

This workbook was prepared as a start up resource for educators working on environment and sustainability questions in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The workbook explores creative ways of working with ethics in education.

It includes six different sections:

- Being Critical: Encourages us to look beyond the obvious, and to practice becoming more critical.
- Self-Validating Reduction: Encourages us to examine what happens when the potential of people, communities, places or landscapes is reduced in damaging ways.
- Complex Questions and Ethical Quandaries: Encourages us to reflect on what happens when complex ethical questions are not easy to address.
- Ethics In Action: Encourages us to explore ethics as an everyday activity.
- Re-imagining Possibilities: Encourages us to 'think outside the box' and to creatively re-imagine the future with new possibilities.
- Ethics Around the World: Encourages us to think about how ethical questions are being discussed in different places and cultures around the world. You can 'add your story' by describing ethical questions in your own community, context, culture and country.

Each section includes stories, learning activities and extension activities. Some of the sections include additional handouts. The book allows for 'working in the book', making this a workbook to get started with environmental education, ethics and action at the start of the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

The book represents an international collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme, Lakehead University (Canada) and Rhodes University (South Africa).

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ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION, ETHICS & ACTION
A WORKBOOK TO GET STARTED

Published by: United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in collaboration with Share-Net

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Hertfordshire SG14TP
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Tel: +44 14 38748111
Fax: +44 14 38748844
E.mail: orders@earthprint.com

The publication can also be ordered from Share-Net:
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Citation: Jickling, B., Lotz-Sisitka, H., O'Donoghue, R., Ogbuigwe, A. (2006) Environmental Education, Ethics, and Action: A Workbook to Get Started. Nairobi: UNEP.

Printed by: Share-Net

1st Edition: 2006

ISBN: 92-807-2656-0

Job Number: DEP-0761-NA

Illustrations by: Tammy Griffin, Basil Mills

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Cover Design: Francis Lotz

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Translations: English to French by Gilles Bédard; English to Spanish by María José Hernández Ramos; English to Italian by Filippo Laurenti.



This work book is printed on recycled paper, through a not-for-profit environmental education printing group in Africa (Share-Net)

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acknowledgements

Writing this book was a collaborative project and the authors are indebted to many people for their support, encouragement, ideas, and critical perspectives. We would especially like to thank Nikki Köhly for research support and for writing the first draft of the Rhodes Environmental Policy 'Ethics as Action' story; Rose Ogot for contributions to Environethics; Lawrence Sisitka and Pat Irwin for advice and help in compiling the 'Great Elephant Debate' story; Lawrence Sisitka for critical reading and advice throughout.

We would also like to thank Anthony Weston for many things, but in particular for his generosity in sharing ideas about self-validating reduction and for his leadership in re-imagining environmental ethics. Sections on these topics were first prepared by Anthony for a workshop presented with Bob Jickling at the 1997 conference of the North American Association for Environmental Education in Vancouver, B.C. The inspirations remain his, but the present authors accept responsibility for any errors in interpretation.

This workbook was introduced during a workshop at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress, held in Turino, Italy in October 2005. During this workshop many people contributed to the development of this edition. Their stories have been incorporated into the text, and their suggestions helped shape our revisions. We are grateful for the energy, enthusiasm, and thoughtful comments from this international group of environmental educators.

foreword

Environmental Education, Ethics and Action, Getting Started

'To think is easy. To act is difficult. To act as one thinks is the most difficult of all.' These words by the German poet Goethe encapsulate the essence of the branch of philosophy known as ethics. Ethics lies at the heart of all human endeavour, from the foundations of human civilisation and the great religions, to the day-to-day decisions we all make in the course of our lives.

Environmental decision making by governments, businesses and individuals cannot be separated from ethics. For example, consider the issue of climate change. Decisions that we make today—at the policy level and as individual consumers of energy and natural resources—will affect all of humankind for generations to come. As pressures upon the Earth's natural systems increase, more and more people, young and old alike, are realizing that environmental issues concern everyone and that they cannot be resolved by technical means only. They understand that environmental management also rests on questions of ethics.

At UNEP we receive many visitors, from schoolchildren to politicians, diplomats and government leaders. The most interesting questions they ask are often related to ethics—issues to do with poverty and environment, climate change and the Kyoto Protocol, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, indigenous peoples and biodiversity, the link between environment and cultural and spiritual values, etc. Through these visitors, and people I meet around the world, I have learned that ethics needs to be incorporated into environmental awareness raising and into mainstream education.

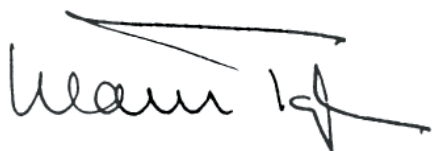
The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 emphasizes the need not only to inform and educate people so they can make the right decisions, but to ensure that such education is propelled by an underlying ethical reasoning. It is therefore a pleasure to introduce *Environmental Education, Ethics and Action: A Workbook to Get Started*. This book will help educators to incorporate the challenging, complex, yet vital world of ethics into teaching and learning.

The object of *Environmental Education, Ethics and Action: A Workbook to Get Started* is to link ethics to everyday activities. It takes ethics out of philosophy departments and puts it squarely onto the streets, into the villages, towns and cities, and connects ethics to all life on Earth. The book's primary audience is teacher trainers, college instructors, university professors and others responsible for professional development in education. It is also aimed at environmental educators who want to take their teaching more deeply into the questions that lie at the heart of sustainable living.

The activities featured in this publication have been developed and tested over many years. The authors have used them in undergraduate and graduate courses and in workshops in many parts of the world. Most recently a draft of this book was introduced during a workshop at the Third World

Environmental Education Congress in Torino, Italy, 7–10 October 2005, where the participants were encouraged to provide feedback based on their practical experience. Their thoughts and comments have been incorporated in this publication.

In the end, however, this book is just a beginning. No book can cover all ethical possibilities, nor can one set of authors speak for everyone. It is a starting point that invites people from all over the world to seek examples in their own communities, and from different cultural perspectives. The nineteenth century biologist and social philosopher Herbert Spencer once wrote: 'The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.' We encourage readers to continue the work begun here. Write stories, devise activities and keep us informed about your innovations. It is through the simple perspectives of local environmental values that we can hope to inspire differentiated yet unified action to conserve the global environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Klaus Toepfer', with a long horizontal line above it.

Klaus Toepfer
Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme



introduction



Why this book?

It is timely. Global efforts to save the planet often remind us of our need for ethics. Many environmental conventions and treaties have come up in recent years to ring the ethics bell even louder. People around the world want better relationships between themselves, within communities, between communities, and between nations. And they know that this includes relationships between humans and the more-than-human world, or, for others, between humans and the rest of Creation¹. In using the term 'more-than-human world' we suggest that exploring new relationships with Earth not only benefits human beings and their needs (although we recognise how important these are), but also the needs and well-being of forests, fields, rivers, animals, creatures in the sea, and the atmosphere.

This book recognises that ethics is about relationships between individual and group interests—human or otherwise—around some idea about the common good. People know that we need to pay more attention to these relationships; there are signs everywhere. Newspapers run columns on 'everyday' ethics. Some days it seems that the word 'ethics' is never far from the lips of concerned people everywhere. Perhaps this is because people around the world are realising that globalisation is essentially about an economically driven vision for the world and that an approach which over-emphasises economics is failing humanity². So far, globalisation has not helped very much in a resolution of many of the World's most pressing problems. As Nelson Mandela said, 'Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times'³.

Many of the world's social and environmental problems are not resolved because ethics questions are not asked. Ethics, with all the challenges that go with this idea, can initiate discussions about living well, about justice, equity, and common interests. This Workbook provides some beginnings for these discussions—openings, starting points, challenges, and even hope.

In imagining this project, we had a common vision—to improve our teaching, and to encourage students and teachers to consider ethics everyday. As environmental educators, we all share a deep concern for the human and the more-than-human world. And, we are interested in how we humans can live in different ways—ways that are not destructive to other humans, and to the more-than-human world. This book is written for teacher trainers, college instructors, university professors, and other professionals with responsibilities for professional development in education. It is also aimed at those passionate environmental educators who seek ways to take their teaching more deeply into questions at the heart of unsustainable patterns of living. We have found that there is often very little 'practical' material available for teachers and teacher educators to 'get started' with ethics as an everyday activity. Hence this book.

The book is inviting, practical and creative. It encourages educators to examine stories that shape the world—stories found in newspapers, on television, on the streets, in the fields and forests. We encourage educators and learners to look at things people do, in their daily lives, and in citizen actions. Mostly, we encourage educators

and learners to tell stories — stories that are ethically inspiring, and stories that work.

While we want this book to be inviting, we have not shied away from harsh and difficult realities. Power, injustice, exploitation, greed, and degradation are some of the themes running through our stories. We encourage readers to make the invisible values that shape our societies more visible⁴. And we encourage readers to re-imagine the world in creative ways, to find alternatives, to seek answers, and to take action.

Indian activist and writer Arundhati Roy, in her book, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*⁵, reminds us that there is beauty yet in this brutal, damaged world of ours, and she encourages us to seek out the beauty, to nurture it and to love it. Her words encourage us to think about the future as open, and we recognise that there are ‘all manner of unimagined possibilities surround us’⁶. We think that an exploration of ethics is an important way to create an open, imaginative, just, and beautiful future.

Christina Boelcke
Director, Division of Policy Development and Law
UNEP.

Ethics and the environmental educator

Exercising our ethical abilities is part of being human. It is an ability that should be built into our lives such that it becomes ‘simply normal behaviour’. Ethics should not be an exotic activity performed by heroes, saints, and experts that reside elsewhere—it is a matter for everyone. It is the stuff of everyday activity.

There are many who recognise the importance of ethics, but we are still a long way from making

ethics an everyday activity. In spite of growing interest, ethics circles the perimeter of mainstream education. As long as this remains the case, the implicit message delivered to students, parents, teachers, schools, and citizens is that ethical practice isn’t particularly important.

In this book we explore creative ways of working with ethics in education. But first, we must clarify what we mean by ethics. It’s a tricky word that can take many meanings. For us, ethics is a *process of inquiry* and *critical thinking*; it is **not** about ‘preaching’, ‘indoctrinating’, or ‘inducting’ learners into ‘rules of behaviour’ or ‘codes of conduct’.

One way to start this process is to ask philosophical questions: What is a good way to live? Or, what is a good way to live in a given context? What are good relations between people and societies? What about good relationships between people and animals, species, ecosystems, or the more-than-human world?

Some think of ethics as relationships that include action, reflection, and doing. We are drawn to First Nations⁷ colleagues, and in particular Louise Profeit-Leblanc who asks ‘What makes us noble?’ She adds that ethics ‘has to do with upright living and making moral decisions based on this goal of being noble in our everyday activities’⁸. We can also ask: how does ethics inform everyday activities, and conversely, how do everyday activities inform ethics?

Seen this way, ethics is an open-ended process with the potential to expose new challenges and generate new possibilities. It is a process of making choices that enable better ways of seeing and doing things. This doesn’t mean that decisions and actions are never taken—we do act. It does mean, however, that ethical positions are open for discussion, re-examination, and revision.

In this book we provide starting points, ideas, and activities to get you started. We invite you to explore ethics in the everyday, and to discover the excitement and joy of doing ethics.

