic globalization and ecology

Globalization has unfolded through various projects, such as colonialism and imperialism. Its contemporary economic and political form is corporate globalization, guided by the neo-liberal economic model and supported by modern technology, media and military presence. At the same time, globalization is not limited to the economic and political spheres, but has cultural, ecological, ethical, religious and even ecclesiological implications as well. In its effort to address the challenges of globalization, the JPC team focuses on **economic justice**, a vision of Earth as Home and a life-centred ethics.

Its methodology includes

- *analysis* aimed at a clear understanding of the global system,
- *critique* of the neo-liberal market ideology that is the engine of rapid globalization, and
- alternatives that emerge in people's struggles for life.



Rice sheaves drying
(Indonesia, 2004)

**+ Documents, resources,
links on economic
globalization**

In this context of growing inequality, concentration of power, social exclusion and ecological destruction, people are longing for **life with dignity in just and sustainable communities**.

If that goal is to be attained we need to work for

- **equity** as basic fairness that also extends to other life forms,
- **respect for diversity** as recognition of the complementarity of, for example, cultures species, religious traditions,
- **accountability** as a way of being responsible towards one another and Earth itself,
- **participation** as the optimal inclusion of all involved,
- **sufficiency** as a commitment to meet the basic needs of all, and
- **subsidiarity** as determining the most appropriate level for decision-making, supporting the downwards distribution of power.

There are various ways in which economic globalization affects the environment:

- multinational corporations moving operations to developing countries to avoid the stricter environmental regulations of their home country;
- shipping of toxic wastes from industrialized nations for disposal in countries of the economic south;
- free trade agreements which restrict the capacity of national governments to adopt environmental legislation;
- destruction of southern rainforests to provide exotic timber for northern consumers and to create pasture land for beef for northern hamburgers;
- transportation of goods and materials over vast distances, producing significant polluting emissions;
- pressure on countries of the economic south to engage in ecologically-destructive agricultural practices to produce cash crops for export in order to service foreign debt payments.

There are a number of common dynamics that underlie these manifestations of the destructive linkages between economic globalisation and ecology:

- a significant imbalance in power exists between industrialized nations of the north and countries of the economic south which allows the richer nations to exert undue influence in international negotiations on multilateral financial, trade and environmental issues; an important point in case is the conflict between the multilateral environmental agreements (such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biodiversity) and agreements and rules of the World Trade Organization;
- uncritical observance of the ideologies of free markets and deregulation has effectively transferred much decision-making authority from governments, with their mandates to address the common good, to unaccountable and profit-oriented multinational corporations;
- international financial institutions, whose policies are largely decided upon by the richer industrialized nations, hold nations of the economic south financially hostage and place requirements on them (external debt repayments, structural adjustment programmes, poverty reduction strategy papers) that are touted as being for the benefit of poorer nations but which in many cases undermine social well-being and ecological sustainability in those countries;
- the globalizing of an economic system based on an ever-expanding growth in production and consumption to feed insatiable consumption demand in industrialized countries, with destructive ecological consequences at local, regional and global levels.

There are options for challenging the ecologically and socially destructive aspects of economic globalization and pursuing alternate approaches which build sustainable communities. One of the foci for discussion of such options was the **World Summit on Sustainable Development - WSSD** (Johannesburg, Aug. 26 to September 4, 2002). Civil society members, including faith communities, critiqued the inter-governmental negotiations on proposed WSSD agreements and proposed alternate strategies that address the social inequities and

ecological destructive of economic globalization.

One of the roles of faith communities in these debates is to articulate the spiritual and ethical dimensions. The Ecumenical Team that participated in the WSSD in Johannesburg from 26 August - 4 September 2002 presented an analysis of an alternate approach to economic globalization based on justice and sustainability.

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