



THE CENTER  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND LAW

CEEL Advancing principles of environmental ethics in law and life.

BEI ethical principles for a new economics

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These principles have been collected from the research and Relatos of the BEI. They are not meant to be a complete list, but rather an evolving discussion on environmental ethics and economics.

1. We recognize the extreme inequalities created by the current free market system and the great power imbalances which limit procedural and substantive rights.
  - \$ → created for ownership → capable of ownership → capable of sale → capable of loss (and for what?)
2. We recognize the need to set the economy in the appropriate context, based in ecological realities, with limits and long-term thinking.
3. We recognize the danger in the commodification of life, patents on life and the creation of new life forms.
4. We need an ethic of care within this new economy.
  - Cannot have justice for any without justice for all.
  - Taking care of the vulnerable takes care of all.
5. We recognize that the main drivers to biodiversity loss are economic and population growth
  - Growth is not [always] good.
  - Market = consumption
  - Richness is just as problematic as poverty.
6. We need to change our language concerning the market
  - Redefine “progress”; redefine “human well-being”; redefine “natural resources”
  - Look at alternative frameworks, e.g. Gross National Happiness in Bhutan
7. We must demand our public servants to be public servants: to protect the public welfare.
  - It is their obligation/duty.
  - Public welfare
    - Knowing and reducing the local/regional footprint of their constituency
    - Promoting food security and integrity
    - Nurturing neighborhoods, fostering locophilia
    - Enact green infrastructure policies and provide incentives to citizens and developers
    - Engage private developers
    - Promote green job creation
    - Dispel the myths (jobs v. environment; development v. environment)
    - Localize businesses and industries into the community (providing jobs is not enough; look at local investment v. profits)

8. We recognize the importance of corporate sector engagement in a community and an economy
  - Need nation-state and international laws to internalize the externalities.
  - Net-positive Impact on Biodiversity – international mining company, Rio Tinto
  - Corporate social responsibility, Local Agenda 21 efforts – oil company, Petrobras
9. We recognize the importance of certain sectors to advancing a new economy, namely tourism, fisheries and cities.
  - Cities: more than half of the population; 67% of total energy consumption; 70% of total green house gas emission
  - Tourism: creating cultural mimicry as opposed to fostering authentic culture; with tourism comes other sectors of importance: development, food and indigenous involvement
  - Sustainable development is a principle of international law.
  - Management plans need to be put in place to protect nature and culture, and the impacts of tourism on each.
  - When existent, local communities and indigenous peoples must have a voice in the planning and implementation.
10. We recognize the unjust consequences of the free market system, or the real costs of the free market system.
  - Privatized health care does not place human health as its priority.
  - The individual will always succeed over the collective.
  - The commons will always lose to the self-interested.
  - It creates obstacles for fair trade.
  - It promotes injustice: it directly supports sweatshops, child labor, and involuntary servitude.
  - It promotes power imbalances: it creates an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor.
  - It promotes efficiency over quality of life, job creation, human rights and the well-informed decisions.
  - It violates international law: duty not to harm, principle of prevention (of harm), duty to act in good faith.
  - It violates domestic law: protect the general welfare.
  - **It does not care** for the poor, the vulnerable or the discarded.