Some thoughts on how to use this book

To 'get started' with an exploration of ethics, we offer five topics, and five potential ways to get started:

- **Being critical** — here we encourage you to 'look beneath the surface';
- **Self-validating reduction** — this is an examination of what happens when the potential of people, communities, places, or landscapes is reduced in damaging ways;
- **Complex questions and ethical quandaries** — in this section we reflect on what happens when complex ethical questions are not easy to address;
- **Ethics in action** — this section explores ethics as everyday activities; and,
- **Re-imagining possibilities** — here we encourage you to think 'outside the box', and creatively re-imagine the future with new possibilities.

Topics include background notes, stories, and some guidance on activities. We find them engaging for young and old alike. We also find the questions and activities suggested can be used as they are, or adapted. One of the most exciting ways of adapting the activities is to find locally relevant issues and stories to share and examine. We have included a range of examples; but stories like these can be found anywhere, in all corners of the globe, and amongst all people. In the last section of the book we invite thoughts on all of the above topics from people around the world.

We encourage you to browse through the topics and find a place that feels comfortable to begin. Try a few activities. When you feel comfortable with these, try a few more and explore other topics and other stories. The stories we include are drawn from the experiences of people around the world.

As you get started, remember that there are many different ways to teach ethics. This book introduces activities such as analysing images in popular media, group discussion about complex issues, contemplating local and international scenarios, reflecting upon daily actions, and creatively imagining new possibilities. But remember, teaching about ethics isn't a value neutral activity. You will choose activities and teaching strategies just as we have done in writing this book, and no one can cover all ethical possibilities. You may develop some new activities that reflect your own interests and your approach to teaching. While teaching ethics is not value neutral, it is not about imposing ideologies or seeking consensus either. Our challenge is to encourage processes of thoughtful deliberation and creative actions.

Finally, teaching about ethics isn't for someone else. It is for everybody. How we approach the world, how we come to know it, and how we make meaning of our experiences are all shaped by our values, even if we don't notice this on a day-to-day basis. These values are sometimes called assumptions and are at the core of everything we do; and, they are at the core of all subject areas—even science. Seeking out assumptions, examining them, and making thoughtful decisions about how they affect our actions is the work of ethics.

Education would better serve the whole person if ethics were included in all subjects, thematic studies, and at all stages and levels. This is important work. Good luck!

being critical

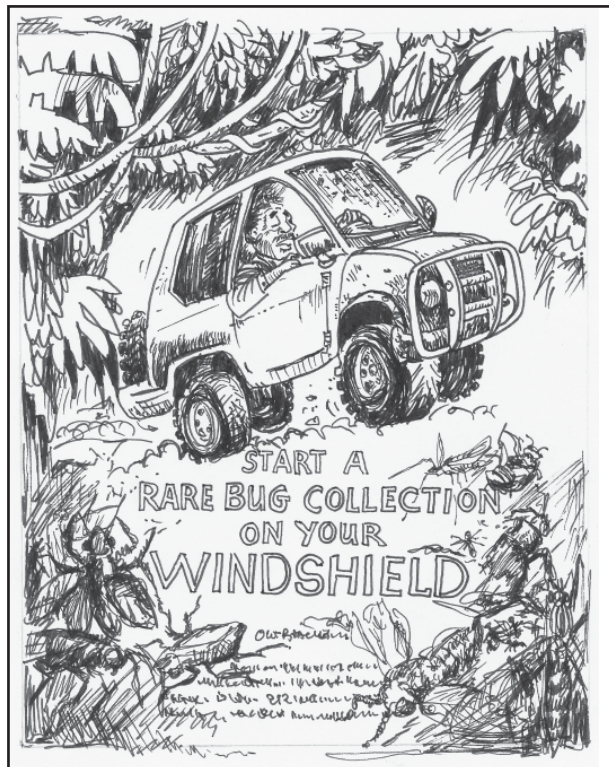
In this section we introduce activities that encourage you to 'be critical'. In particular, we explore some of our 'taken for granted' cultural assumptions. Becoming more critical may help us all to make the invisible more visible, and to make ethics more accessible.

Rare bugs, advertising, and unquestioned assumptions

In August 2002, talk about the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg was everywhere. During the early days of this conference the pages of major Canadian newspapers presented an array of perspectives. Some authors were more positive than others, but there was an overall sense of anticipation, and even hope. Big issues like global climate change and biodiversity were discussed.

Many Canadians had been thinking about biodiversity and they read, with interest, prospects for pressing this agenda forward. They had been lobbying hard for endangered species legislation.⁹ Some opinion polls indicated that as many as 94% of Canadians had urged the Minister of the Environment to give their country strong legislation in this area. Many found comfort in these numbers. They saw a strong undercurrent of environmental concern and, in particular, concern for disappearing species and habitats that support them. Reading the newspapers conveyed a renewed sense of optimism. It was good to know that biodiversity was being included in mainstream media reporting as the World Summit was getting underway. But, such optimism can be fleeting. Consider the Air Canada in-flight magazine *en Route*¹⁰ that was published at the same time.

Prominent amongst other marketing in this magazine was an advertisement for a four-wheel drive vehicle sitting in the middle of a jungle stream. It looked something like this:



The caption presented below this advertisement read: 'Start a rare bug collection on your wind shield.' Further below, in the small print, it said, 'Entomologists aren't the only ones who can discover a new insect. All you need is the ... '.

Here marketing gurus had invoked the collectability of rare insects—or even worse, the destruction of rare insects by their products' windshields—as a sales gimmick. And, their pitch is made to a community that supports strong endangered species legislation. What gives? Marketers are clever; they know how to sell products. Yet, this advertisement flies in the face of public sentiment. Why?¹¹

Canadians are not alone in such apparent confusion. Here are two other examples that seem to illustrate the same paradox.

A Natural High?

A Scottish tourism flyer encouraging visitors to experience a 'natural high' in the Cairn Gorm mountains tells a similar story. The flyer advertises the *'inspiration, adventure, and enjoyment'* of mountains as an enticement to patronise the new mountain railway that now carries visitors *'in total comfort (protected from the infamous Scottish weather!) from car park level to the new Ptarmigan Station and the higher lying snowfields in around fifteen minutes'*. On arrival, this Ptarmigan Station offers *'spectacular views combined with a mountain exhibition and the highest panoramic restaurant and shopping in the UK.'*

There are many ways to analyse this Scottish flyer. One can, for example, immediately see the juxtaposition of contrasting, even contradictory, messages. How does one reconcile the inspiration of the mountains—the natural high—with the total comfort and protection of the artificial environment of the railway car? And then, there are unforgettable mountain memories that are topped off with dining and shopping¹².

Possessing Rarity?

Another interesting story is to be found in a special edition of the South African Airways in-flight magazine, *Sawubona*, published during the WSSD. While reporting on many interesting sustainable development issues, it also carried an advertisement for an extremely rare stone, the Tanzanite¹³. The headline read *'At last it is acceptable to wear something on the endangered list'*. A featured selling point of this rare stone is a trademark that reads *'Mark of Rarity.'* Text in a more recent advertisement for this stone reads:

'With only a single known source at the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro, and just over a decade's supply left, tanzanite is the world's rarest and most mystical gemstone. Insist that your tanzanite comes with the Mark of Rarity—it's your assurance of authenticity, accurate grading and an ethical route to the market.'

It seems ironic that a 'Mark of Rarity' (or scarcity in other words) is seen as an 'ethical route to the market'. The hidden message is about private ownership of a scarce resource, or 'get your tanzanite before it runs out, and make sure you pay a high enough price for its rarity!'

When extracted from their advertising contexts these examples leave many of us shaking our heads. Why do such seemingly contradictory messages so often go unnoticed? What can be done?



Investigating unquestioned assumptions

As we can see from the examples above, beliefs, or assumptions, are often embedded so deeply within the text and images of cultural artefacts (such as advertisements) that they become almost invisible. Hidden this way, they remain unquestioned. These unquestioned assumptions are what environmental philosopher Neil Evernden¹⁴ has called the *real authorities* of a culture. They are also at the root of an ethics problem. It is these assumptions, whether we are aware of them or not, that shape our practices and the decisions we make. With this in mind, we begin our inquiries by searching for these embedded assumptions—these 'cultural authorities'. Once

revealed we, and our students, can be more critical as we evaluate priorities and preferred futures. This process can be described as the reflective practice of ethics.

1. Consider the advertisement for the four-wheel drive vehicle sitting in the jungle stream with smashed insects on its windshield. What hidden messages does it contain? How are people to relate to nature? Or, to the more-than-human world?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

2. Consider the stories 'A Natural High?' and 'Possessing Rarity'. What hidden messages do

they contain? What do they reveal about how people are to relate to each other and the natural world? Also look closely at the language used. Is it respectful of people, animals, plants, ecosystems, or does it imply that they are simply objects of consumption? What are the consequences of language choices?

3. These kinds of stories are easy to find. Newspapers, and other media, can be good sources, particularly if an issue is followed over a period of time. Find some. By collecting a series of articles over a period of weeks, or even months, a range of perspectives can be gathered. What messages do these various perspectives contain? What assumptions do they rest on? With assumptions revealed, discuss preferred options.

Using the workbook to 'get started':

Comment on the message in the 'being critical' section of the workbook. What are the authors suggesting we do? Comment on the views / perspectives of the authors.

Could you use the examples provided above in your teaching?

How would you adapt or change this section of the workbook for your teaching?

Section six of this workbook has more examples from around the world that challenge us to 'be evermore critical'. Can you use them?

Thinking critically about curricula

Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, in his widely read book *Small is Beautiful*,¹⁵ raised doubts about the efficacy of Western education. Despite widespread belief in education as the key to a resolution of our problems, and despite vast amounts of energy and resources devoted to education, Schumacher suggested that little had changed.

Now, 40 years after Schumacher's observations, there are some indications that environmental education may be having some impact. Perhaps most telling is that the corporatist community is lashing out against the field. For example the New York Times reported:

The environmental education movement is based on flawed information, biased presentations and misguided objectives. At worst . . . impressionable children are being browbeaten into an irrational rejection of consumption, economic growth and free market capitalism.¹⁶

While attacks on environmental education are increasing, corporatists have also sought to exert their influence through development of school curricula and teaching aids. These often support consumerism and models for economic growth that Schumacher warned us about.

An interesting example emerged in the Yukon Territory in Northwest Canada after a group of school children published letters in a local newspaper. The letters expressed concerns about the future of mining in the Territory and suggested rethinking approaches to this industry. The mining industry reacted negatively and attacked the teacher, the school, and the curriculum as being biased. They concluded that remedial action was required and, together with the Department of Education, they should develop a 'Mining Curriculum' for Yukon schools. The bluster surrounding this issue was played out through a number of letters and articles published in the local papers.

One of the most interesting articles was an editorial entitled 'Corporate money is seductive, but do we want it?'¹⁷ Here, the editor acknowledges that those preparing study materials would be professionals and would not easily be bamboozled into planting uncritical and subliminal industry messages into the curriculum, but he still speaks of nagging doubts about this kind of funding arrangement. He concludes that corporate sponsorship in the public school system is a seductive and dangerous practice. This editorial leads to important questions for anyone interested in curriculum development.

How, for example, can educators see through attempts to bamboozle them? Some supplemental curricula and teaching materials are very sophisticated. How do curriculum sponsors subtly, and perhaps even unwittingly, influence projects they pay for? What assumptions about contemporary society, economics, and human/nature relationships do these curriculum projects rest upon?

Hidden assumptions are not only found in advertising examples, but in all curricula. What assumptions do these curricula represent? Do they encourage us to explore viable alternatives for the future, or do they tend to reinforce the status quo? There will always be values embedded in any teaching materials—some openly stated, others implied through the text, and yet others revealed through strategic omissions.

