

## **Preface for the Japanese edition of “Fair Future”**

In June 2012, twenty years after the legendary “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, political leaders of the world again gathered in Brazil to negotiate global action against humanity’s increasing environmental imprint. Yet two years of preparations, the increased worldwide attention for ecological damages, about 50.000 participants present in Rio, and the high-flying rhetoric of political leaders did not help: the final declaration of the summit contains only weak statements and miserably fails to lay the groundwork for further action in future years. Twenty ears after the international community has explicitly set out to solve global environmental challenges, multilateralism is caught in a deadlock.

This is all the more surprising, as the utmost urgency for truly effective action has much increased during the past years. Never before has the number of hungry and chronically undernourished people surpassed the embarrassing threshold of one billion people, as happened in 2009. The prospects to realize basic subsistence rights to all people remain most dire. Likewise, never before in human history has the amount of greenhouse gas emissions risen as fast as in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet already in 2009, leaders at the Copenhagen Climate Summit failed to agree upon emission reduction goals that would prevent the planet from dangerous global warming.

Observers still attempt to figure out why it happens that the international community currently is unable to act. Some blame the unmanageable number of participating states in United Nations conferences, others the undemocratic nature of decision-making. But there is no doubt that the frustration of developing countries about the perceived lack of fairness in particular on part of the United States, but also of Canada, Japan, Australia, and parts of European Union, creates the biggest stumbling block. While the US has by far the biggest environmental footprint among the larger countries in the world, it shows itself unwilling to drastically change course. –It is true that Germany had abruptly changed its energy policy course in the wake of the Fukushima tragedy to abandon nuclear energy and forcefully establish renewable energy. However, the decision to exit the nuclear path was taken after decades of political pressure from a popular anti-nuclear and environmental movement. No other comparable country so far followed

Germany's lead to target 100% electricity supply through renewable energies by the year 2050. Developing countries, above all China, dug in their heels, rejecting any notion of change by themselves. As they point their finger on the lacking action by most of the global North, while most Northern countries keep perpetuating the old fear of loss of competition vis-à-vis the South, the impasse in multilateral negotiations is perfect. The impasse thus rests on lacking steps to mitigate not just environmental pollution, but also international inequality. As long as the equity aspirations are not met, the ecological objective cannot be attained. "Rio plus 20" again proved the assertion of this book, namely that there will be no effective ecology without greater equity.

Indeed, it has been the experience throughout twenty years of global environmental governance that the planet cannot be protected without redesigning the global society. The deep social divisions that run across the world have turned out to be major obstacles to putting the global affairs in order. After all, also global resource use is marked by huge disparities, given that 25 percent of the world population use about 75 percent of the world's resources. As a consequence, Southern countries are distrustful, they hesitate to engage in cooperation for preserving the biosphere. They feel in many ways disregarded or even mistreated, and see themselves as victims of a long history of colonialism and domination. Above all, they fear that any serious move towards a green economy will damage their prospect of eventually catching up with the old-industrial nations. As the "Rio plus 20" summit demonstrated once again, to save the environment at the price of perpetual inequality is not an option for them. Why should countries like China, Brazil, South Africa or India enter an agreement that would allow them fewer or more expensive natural resources than those of industrial countries for an indeterminate period? This is why greater fairness between North and South has become a necessary condition for achieving effective planetary protection.

However, the reverse is true as well: there will be no equity in the world without ecology. At the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009 it was the representative of Tuvalu, the small Pacific island state, who articulated this fact of the matter most forcefully. He desperately tried to awaken the world community to the threat of extinction that his country faces if global warming was not immediately brought to an end. His alarm brings into sharp relief the fact that the bitter effects of climate change are primarily going to hit poor countries and poor people. It becomes less possible to rely on rainfall,

groundwater levels, temperature, wind, and seasons – all factors which, since time immemorial, have made biotopes hospitable for plants, animals and humans. Obviously, a rise in sea level will make some of the most densely populated areas of the globe impossible to live in. Less evident is the fact that changes in humidity and temperature will trigger changes in vegetation, species diversity, soil fertility and water deposits – not to speak of possible natural disasters. Far from being simply a conservation issue, climate change is about to become the invisible hand behind agricultural decline, social erosion and displacement of people. In other terms, the excessive emission of greenhouse gases undermines human rights, such as the rights to food, water, and shelter, which constitute the basic level of equity for all world citizens. Basic equity for everybody, therefore, requires more ecology, i.e. a much smaller environmental footprint of industrial countries.

This book points out how the two great challenges of our time, ecology and equity, are interconnected. It demonstrates how in the 21<sup>st</sup> century sustainability calls for greater justice, and, in turn, how greater justice calls for more sustainability. The authors hope that their work helps to bring this issue to public attention in Japan, as it did in Germany and other countries.

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