Educators have recognised for some time that no curricula can be value-free. Among them, curriculum theorist Elliot Eisner¹⁸ has provided a framework that can be used to critique educational materials. In a chapter called 'The three curricula that all schools teach', he argues that there will always be an explicit, an implicit, and a null curriculum. In revealing these three curricula we are also revealing the beliefs and assumptions which shape learning experiences and educational materials. Eisner's framework, used as a critical tool, can provide a basis for accepting or rejecting

curricula, or for using a curriculum in a thoughtful and analytical way—as a vehicle for revealing and examining social assumptions, as a basis for making more informed judgments, and as a factor in justifying our decisions.

HANDOUT

Some more information on the 'Three Curricula'

The Explicit Curriculum. This refers to the curriculum defined by the stated goals and objectives.

The Implicit Curriculum. This refers to the 'hidden curriculum' or the curriculum that is not openly stated yet is required by virtue of the content selected or the teaching practices used. Thus, the social roles and relationships in classrooms, and the content selected, carry 'hidden messages'. A very detailed, highly structured program with tight time allotments implies that both teachers and students need a lot of direction and control, and that learning is best accomplished in a regulated environment. Or, a classroom that respects children and encourages them to voice their opinions, carries a hidden message that children are valued. The amount of scope for decision-making, for student-teacher interactions, for criticism, may all be elements of the 'implicit curriculum.' The implicit curriculum is also represented by the values and assumptions embedded in the language, images, and examples employed.

The Null Curriculum. This curriculum is defined by what is not said, discussed, or included. Often it reflects basic political decisions made during the process of curriculum development. Suppose, for example, that a major forestry corporation was to support a curriculum in forest management. If the final program made no mention of indigenous people's land claims, cultural practices, and rights, then that set of ideas would be part of the null curriculum. Most likely they would have been omitted because sponsors decided that they were not acceptable or that they were irrelevant. What is not said often tells more about a curriculum than what is said. It is interesting to see if particular perspectives are promoted, either overtly, or through a failure to include and examine alternative perspectives.

LEARNING
ACTIVITY

A curriculum critique

One outcome of the Yukon mining story was an alliance formed between industry and government to produce a mining curriculum called *Rock on Yukon*.¹⁹ One element of this project was a poster to advertise its arrival into schools and to capture the interest of the targeted children. It looked something like this:



The first thing an observer notices is that the image is full of happy people enjoying products derived from mining activities. These images compliment a long list of useful products that are derived from mining activities. A thematic slogan runs across the poster and reads, *'What's mined is yours'*. Of particular interest is additional text that states, ***'At the heart of our modern lifestyle is a diverse and healthy mining industry'***.

1. Using Eisner's three curricula as a guide, take a close look at this poster. What kinds of images are used to support the curriculum? What hidden messages does it contain—that is what are the implicit messages? What do they reveal about how people are to relate to each other? How are people to relate to nature? Or, to the more-than-human world? And importantly, what isn't there? What assumptions are hidden by omission—by virtue of the null curriculum? Are there assumptions that you expect the designers did not want to have revealed or challenged?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

It isn't possible to judge an entire curriculum by critiquing just a poster. It's a start, but to be fair you need to examine the whole package. So try this:

2. Find a curriculum, or some curriculum materials that you are interested in—perhaps something from your region—and take a close look. What is the explicit curriculum? What does it say it will do?

What is implicit? In addition to looking at the stated goals, check out the activities. What hidden messages do they contain? What do they reveal about how people are to relate to each other? How they are to relate to nature? Or, to the more-than-human world? Look closely at the language used. Is it respectful

of people, animals, plants, ecosystems, or does it imply that they are simply objects for consumption? What are the consequences of language choices? What kinds of images are used to support the curriculum? What assumptions are embedded in their selection? Is nature portrayed as a resource to be used, a gymnasium, a playground? Or, is nature portrayed with only picturesque images? Or images without people? How are people's cultural values portrayed? How are people-environment relationships portrayed?

What isn't there? What is the null curriculum? What seems to be omitted for political or other reasons? And, what does this tell you about the curriculum?

These questions lead to judgments that educators must make in deciding to use curricular materials. You might ask yourself: is the curriculum generally educative, or does it advocate a particular view? Or, does it attempt to initiate the student into a particular set of social norms? Does it encourage student understanding, critical thinking, and judgment, or does it attempt to train the student, or modify the student's behaviour in a particular pre-determined fashion?



Using the workbook to 'get started':

Comment on the message in the 'thinking critically about the curricula' section of the workbook. What are the authors suggesting we do? Comment on the views / perspectives of the authors.

Could you use the examples provided above in your teaching?

How would you adapt or change this section of the workbook for your teaching?

Section six of this workbook has more examples from around the world that challenge us to examine hidden assumptions in curricula and other learning activities. Can you use them?



self-validating reduction

The activities and stories in this section reveal what happens when the potential of people, communities, places or the more-than-human world is reduced in a downward cycle, or in a way that is 'self-validating'. This process has also been called 'self-validating reduction', a concept coined by Anthony Weston. It is a challenging concept, but this section describes, in more detail, how it works and gives examples that show how 'self-validating reduction' can be used to probe deeply held cultural assumptions and to open up everyday ethics questions²⁰.

What is self-validating reduction?

A good way to begin is by exploring the consequences of reducing potential. For example, in everyday-life we describe things using language and images that are available to us through our culture. For example, you may describe a flower as being 'pretty' or you may describe it using the language of colours (e.g. you may say the flower is blue or yellow or a lovely pink). However, we are only describing part of the flower. We do not often, for example, say that the flower has a green stem, with partially yellow leaves, or we don't talk about how the flower came to be situated in the landscape. And, we hardly ever describe the intricate workings of how the plant produces chlorophyll, and how the roots absorb water, or if we do, we mostly talk about the plant as if it was nothing more than a biological machine. Reducing things through speech is therefore natural to all humans. We do this when we describe each other, or when we

discuss an event, or when we make big plans to change the world.

Sometimes the 'new view' of something (once it has been reduced) changes the way that things are seen and done, particularly when the 'new view' becomes part of our day-to-day lives and our taken for granted 'way of thinking'. Sometimes the 'new view' (the 'reduced view') is then put forward as 'the only view' or 'the only way' that things can be seen.

What is important, however, is to be alert to what happens when this often unconscious process reduces the full potential of human beings, or the more-than-human world in such a way that potential can no longer be seen, or that it is changed forever or lost.

Now consider the idea of a *self-fulfilling* prophecy. People buy shares that are 'supposed to go up'—so they do. Charms and rituals used by warriors before battle may produce just the confidence and mass excitement that lead to victory. In school, the subtle and not-so-subtle expectations conveyed by the teacher tend to produce the expected successes or failures. If, for example, we think of a child as a poor student we will often convey that attitude through our gestures and comments. Sensing this, the student will think of him or herself as inferior, lose confidence, and perform even more poorly. In turn, this reinforces the teacher's attitude and the cycle begins anew. The teacher's original prophecy becomes self-fulfilling²¹.

Prejudiced views readily become self-fulfilling too. Take for example a sexist attitude held by a man who views women as ‘less than’ himself. Armed with such an attitude, the man interacts with the women in his life in ways that are degrading, or even worse, abusive. After a while these women may become conditioned to see themselves as inferior, as less intelligent, less able or less powerful. Seeing themselves as inferior, they begin to act that way, confirming the original sexist attitudes. To the man, this behaviour encourages evermore sexist actions and the cycle becomes self-fulfilling, or even more accurately self validating.

The same kind of self-validating views are often the basis of racism. One sometimes hears the statement that ‘racism breeds racism’. Or consider slavery. A system that deadens people with work and fear does not merely reflect and respond to prejudice: it perpetuates it, and begins to *justify* it. Then, the very crimes of slavery—that it ‘makes the enslaved a character fit only for slavery’²²—become slavery’s best defence.

In cases such as sexism and slavery we need to speak of something stronger than mere ‘prophecy’. Beating or bullying someone into submission, subservience or slavery, for instance, is no mere ‘expectation’. Here the person is reduced to something less: a thing or object, something to be exploited, dominated, or killed. And this is where the terms ‘self-validating’ and ‘reduction’ come together. The ‘reduction’ justifies itself to such an extent that it validates itself. And, we can now speak of *self-validating* reduction.

A *self-validating* reduction, then, is a self-fulfilling prophecy in which one of the main effects of the ‘prophecy’ is to reduce someone or something in the world. It acts to make that person or thing less than they, or it, are or could be; or it diminishes some part of the world’s richness, depth and promise. And, this reduction in turn feeds back, not only to justify the original ‘prophecy’ but also to perpetuate it.²³ Here are a few examples of self-

validating reduction:

- The treatment of animals in factory farms where their social instincts are destroyed (this is where chickens are ‘de-beaked’ and pigs have their tails docked; the usual social and developmental constraints have no time and space to do their work) and they have no chance to develop any kind of intelligence or relationships with each other or human beings (broiler chickens are killed on the average at seven weeks of age: chickens naturally live about seven years). So of course they will seem stupid, or slothful, or pitiful, or vicious, and to deserve their fate.
- Wild rivers are destroyed by dams, rich ecosystems are simplified, clear cut, or strip mined, and so on; and then we begin to lose a sense of why nature or wilderness has any real value in the first place. This then, makes it easier to justify further developments. The more development that takes place, the easier it is to argue for ever-more development.
- Arundhati Roy²⁴ describes experts at the World Water Forum at The Hague in Holland discussing privatisation of the world’s water. Delegates at this forum believed that ‘God gave us the rivers, but he didn’t put in the necessary delivery systems. That’s why we need private enterprise’—privatisation is necessary because there are no ‘natural’ delivery mechanisms. As experts convince themselves of the need for privatisation to provide water delivery mechanisms, others start to believe that this is the only way to create access to water resources. This validates further privatisation of water. Through this self-validating process water is reduced from a basic need, and a right, to a commodity that can only be bought. It becomes easy to forget that people in the past have accessed water in many different ways, and that there may be many other creative solutions, besides privatisation.

- Another example comes from economic policy. Free trade is 'marketed' by dominant economic groups and institutions as the solution to poverty and development problems. As more political support is given to this policy at national and international levels, it becomes integrated into government and other policies. With increased support for this economic policy, the policy assumptions become self-validating. Now many people have come to believe that free trade is the only economic framework that can guide world development. And, alternative economies are reduced.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

2. To illustrate the logic of self-fulfilling prophecy from the 'inside,' ask how often we find ourselves unable to escape being reduced to some stereotype. A simple example is clumsiness. If you know someone thinks you are clumsy, you are likely to soon produce real clumsiness. To be graceful, as opposed to clumsy, is partly about being unself-conscious—a state difficult to achieve when you are stereotyped. So you become more self-conscious, and this leads to more clumsiness, and the cycle repeats itself. What examples of self-validating reduction have you experienced?

3. Turning to reductions of the land and of nature as a whole, identify some of the prevailing images of nature, for example in newspapers, and then ask how it is that they become true. For example, when land is divided into pieces for sale (readily observed in real estate advertisements), how long is it before the ecosystem itself is divided into pieces, fragmented? When sacred places are turned into holiday resorts, do they retain their power, or do they become precisely—holiday resorts?

 **LEARNING**
ACTIVITY 

Analysing self-validating reductions

1. In small groups, consider one of the examples given in the handout on the following page. How does it illustrate the effects of self-validating reduction?



HANDOUT

Consider self-validating reduction in these examples

Small farmers sink or swim

Mexico has a long history of producing and marketing corn. As a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico has been flooded with imported corn from north of the border. This has led to a drop in the price farmers received for their corn, and consumers have ended up paying more. The price of tortillas - the country's staple food - rose fivefold as the Government jettisoned domestic subsidies and giant agribusiness firms took over the market. The Government of Mexico recognises that 'reality did not turn out the way we planned it'. A sink-or-swim policy for small farmers led to a drop in income that hit the most vulnerable members of rural society. The remaining Mexican corn farmers now face the additional risks associated with the contamination of native varieties of corn with genetically modified imported maize, which could have major consequences for Mexican Campesino Farmworker Centers and for local biodiversity in Mexico. 'Corn is important because it allows us to live in peace ... it is our form of food security' says one of the villagers, showing that free trade assumptions affect more than just the economies of developing countries.²⁵

Tranquilize monkeys: it's objective science

Could even the attempt at scientific 'objectivity' produce self-validating reduction? Consider this example:

Visiting a rainforest research station at which howler monkeys are being studied, Jim

Nollman is assured by researchers that the monkeys are (in their view) fundamentally unsociable, retreating to the forest canopy whenever humans are around. This is demonstrably what they have done for years. Then Nollman learns that the zoologists study the monkeys by attaching radio transmitters to their necks. To attach the transmitters they have to tranquilize the monkeys. To tranquilize the monkeys they shoot them with tranquilizer guns, dropping them out of the trees. The zoologists consider this technique unproblematic 'objective', purely scientific, and they treat Nollman, a musician who tries to use music to create a shared space between humans and animals, as just a sentimental and unscientific meddler.²⁶

An expensive big-horn sheep

An Arizona (USA) hunter was reported to have paid \$405,000 for a permit to hunt a big-horn sheep in Alberta (Canada).

Each year the Rocky Mountain Elk foundation auctions off permits, to the highest bidder, for one big-horn sheep and one elk. On this year speculators felt that the Alberta ram could set a world record for a big-horn sheep trophy. This prospect was felt to have driven up the bidding.

In Alberta the previous record for a big-game permit was about \$200,000. 'The auction, approved by Alberta Environment Minister Ty Lund in 1995, angered environmentalists and hunters who accused the province of selling off wildlife.' The spokesperson for the foundation said most of the money would go to conservation programs to protect wildlife²⁷.

Using the workbook to 'get started':

Comment on the message in the 'self-validating reduction' section of the workbook. What are the authors suggesting we do? Comment on the views / perspectives of the authors.

Could you use the examples provided above in your teaching?

How would you adapt or change this section of the workbook for your teaching?

Section six of this workbook has more examples that challenge us to identify the consequences of self-validating reductions from around the world. Can you use them?

complex questions and ethical quandaries

Ethics questions are often 'more than what they seem'. Being more critical, and identifying and analysing self-validating reductions can help us to make more ethically inspired choices in our daily lives. There are, however, often situations that are perplexing and have 'no easy answers'. We sometimes call these quandaries. This section explores some ethical quandaries.

Why quandaries?

First think about dilemmas. We sometimes talk about being on the horns of a dilemma when we have a difficult judgement to make between two choices. However, environmental issues seldom boil down to two choices. They are more often complex, multifaceted, and reflect multiple perspectives. To get away from the idea that issues can be boiled down to two perspectives, we like to use the word quandary to describe complex and perplexing ethics questions.

There are many stories that illustrate quandaries. Here we discuss one such story in some depth (The Great Elephant Debate), and invite you to investigate other such stories.

The Great Elephant Debate

A visit to any of the big national parks in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Namibia tell a similar story. One is likely to meet thousands of elephants. They are truly majestic, and observing them can only engender enormous respect and

awe. Elephants are sensitive animals. They have complex social structures and are able to communicate fear and pain to other elephants over huge distances.

During such travels, one is likely to come across game rangers and community members saying something like this: 'There are too many elephants'. But, how do we establish whether there are 'too many elephants'? What does this mean for people, for the elephants, for biodiversity?

Since protection for African elephants was instituted in the 1980s (through CITES,²⁸ anti-poaching interventions, and wildlife management), elephants have multiplied in the southern African region. Today large tracts of land seem to be irreversibly changed by elephants and their activities (it reminds one a little of human beings, who have also multiplied, and the way they are able to change the landscape!). While there is no proof that elephants reduce biodiversity, some comment on a scarcity of small mammals and birds in places where elephants were abundant. Others say that elephants can assist with biodiversity through seed dispersal and generation of habitat, especially for birds. Elephants nowadays, are 'contained' by boundaries of national parks while, in earlier times, they would have roamed freely across the African plains on their annual migrations. To complicate the story, national parks are important sources of income for the local economies as they attract many tourists. Poverty is a real issue in southern African countries and industries such as tourism are increasingly important. Tourism generates jobs, and provides outlets for craft sales and local activities. Conservation officials and scientists

who manage parks aim to maximize both tourism and the biodiversity potential.

In South Africa, elephant culling was stopped in 1995 as a result of international pressure. Since then the elephant population in the Kruger National Park has grown from 7 000 to almost 12 000 in 2005. These elephants are reproducing at about 1 000 per year, and each elephant eats up to 150kg of vegetation per day. So, a 'Great Elephant Debate' is taking place in South Africa on the question of 'too many elephants'. It is a complex debate, with few easy solutions. Kruger National Park is currently working to develop an elephant management strategy, given concerns raised by conservation managers about perceived threats to biodiversity in the Park (resulting from 'too many elephants'). The reality is those conservation strategies, and other human activities, make the original experience of elephants to roam free and independent of human intervention, impossible. South African National Parks (SAN Parks) are considering the different voices in the 'Great Elephant Debate,' and are acutely aware of the fact that they are left with imperfect situations and solutions. This Debate is so complex that the Minister of Environment and Tourism has started consulting international partners for advice on how South Africa should address the biodiversity questions raised by the Great Elephant Debate in the region. No solutions have been put forward as yet.

An ethical quandary. South African National Parks are faced with difficult choices. What are they to do about the burgeoning elephant populations in the Park? Animal rights groups uphold intrinsic principles concerning rights of animals to live unhampered by human intervention. Sustainable use groups argue for economic aspects of elephant management, with an emphasis on how local communities could benefit from hunting and/or from selling products from culled elephants. Conservationists and scientists maintain that the ecological balance in the park is most important.

But, there is little certainty as to exactly what this balance is, and how it ought to be established. The debate is complicated by serious economic (and social) implications associated with the costs of either maintaining a contraceptive programme, culling, or constantly expanding Parks (involving the relocation of human populations) to accommodate growing numbers of elephants.²⁹ The managers of SAN Parks, and other government leaders, recognise the complexity of the issue and quandary they face; and, they note that it would be 'naïve to expect a perfect solution'.

Trying alternatives. In response to the complex ethical questions, SAN Parks have explored alternatives to culling. They have tried two contraceptive methods; one disrupted social relationships amongst the elephants, and the second is too expensive for a developing country. 'Trans-frontier' Parks have been established to create bigger parks and migration routes for the elephants. Translocation of elephants has taken place, but this is a very expensive process.

A question asked in the newspapers is whether culling is a viable management strategy. Given the complexity of the question, SAN Parks turned to the public and hosted the 'Great Elephant Debate' of 2005. Saliem Fakir,³⁰ IUCN Country Programme Coordinator, in a talk on the ethics of elephant management, said we need more adequate language for deliberating the elephant issue. He argues for tolerance, for ethical pluralism (a mix of different ethical viewpoints), for locating discussions in context, and for considering technological and economic dimensions of the issue. He warns, for example that 'sustainable use' arguments are confused with ecological questions, and economic questions are side-tracked by commercial interests. He argues for 'sound judgement,' based on available evidence, careful deliberation, and consideration of long and short term trade-offs. He urges citizens to build a listening and a learning society.

HANDOUT

Some thoughts on finding ethical practices in difficult issues

International literature is replete with references to the need for a 'new ethic' (see for example UNESCO 2004,³¹ the Earth Charter³²). There is much international support for framing this new ethic in terms of 'sustainability'. Will this assist South African National Parks in making their choices to resolve the Great Elephant Debate? Is the solution that simple? How, for example, would it deal with the observation that the ethic of sustainable use has been 'skewed' towards commercial interests in elephants? And just what does 'sustainability' really mean in this context? Fewer elephants? Bigger parks? More effective contraception for elephants? Trophy hunting to generate income for communities? Relocation of rural communities away from the boundaries of the park to enable continued expansion? More money from the international community to pay for expensive alternatives?

Ethical choices cannot be easily defined. The process of engaging ethical questions is often a difficult and time-consuming process involving deliberations, trade-offs, development of creative alternatives, and considering realities in different contexts. This is acknowledged. From the elephant story, it would seem that ethical questions are often ambivalent and that there are no simple recipes, and no 'simple ethics'.

In looking more deeply into the elephant story (and other such stories), some 'new lines of thinking' may be opened up for our ethical work in the everyday:

- Ethical practice often encounters *ambivalence* and *ambiguity*.
- It involves finding ways to allow people to *deliberate* on ethical questions, and to engage critically with ethical quandaries—in diverse contexts. This process requires *respect* and *tolerance*, to hear and consider different perspectives.
- When we are tolerant and respectful we find ways to share common language and create space to discuss alternatives.
- This process, however, is mediated by an '*ethic of timeliness*.' According to Johan Hattingh³³ an '*ethic of timeliness*' is an imperative to take action before reaching the point of no return, before outcomes become irreversible. This often requires a combination of pragmatic decision making, creativity and a commitment to exploring all available alternatives within time boundaries.
- *Complexity* is also an ethical issue—the simplification of complex issues (such as the Great Elephant Debate) is both fraudulent and irresponsible. This places responsibility on the shoulders of everyone, including the scientific and intellectual communities (and especially educators) to work closely with decision makers, the public, and each other so that all are aware of the multiple dimensions of issues and associated risks.



LEARNING ACTIVITY



Exploring stories with ‘no easy answers’

Taking a close look at the quandary generated by The Great Elephant Debate can provide opportunities to examine personal and cultural beliefs, consider ethics in practice, have ideas examined and discussed by peers. With this in mind, consider the following activity.

1. Gather into small groups to discuss the Great Elephant Debate. What would you do? Why? What assumptions do you hold about human-elephant relationships? Share your thoughts. Can your group agree on a collective response? What else do you need to know to take your discussions further?
2. How can an ‘ethic of timeliness,’ as well as increased understanding of complexities, change the deliberations? (See the handout in this section.)
3. Some suggest that when we come up against difficult questions or quandaries we can sometimes shift the problems by reframing the questions.³⁴ Are there other ways of looking at elephant issues that can help us transform the problem, to come at it from a different angle?

Reframing problems

Some researchers have begun trying to re-frame the issue and shift the problems in elephant-human relationships. These don’t always ‘solve the problems,’ but they have been successful in creating alternatives that local people can work with. Some examples include:

- The establishment of Trans-frontier Parks which allow elephants move along larger migration routes, this allows for biodiversity regeneration as the elephants move to new places.
- Not putting up park fences but rather supporting local farmers to fence their crops so that people and elephants can live alongside each other. In Zambia the Department of Wildlife have created ‘zones’ outside of the park boundaries called Game Management Areas where people and elephants live side-by-side. The challenge has, however, been to provide local people with the support for fencing their crops.
- We could also think of reading the story ‘the other way round’ i.e. from the view of the elephants. How are the elephants changing people? What might the elephants be thinking about people having a ‘Great Elephant Debate’?

Solutions to reframing a problem have not been easy, especially as elephants sometimes threaten the lives of people in the communities, and authorities are called upon to address the elephant problem by shooting one or more of the elephants. Community-animal relationships are not always harmonious. But the challenge here is to find new ways to work with the issue and to reduce conflict.³⁵

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

There are many other stories that also have 'no easy answers'. One example that comes to mind is the contemporary use of DDT, in some places, to prevent the spread of malaria in rural Africa (more people in rural Africa currently die from Malaria than any other disease). The use of DDT is apparently a 'proven' solution to the problem. But what else needs to be considered?

Some other 'stories with no easy answers' may include: The building of large dams (e.g. the Nujiang dam in China or the Narmada dam in India – see www.dams.org). Or, the current trend to privatise water in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

4. Find out about one of the above-mentioned issues, or study a local quandary, that appears to have 'no easy answers'. Seek contrasting perspectives and use materials from different sources. The internet normally provides a good starting point. Magazines such as the New Internationalist (www.newinte.org), the National Geographic (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com>), and the New Scientist – (<http://www.newscientist.com/>

home.ns) provide good quality sources with different perspectives. Try locally available magazines or newspapers too.

What are the key issues and what are the difficult questions and the ethical quandaries? What choices are available? What kinds of deliberation processes may be needed to resolve the quandaries? Who should be involved in the deliberations? What creative alternatives are possible to resolve and reframe the questions? Are ethics framed by the concept of 'sustainability' adequate for resolving the quandaries you are working on?

5. Examine the Earth Charter, at <http://www.earthcharter.org> (or another 'ethical framework'). How can this framework, and its listed principles, help stakeholders to deliberate on ethical alternatives to the 'Great Elephant Debate' or other issues? What is the value of this approach, and what are its limitations?



Using the workbook to 'get started':

Comment on the message in the 'complex questions and ethical quandaries' section of the workbook. What are the authors suggesting we do? Comment on the perspectives of the authors.

Could you use the examples provided above in your teaching?

How would you adapt or change this section of the workbook for your teaching?

Section six of this workbook has more examples that challenge us to 'address complex ethical questions' from around the world. Can you use them?

ethics in action



This section considers ethics in action, as part of everyday activities. Through stories about ethics in action we explore how ethics arises in, and informs everyday practice.

Catch and release fishing ³⁶

One story about ethics ‘in and as’ action, is taken from the *Regulations Summary for Fishing in the Yukon* (Northern Canada). These annual regulations outline rules for angling. The story is about the appropriateness of ‘catch and release fishing,’ that is using a rod, line, and hook to catch fish that are landed by the angler and then released back into the water. Given difficulties associated with regulating ‘catch and release fishing’, a creative approach is taken in reporting the challenges inherent in this issue.

Rather than providing rules, these summaries tell the catch and release story from multiple perspectives. For First Nations people, it has often been important to tell their stories in their own way and, similarly, other anglers have stories that they want to tell, too. Presenting these multiple stories alongside each other can provide a useful starting point for deliberations. For example, First Nations folks often remind us that, ‘Fish are to eat, not to play with,’ or, ‘The fish comes to you as a gift. It’s offering its life to you. And if you don’t accept it, that’s an insult. Sooner or later the fish will stop coming to you.’ Other anglers, supporting catch and release fishing, suggest that, ‘for me a fish is priceless too. I can’t put a value on the peace of mind I get when I go fishing. I can’t put a price on how important it is to me to be with my family: my son, my daughter, my wife, in the kinds of places where you find fish’. These kinds

of statements are supported by information about methods for careful release of fish, ‘live release ethics’, and the ‘use everything—waste nothing’ tradition of First Nations peoples³⁷. This may seem irresolvable, but it doesn’t have to be.

For years these contrasting stories have been presented together. Each time an angler flips through the regulation booklet he or she is invited to consider them. Put another way, the public is invited into a personal discussion about ethics, and invited to consider how she or he will respond. The authors of the regulations have worked towards presenting the stories in a non-judgmental fashion—that is various perspectives are presented together in an open-ended fashion. For many, this opens up new space for ethical deliberation and new possibilities for practice. Each year revisions to the previous booklet suggest some movement and creative interpretation, as one respondent recently said, ‘At the end of the day, we are all Yukoners. We share a common resource and the foundation of our thinking on both sides is respect’. Some readers may critique this statement, but I don’t think it should be considered an end, or a product, rather it is a snapshot of an individual engaged in a process that is ongoing.

But there is one final step to this story. The angler must decide what to do when landing the fish—when the person and the fish come into physical contact. Will the angler keep the fish for food or release it? How will the ideas presented in regulations (or drawn from other sources) affect his or her judgment and actions? How will knowledge about size, breeding potential, or survival rates for released fish affect her or his decisions? How will actions—in releasing or keeping the fish—affect his or her personal ethic?³⁸

Environmental practice—ethics and action in our own backyard ³⁹

As environmental educators, we often get challenged with questions like: ‘What are you *doing*? Are you just preaching to others, or are you changing your own practices?’

In the Education Faculty at Rhodes University, this question came to the fore when the University signed the Talloires Declaration. This Declaration committed Rhodes University to reducing its ecological footprint and supporting environmental change more broadly through research and teaching. The University requested the Environmental Education Unit to develop an environmental policy for the University. Staff in the Education Faculty realised then that they, too, would have to *do* something to make a difference in their own backyard!

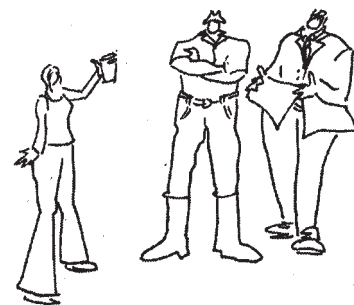
It took a while for the University policy to move off paper and into practice, but in 2000 the Faculty of Education started implementing a Departmental Environmental Policy. The first thing the staff did was to establish an environmental-policy working group. This group meets once a quarter to make decisions about new actions and to report on progress.

The working group also undertook an environmental audit to find out how Department members view the environmental impact of their daily activities. Through this ‘audit’, five main areas of concern were identified, namely, the use of paper, water, energy, office equipment and stationery, and improvements in the overall working environment. These areas were then researched by a small group with the aim of working out what possible solutions or alternatives we could try. The group created an imaginary character ‘*EcoSonke*’ whose name is a blend of the word ‘ecological’ and the Zulu word for ‘everyone’. *EcoSonke* regularly reminds staff in the Department to recycle paper,

to switch off lights, to use recycled cartridges in their printers. She also invites Department members to working group meetings, and informs everyone when a new ‘breakthrough’ has been made. For example, the group finally got permission from the Communications and Development Division to use recycled paper for their Departmental letterheads, overcoming initial concerns that University colours would not be ‘correctly represented’ on the recycled paper!

The staff in the faculty found that ethics needs ongoing ‘*creative actions*’ to respond to new problems and to create new possibilities. For example, they were unable to sell recycled paper when the bottom dropped out of the recycled paper market. They then responded with a paper-brick making project which may prove to be a good source of fuel for use in homesteads where access to fuel is a considerable problem.

They have also found that ethics requires ‘*vigilant actions*’ to monitor progress and to alert *EcoSonke* and the working group to emerging problems. For example, in 2003 a decision was taken at departmental level to use recycled paper for letterheads. As these are usually printed in batches of 1000, there was a time lapse before the following print order. During this period the decision to print on recycled paper was forgotten! Ongoing *commitment*, *creative solutions*, and *collaboration* are important parts of ethics in action in everyday institutional life.



Making bread, responding to children's hunger, and song

In a recent research project on *Nguni* practices of bread making in South Africa, researchers became interested in this practice while working on the *Eziko*⁴⁰ project. The Eziko centre is being established in a rural area of the Eastern Cape Province, to strengthen nutrition in response to HIV/AIDS risks and health issues. Researchers were investigating how bread was made.

Early Nguni bread making involved, first, grinding corn to make meal. While visiting some homesteads, where women were making bread, one of the researchers was taken by how the corn grinding was accompanied by a soothing song. The song was an acknowledgement of hunger and the need to feed the children who began to cry with the sounds and smell of the evening meal preparations. The soothing rhythms of the song galvanised a concern for, and a social responsibility towards, the hungry children. There were smiles and laughter and everyone picked up the rhythms adding harmonies. Attention to the children was a shared concern.

This story enables us to reflect on how many daily actions reflect what people value. This valuing also provides insight into the moral orientation that exists in communities, and in our daily practices. It helps us to reflect on how we do things and the unconscious choices we make. Stories work in two ways here. Either the story works from the action, through the feelings, to a sense of the ethics. Or the story works from a consideration of the ethical, to a better grasp of how and why we do things in particular ways (the action). In either case, the insights of the song, that put a shared concern for the children before everything else, allows us to see what we put first in our patterns of practice.

Ethics in action at UNEP

It goes without mention that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is very passionate about the environment. Indeed that is why the Programme exists and has been successful all through these years. UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

What is, perhaps, not widely known is the persuasion and enthusiasm that many people working in UNEP have towards the environment and how these fit into the noble objectives of UNEP. During World Environment Day in June 2005, we were privileged to gain an insight into the private lives of some UNEP officers when they were asked to share some of their actions that contribute to a safer environment.

Below are a few excerpts from the numerous entries that were submitted by UNEP officers and executives:

- Without knowledge and ability to access information, an individual cannot make the right decisions on life's big issues including the environment. I support a literacy project, run through Kitengela Glass on the edge of Nairobi's national park that helps local Maasai women to read and write. I am passionate about environmental education. I insist that all dignitaries visiting UN here in Gigiri join me in rolling up their sleeves and planting an indigenous tree in this fine Kenyan soil. I am passionate about planting trees. (*Klaus Toepfer, Director General of the Unon and Executive Director of the UNEP*)

- When I go shopping, I take my own cloth bags so that I don't have to use plastic bags. In my house we have reduced the use of chemicals; we keep the windows open and let fresh air in, instead of using sprays. We protect nature from plastics and chemicals. We let our towels dry in the sun, instead of washing them everyday. I save water. *(Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of the UNEP)*
- Water and energy are the most important resources in Africa. I switch off the light when I go to lunch and I put my computer to sleep when I am not working on it. I save energy. I only wash my Senegalese clothes once a month. In my home, I filter waste-water to water my garden. That is cheaper and I save water. *(Bakary Kante, Director: Division of Policy Development and Law)*
- I drive an electrical car. I also have solar panels at home to produce electric power. I reduce CO₂ emissions. *(Sean Khan: Programme Officer, Information Management, DEWA)*
- As the Secretary of the Governing Council, we use recycled paper for our reports and we reuse envelopes. The staff collects printed paper in a box and prints drafts on it. We save paper. I save resources. *(Beverly A. Miller: Secretary, Governing Council, Secretariat of Governing Bodies)*
- Every day I commute to work on my bike. That is easy, economical and environmentally friendly. I don't pollute the air. *(Ming Wu, Translater, Chinese Language Unit)*

it may seem, can go a long way to keep our environment safe and promote sustainable development. Welcome to the club!


**LEARNING
ACTIVITY**

Exploring possibilities for ethics as action

1. Think about your daily activities. Are you practicing ethics in action? Perhaps you can share some examples?
2. Who is a role model in your community? Identify examples of others who are re-personalising ethics in their actions—through their work or their lifestyles. Or, identify examples of those who take responsibility for 'the Other' (human or non-human) without expecting reciprocity.



These examples further enforce our definition of ethics – a process of inquiry and critical thinking – and show how action, no matter how insignificant

HANDOUT

Some thoughts on ethics and action

Zygmunt Bauman, like others, recognizes a need for 'new ethical solutions to modernity's problems'. He describes how modern societies have developed in ways that diminish what he calls 'moral proximity'. For Bauman, moral proximity is in the realm of intimacy. For him, new 'solutions' may be found in relationships between intimacy, moral decisions, and ethics.

As people are stripped of more traditional social bonds (as family and clan systems fragment, and as people become disconnected from the more-than-human), intimacy is diminished. Many societies today are increasingly shaped by individualisation and patterns of consumption that, in turn, have helped shape a gradual loss of 'moral proximity' (another example of self-validating reduction). Action-taking also seems to become more difficult as issues in society become more removed from our direct sphere of experience and responsibility—and hence become less visible.

Bauman argues that we should re-personalise morality. He describes this as a process of taking responsibility for the 'Other': I am always responsible for the Other (human and more-than-human) without waiting for reciprocity ... The 'I' always has one more responsibility than all the others.⁴¹ In our stories above, the angler's actions had implications for the Other (the fish and the other anglers); the staff in the Rhodes University Education Department's actions had implications for the Other (each other, their University, and the environment); and the action of the women grinding corn had implications for the Other (shared attention to the children). People in our stories were all actively engaged in processes of re-personalising morality, of taking responsibility for the other (human or more-than-human) through their actions without expecting reciprocity.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

3. What kind of 'ethics as action' activities can you undertake in your own backyard?
4. Do some lifecycle research to find out how you could change your daily lifestyle choices. Try researching one of the following items (or something you use/buy a lot): a hamburger; a cup of coffee; a T-shirt; a pair of jeans; a newspaper. Write a story with the title 'The secret life of ...,' and tell the story of the different ethical choices you are making when you consume/use the product in your story. What alternatives are there? Start a display in your classroom, tearoom, department, or home to inspire others to do the same!

Using the workbook to 'get started':

Comment on the message in the 'ethics in action' section of the workbook. What are the authors suggesting we do? Comment on the perspectives of the authors.

Could you use the examples provided above in your teaching?

How would you adapt or change this section of the workbook for your teaching?

Section six of this workbook has more examples that challenge us to practice ethics as an everyday activity. Can you use them?

re-imagining possibilities



So far we have been involved in various forms of critical analysis. We have also been studying actions more carefully. But this is only half of our task. We criticise in order to envision real alternative possibilities. In this section, we take it as our task to actually re-imagine social possibilities⁴².

Experiments in re-imagining the future

Marcuse⁴³ writes, ‘naming the things that are absent breaks the spell of things as they are’. We practice critique—or deconstruction—ideally, in order to create a space to re-construct. In taking up our task of re-imagining social possibilities we claim the space opened up by our critical work by trying to spell out, to make concrete, what we want instead. In general we know that we want to live at peace and as one with each other and with the more-than-human world. But how to do this, how should we speak, what kinds of houses, policies, actions, events, enterprises, relationships should we create, and what sorts of stories should we tell our children? We have barely begun to imagine the possibilities that exist. Yet, this too is an essential task for a reconstructive cultural environmentalism.

We can begin by re-imagining images that we live by. U.S. philosopher Holmes Rolston III⁴⁴ has spoken about visiting a favourite campground in the Rocky Mountains that is adjacent to sub-alpine meadows. The trail signs in these meadows, profuse with daisies, lupines, columbines, delphiniums, bluebells, paintbrushes, penstemons, shooting stars, and violets, for years read, ‘Please leave the flowers for others to enjoy’. More recently these

signs had been replaced by newly cut ones saying, ‘Let the flowers live!’

A particularly powerful example of re-imagining the future comes from South Africa. Human rights abuses in that country were most sharply illustrated by the Sharpeville massacre of March 21, 1960 when police killed 69 people who were participating in a protest against apartheid pass laws. This day had come to be commemorated as ‘Sharpeville Day’. With the advent of democracy, the government retained the ‘day’ but has re-named it ‘Human Rights Day’. They reframed the issue in a way that could allow people to move forward together. Each March, South African people remember the past, through positive celebrations, and actions, chosen to celebrate a human rights culture.

So, what else can we do? One way to get started is to focus our work in three areas: Language, Social Practices, and Imagery.

Language

Some observers have noted that our value-language has become progressively narrowed and ‘one-dimensional’: ethical concerns have often been reduced to economics, or perhaps to meaninglessness. For example, geological surveyors in Western Australia describe water as a resource for government-backed industry, in one instance for irrigating genetically modified cotton. By contrast, the *Karajarri*, the Aboriginal custodians of the same water, call it ‘Living Water,’ or, *karnangkul*. They explain that Living Water is said to be inhabited by various ‘snakes’ who are powerful beings that need to be respected.

Not only are the words different, but so are the values and assumptions embedded in them. For the *Karajjarri* people the language of water is integral to their cultural traditions and to their way of practicing law. To the geological surveyors the language of water conveys instrumental and industrial priorities.⁴⁵

In another example David Lake⁴⁶ insightfully probes the language of climate change. Why do we talk, for example, of ‘global warming’ as if it was something to make you cosy on a cold winter day? Perhaps a greater sense of urgency, or an ‘ethic of timeliness,’ would be better conveyed by ‘global heating,’ or even ‘hotting’?

The challenge to us then is to reclaim the language. Or, it is to reinvent a language adequate to express (and to make more precise, to allow the progressive development and unfolding of) the kinds of values we sense in the larger living world, perhaps, but have not yet found (or are being denied) the terms for?

Social practices

Some say that the deepening of any kind of relationship with the more-than-human world is closed out by the way we build houses, schools, cities; in general by how we live our lives. Imagine how we can redesign buildings that lessen the barrier between inside and outside—or make it more permeable.

The policies and economic decisions that are made also affect the way we build relationships with others. Imagine for example, if every country in the world were to put their military budgets towards providing education for all children in the world, or making sure that all children have enough healthy, fresh food to eat. Try to imagine how social practices and social policies could be redesigned, so that instead of self-validating

reduction they promote the opposite: something we might have to call ‘self-validating invitation’?

In Nicaragua, for example, the *Nueva Vida* (New Life) Women’s Maquila is operated by female workers who established this co-operative to produce conventional and organic cotton clothes as an alternative to sweatshop employment. They were able to establish small markets in the United States, and in 2002 the group supplied 3000 T-shirts for a large European tour. Helped by a British trade-union initiative to wholesale non-sweatshop merchandise, these women have achieved dramatic changes in their lives.⁴⁷

Nobel Prize winning economist James Tobin re-imagined the future when he proposed a small tax on currency speculation, the proceeds of which could be spent on development. This ‘Tobin Tax,’ set as low as a tenth of one percent, could raise \$390 billion a year—seven times the current level of development aid. The proposal has been getting some attention, particularly from the Belgian, Canadian, British, and French governments, but as yet, no serious multi-lateral commitments have been made.⁴⁸

How about designing creative awards? Since 1980 the Right Livelihoods Awards are presented annually in the Swedish parliament to ‘honour and support those offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today.’⁴⁹

Imagery

Remember the images of nature described in earlier examples in this book. Here nature is presented as a problem or threat, as distant, as empty, as a commodity, and as an economic reduction of both the human and more-than-human worlds. All of this is concretely focused in metaphors such as the resource, playground, possession, or obstacle.

Now ask: what would be the alternatives to this?
What new metaphors do we need?

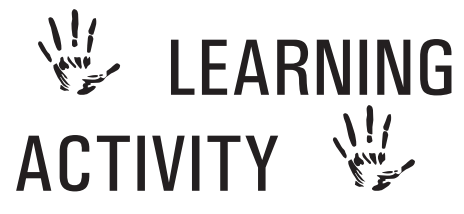
In an area where bears are still abundant, a shift has recently become visible. Warnings that once created images of bears as fearsome and dangerous creatures have been replaced by a message, 'You are entering bear country'—you are the intruder, so be careful and respectful. How could we re-imagine signs in elephant habitat?

What could be achieved if we thought of wild animals and plants—yes, even 'weeds'—as neighbours, citizens, or original inhabitants?

And, how could priorities and assumptions be re-imagined if we stopped talking about the 'developing' world, or 'Third World,' and started calling these 'more sustainable' or 'low footprint' countries or even the 'Majority World' countries?

In February, 2003, a store located in a large shopping mall made a remarkable public statement. A window-sized sign posted in this store read, 'One cannot simultaneously prepare for war and create peace.' How could public discussion have been enriched in the lead-up to the Iraq war if half, or even just a quarter, of the stores in this mall had displayed similar signs?

In each of the examples shared here, the imagery has, unlike the advertisements presented earlier, served to give presence to contradictions and controversy—or different stories. Each provides a starting point for re-imagining new possibilities.



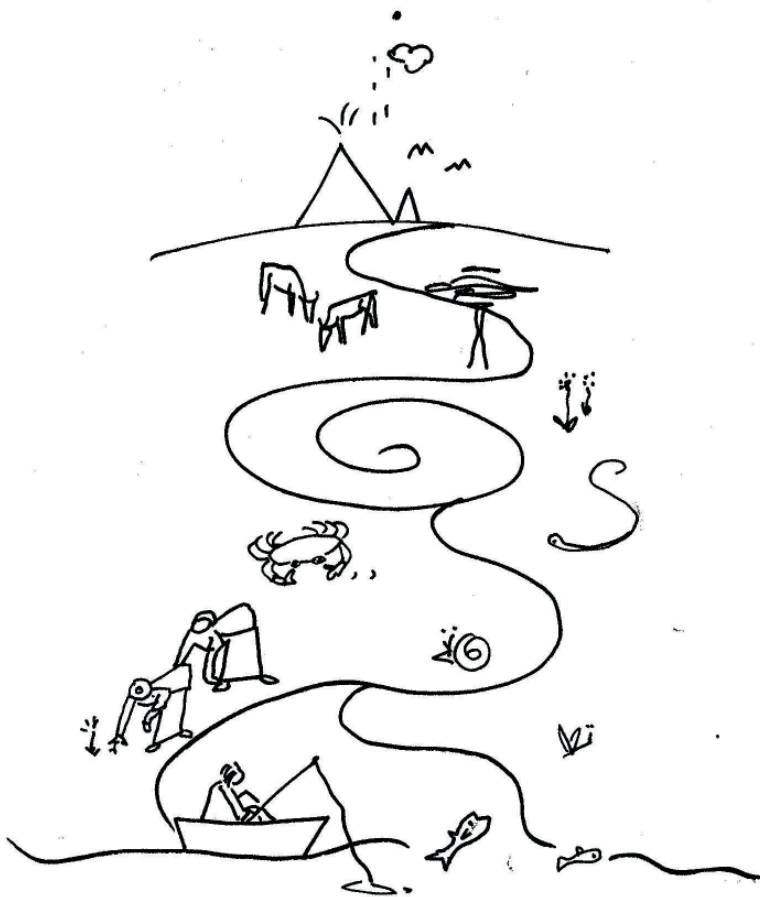
Trying out some re-imagining experiments

1. To begin, go outside in groups of two or three and find a place that is inviting—even with the snow, the heat, the dust, or, perhaps, because of it. Now imagine a way to invite others to become intimate with this place—a pedagogy of intimacy. What can you come up with? What activities could you introduce? How could you help to make the experience a self-validating invitation?
2. Now, in your same groups, choose one, or maybe two, of the three dimensions of this re-imagining topic and work hard to seriously imagine possibilities. Be prepared to share your ideas. Consider:
 - **Language.** What language is used in the environment you live or work in? Can you reclaim language, or reinvent a language, to adequately express the kinds of values you sense in the larger living world, perhaps, but have not yet found (or are being denied) the terms for. So what kinds of other concepts/words do you need? Propose some! Make a case for your approach.

- **Social Practices.** What are the prevailing, or dominant, social practices that shape your environment? Try to imagine how social practices and social policies can be redesigned, so that instead of self-validating reduction they promote the opposite: 'self-validating invitation'? What kinds of houses and cities ought we to build? What kinds of work should there be? What kinds of policies will be needed? What kinds of rhythms should the places have? What kinds of teaching practices can we develop? Again, be concrete and specific in your proposals.
- **Images.** What are the prevailing images in the environment you are in? What new metaphors do we need? How would they be made concrete? When a politician or local school principal waves the new flag, what should he or she say?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

3. Look for inspirational stories, or readings that could help you, your friends, your students, and/or your community to re-imagine the future.⁵⁰



HANDOUT

Re-imagining a place for religion⁵¹

A number of people at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress felt that religion was important. So, where is the place for religion in environmental education? Or, where can it be placed alongside, or part of, environmental ethics? After all, the explicit language of values in religion is likely to be much more familiar to most people than that of philosophical ethics. How should we understand the ongoing centrality of religious influences in much local and global decision-making—and in some instances, the role of religious influences in profound conflict.

If education is, as some say, primarily to ‘show individuals how they can function together in society,’ then religion, which can be both divisive and unifying, should not be ignored. So what are some of the challenges?

Try, for example, re-imagining some possibilities:

1. How can religious communities conceptualize, or re-conceptualize, their faith in ways that effectively engages modern environmental concerns?
2. How can a discussion of religion and religious values help to build understanding across faith communities (and communities that eschew religious belief) in ways that create new possibilities for considering environmental concerns and for functioning together?

This is important work for environmental educators from all religious, spiritual, and faith communities (and from outside these communities) and these questions only provide a starting point.

Using the workbook to 'get started':

Comment on the message in the 're-imagining possibilities' section of the workbook. What are the authors suggesting we do? Comment on the perspectives of the authors.

Could you use the examples provided above in your teaching?

How would you adapt or change this section of the workbook for your teaching?

Section six of this workbook has more examples that challenge us to 're-imagine' the world. Can you use them?

ethics around the world



In this section we 'close' the workbook. We do not draw conclusions, but rather open the workbook to more ethical stories from around the world. We have included a number of stories from educators who participated in the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress Workshop, and others that have been sent in via e-mail while we were working on the book. We now encourage you to 'add your story' to the collection of stories already contained in this book, so that we can continue to broaden our conversation on ethics as an everyday activity. Consult the UNEP website on www.unep.org for a chatroom where this conversation can be continued.

Being critical around the world

In the first section of the book, we included examples of cultural artefacts from Canada, Scotland, and South Africa that have helped us think more critically. However, new cultural artefacts (goods, products) are being produced and marketed everyday all over the world, evidently to convince people of the need to consume more. In critiquing prevailing cultural assumptions, one of our purposes is to encourage more sustainable consumption. Here is another story, this time from China, that can help us with this process.

An advert sighted on Chinese television promotes shampoos that promise shiny hair. Is the advert aiming to convince Chinese people that they don't have shining hair, and therefore need the shampoos? Is this creating 'unnecessary consumption'? What are the ethical questions associated with unnecessary consumption?

Consider the implications of these ethical questions in this context: China is the biggest market place in the world for advertisers. 98% of families own television sets. There are nearly 2200 TV channels. More than 1.17 billion people watch TV.

Other examples provided by workshop participants at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress include:

- What are the consequences of cellphone company advertisements that want us to think that 'everything turns around you'? Is it necessary that we have to feel at the centre of everything?
- Does 'branded' sportswear really make us more successful and desirable? Why do we accept these branded images as symbols of success, health and beauty?
- Are holidays in exotic places really a 'natural paradise'? What is being 'left out' or 'not said' in these advertisements?
- Does owning a fast car really make us seem more desirable?
- Are advertisements for flavoured water giving us a message that natural water is 'not good enough'?
- 'Without the cars, Finland stops!' – this is often a sign on big cars or on buses in Finland.
- Consider importation of 're-conditioned' vehicles from Japan and other developed countries to developing countries such as Sri-Lanka, Malawi and others. These vehicles do not meet the developed country standards for being acceptable

for use. And, it is reported that the re-conditioning often amounts to little more than a re-painting! In developing countries it may be better to use the money spent on re-conditioned vehicles to improve public transport.

- Are new style 'conversation kitchens', which are now the vogue in Denmark, really necessary? Is it necessary to abandon perfectly good kitchens and build new ones just to be 'in fashion'?

— Add your story —

Can you identify other examples that could lend themselves to cultural critique from your country or local context:

Spotting self-validating reductions around the world

In the second section of the book we explained how a tendency towards reduction can often become self-validating. We included stories of self-validating reduction that are relevant to many places around the world. The sources of these stories include the World Water Forum, and international policy making. Other stories are from Mexico, from the Amazon Rainforest and from Arizona in the USA. There are, however, many other examples of self validating reduction. Here is a story from Asia, where farmers are challenged by the implications of the patenting and genetic modification of seed.

According to the *New Internationalist Magazine*, the trans-national seed industry is trying to convince farmers to give up their centuries-old practice of saving seed. The industry is promoting both the patenting and the genetic modification of seed. They argue that genetically modified seed, which is patented and controlled by the companies that own the seed will enhance food production. (There is no clear evidence that this is, in fact, the case.) This is leading to a reduction in the number of seed varieties available to the farmers. Through patents and contractual agreements (which state that only the companies can own the seed), seed companies aim to prohibit farmers from sharing or saving seed, to control what pesticides are used, and even to 'own' the harvest. As more farmers enter into these contracts fewer farmers use their own seeds and, ultimately, seed diversity is reduced. With fewer farmers saving and sharing their seeds it can become more difficult to sustain traditional practices, and these practices are reduced. Pressure to enter into contracts grows—and is validated by the decreased viability of traditional practices. And so it goes. An October 2001 Action Aid study found that, of the 250 patents they identified on rice, 61% were controlled by just six seed companies. One rice

farmer from Visayas in the Phillipines, says: 'If seeds are patented it is like cutting off a farmer's arm, since you are removing the farmer's freedom to choose seeds and preserve them', clearly pointing out the self-validating reductionism of the seed companies' strategy.⁵²

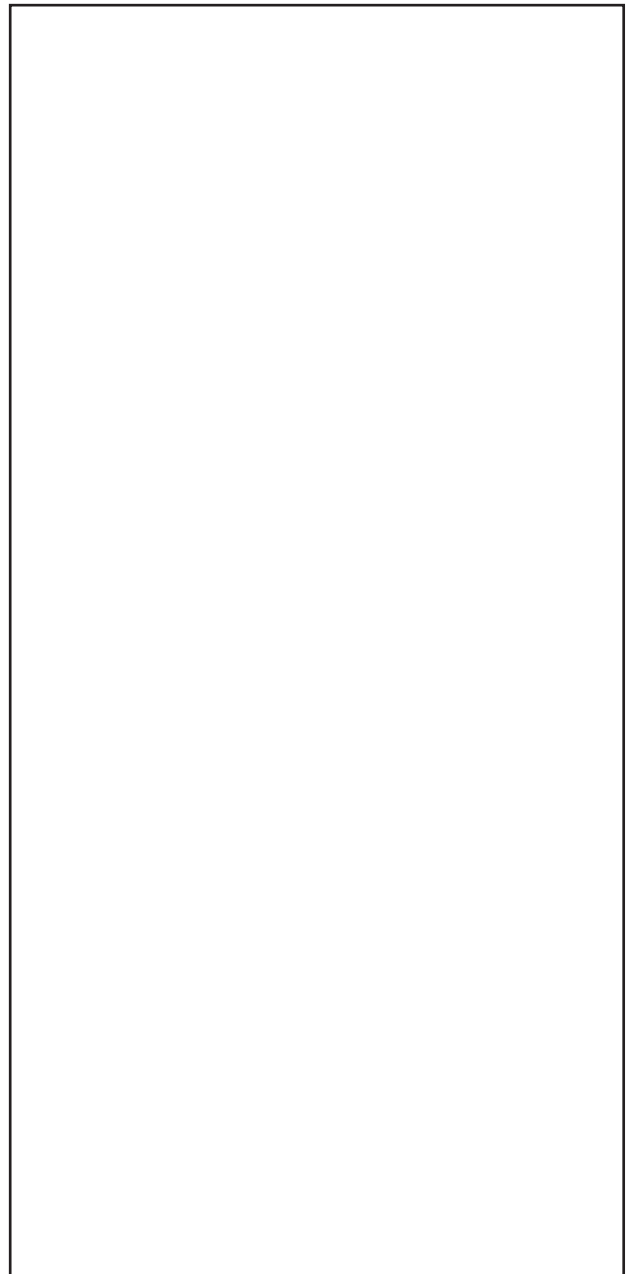
Other examples provided by workshop participants at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress include:

- A prominent international development organisation provided large scale funding for aquaculture of shrimps. The intention was to provide more protein in the diet of poor people in certain areas in India. The aquaculture activities have, however, led to water pollution and a destruction of mangroves, which has led to erosion problems and a loss of natural biodiversity. These affected areas had previously provided poor people with resources for subsistence livelihoods. The loss of access to these resources has led to more poverty and malnutrition, and now the only hope is to gain employment in the shrimp farming industry. Thus, 'work', and livelihood security in this context has been reduced to participation in an industry which has ironically become self-validating!
- In Italy coastal areas are subject to large scale development for tourism and luxury accommodation. These areas are never seen as being 'degraded', but are rather sold and seen as being very valuable. Increasingly those wanting to use the land for luxury developments are reflecting that land used for agriculture in areas near the coast is being 'wasted' or 'not valuable', with a message that this land would be more valuable if used for luxury developments. This is leading to

productive land being viewed as being 'less valuable' and is consequently less valued. Further commercialisation of land becomes self-validating.

— Add your story —

Can you identify other examples of self-validating reduction from your country or local context:



Complex questions and ethical quandaries around the world

In the third section of the book we introduced the idea that it is often difficult to address difficult ethical questions. To illustrate this, we described how conservation managers in southern Africa are faced with an ethical quandary surrounding an increase in elephant numbers in and around the national parks. We also suggested that you could research other difficult ethical questions that arise in other parts of the world, such as the building of the Nujiang dam in China or the Narmada dam in India, or water privatization in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

You may also want to research other difficult ethical questions that result in ethical quandaries such as the 'trade-offs' that are made when environmental impacts are identified for new development projects which may create much needed jobs, or when we use fossil fuel transport (for example air travel) to get from point A to point B to do some important work that may be beneficial to the environment.

Using a computer or a cell phone, even for the best purposes (such as writing this book!), may also be an ethical quandary, particularly when we consider this newspaper report on e-waste:

6 April 2004 -- Chinese labourers eke out a living using acid, fire and their bare hands to recycle mountains of electronic scrap, most of it from the U.S. The peasant works without a break, smashing cellphone chargers, battery packs from laptop computers and other electronic refuse. With scarred hands, he picks through the splintered debris for copper, bronze and anything else that might have value.

Every day, Luo Yinghong and others like him claw through mountains of discarded high-tech equipment, looking for reusable materials. The waste piles have turned this onetime rice-farming community into a foul-smelling, toxic digital junkyard.

"I've been doing this for almost nine years. Even if it is harmful to my health, what else can I do?" said Luo, 28, who comes from Sichuan province. "I am just a migrant worker. I can't afford to worry."

A growing graveyard of the Information Age, filled with cables, keyboards, cathode-ray tubes and motherboards, stretches for miles in this corner of Guangdong province on China's southern coast. Luo is one of an estimated 100,000 'scavengers' who scrape together a precarious existence here.⁵³

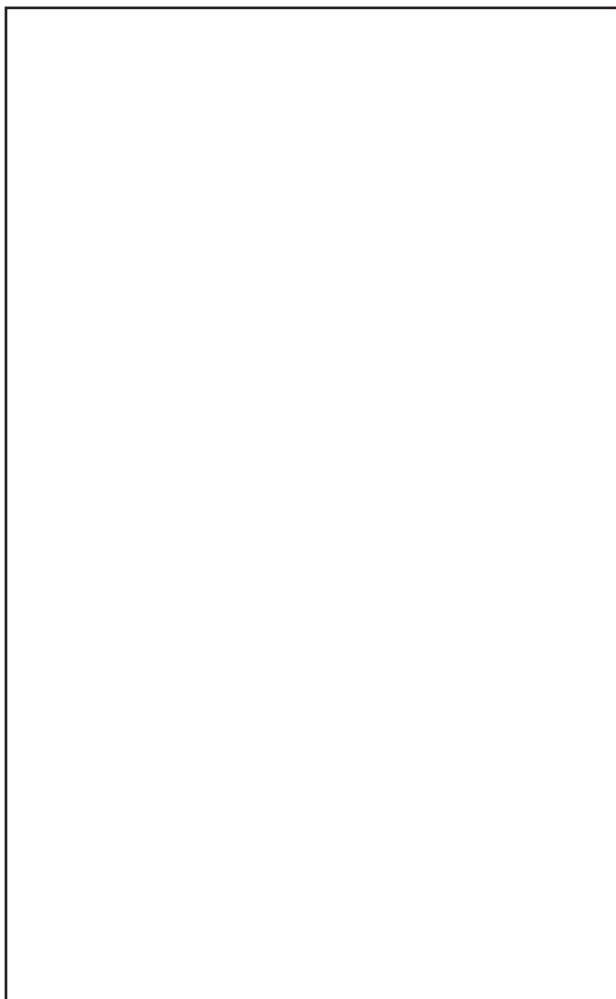
Other complex ethical questions discussed by workshop participants at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress include:

- In Italy wolves are returning as a result of protection. This is leading to conflict with sheep farming, and sheep farmers are faced with ethical quandaries similar to those highlighted in the 'Great Elephant Debate'.
- When using a cell phone (and when we really consider the implications of electromagnetic pollution) we are all faced with the ethical quandary - communication or health?
- In Botswana, fences are constructed to control foot and mouth disease. These fences affect the movement of wildlife, restricting their natural migratory routes. The consequences are high concentrations of some animals (such as elephants) in particular areas which leads to land degradation and deaths in the dry season.
- In Sri Lanka, there is some concern about use of so-called 'concern for the environment'

to advance ones own business needs or to harass rivals or competitors. Some are asking for advice on what 'environmental concerns' (even non-existent) could be put forward to block a rival's venture. One instance was a fight for 'territory' between two shrimp farmers. Actions taken may include encouraging agitation by residents of neighbouring villages against the proposed project. This can be a complex problem needing thought and investigation in some cases.

— Add your story —

Can you identify difficult ethical questions, or quandaries, in your country or local context?



Ethics in action around the world

In section four of the book 'Ethics in action', we included stories from Canada, South Africa, and the UNEP offices in Kenya. There are, however, many other examples of ethics in action from around the world. In Sri Lanka, the government decided to ban the importation of genetically modified foods until they are proven to be safe for human consumption and the environment (this is an example of ethics as action at a national level where the government is taking the precautionary principle seriously). Unfortunately this regulation led to international controversy surrounding the impedance of trade, and the Regulation has been suspended.

In the late 1990's the World Bank conditioned debt relief and other development assistance to Bolivia on the country's agreement to privatize the public water system of Cochabamba city (Bolivia's third largest city). The Bolivian government awarded a 40 year contract to provide water services to the city to a California-based multi-national company that had invested in Bolivia's water sector. Soon the price of water tripled and thousands of residents were unable to afford water. To protest against the privatization and unfair pricing, the community formed institutions and organized protests which included a sustained series of marches, negotiations and demands for the revision of national water policies and a repeal of the contract. Ensuing activism and public protests (an extreme form of ethics as action) forced the government to concede to public demands⁵⁴.

In Europe consumers are increasingly demanding fruit that carries the fair trade label. As a result Britain joined eight other countries selling 'Fairtrade Mark' bananas in 2000, and major supermarket chains started to stock these bananas. In Colombia, a co-operative farmer with less than one hectare of bananas, underlined the benefits that fair trade can deliver in just one year:

‘Without the premium price, we would not be farming still ... We have been able to cut fertilizer use by half and started using animal manure. We have stopped using herbicides and the ground cover between plants is now attracting back the wildlife. We have also built a kindergarten for 120 children and have organised waste collection in the community’⁵⁵.

In a more experimental approach to ethics in action, Luigina Mortari, from the University of Verona in Italy, works with young children in their first years of schooling⁵⁶. She believes that the present ecological crisis lies in an ethic of nature consumption; and, reconstructing cultural frameworks requires alternative ethics. For her this means an ethic of care grounded in first-person lived-experiences. Believing that pupils can learn to care for others (human and more-than-human) with whom they are intimate, she started a program where young children cared for plants. Importantly they were involved in both thinking about the task and the practical activity of looking after the plants. So they were involved in another example of ethics in and as action. Through analysis of conversations with the children, and of their diaries, Luigina felt that students did become emotionally and ethically attached to their plants, and that an ethic of care can be cultivated. She believes that combining the acts: the concrete experience of caring for another living entity (even plants) and the task of reflecting and writing about the lived experience, is critical. Though Luigina acknowledges that evaluating these experiences is difficult, and conclusive results are elusive, an important organizing principle remains. That is, seek to offer children experiences that are positive and creative.

Other examples of ethics in action provided by the workshop participants at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress include:

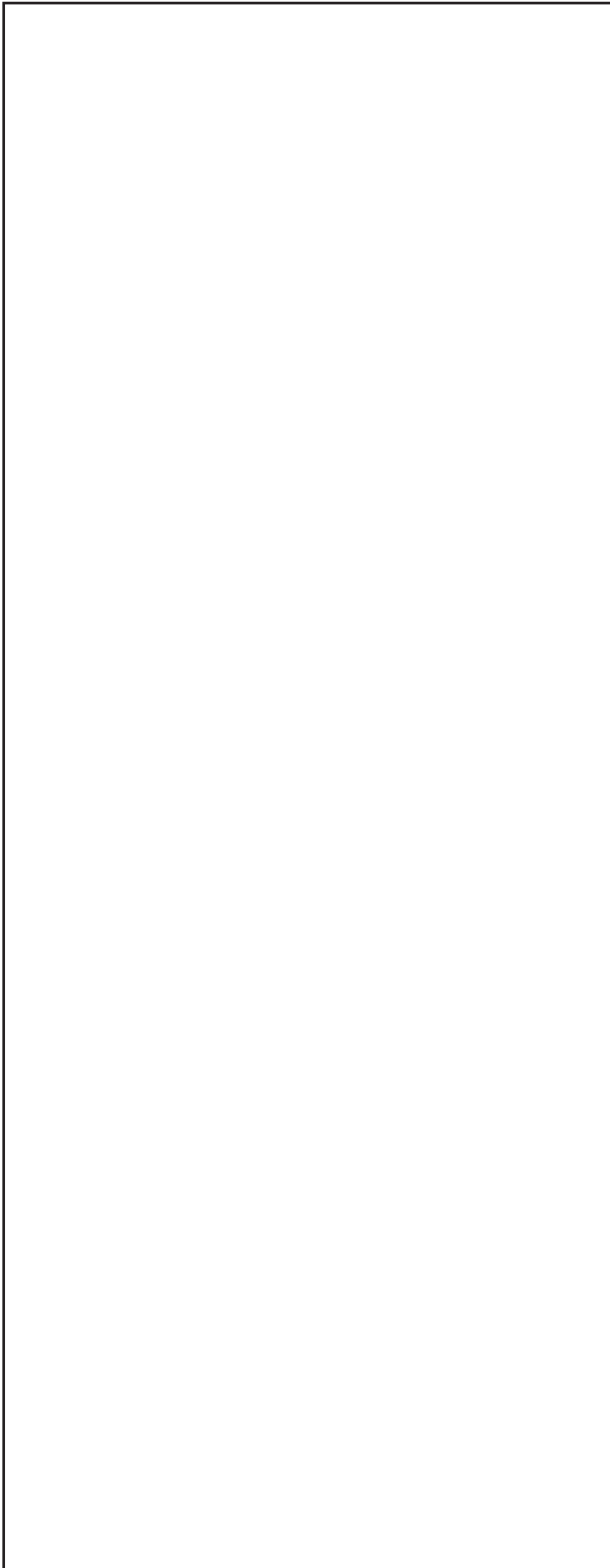
- In a place where water shortage is the order of the day (Botswana), a billboard

reads “Water is life, conserve it”. This is meant to encourage the community to conserve water. Ironically, the billboard is placed in front of the Water Affairs Department, who regularly water their lawns with sprinklers!

- One participant reflected that in addition to reducing the weight of her own ecological footprint through everyday actions by using a bicycle, walking and using public transport, saving energy, she also tried to share this sensibility with others.
- In Sri Lanka an innovative solution has been found to the problem of 'coir dust' or powdery material which remains after making rope from coconut husk. Some years ago, large unsightly mounds of this material was found all over the coconut growing areas of the country, since it did not decompose significantly even after thirty or forty years. This environmental problem has been more or less solved in recent years since a bright entrepreneur got the idea of putting it in bags after processing, and selling it around the world for horticultural purposes under the name 'cocopeat'! This has the added environmental advantage of saving the world's peat beds from being excavated.
- The Global Ecovillage Network supports the positive flowering of community-based initiatives aimed at restoring degraded ecosystems, and developing more sustainable and satisfying ways of living. This Network comprises more than 13 000 eco-settlements, and involves people on every continent on the planet!

— Add your story —

Can you identify examples of ethics in action in your country or local context?



Re-imagining possibilities around the world

In 'Re-imagining possibilities', the fifth section of the book, we included stories from Australia, South Africa, Nicaragua, Sweden, Canada and the United Kingdom. There are many other stories of re-imagining possibilities. In Denmark and other European countries, more and more people are using bicycles to travel to work and back. In doing this, they are re-imagining possibilities for a world with less air pollution.

In Pakistan, a community worked together to re-imagine the possibilities for development in their community. Residents of the Orangi Pilot Project, in Karachi, Pakistan, constructed sewers to 72000 dwellings between 1980 and 1992, contributing more than two million dollars of their own resources. The community has also developed exemplary provisions in basic health, family planning, education and empowerment, creating a very successful slum upgrading initiative, and improving the quality of life for many of the communities. This example now provides other communities with ways to re-imagine new possibilities for development.

Now famous for her efforts at re-imagining the future, Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai (way back in 1977!) re-imagined new possibilities when she started the Green Belt Movement. Since then more than 30 million trees have been planted in Kenya. These have slowed desertification, provided fuel, shade and fruit and many women have been empowered through their participation in this movement.

Other examples provided by the workshop participants at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress include:

- In Botswana, communities in the Chobe area have established locally-based

organisations to conserve wildlife. This has resulted in a reduced rate of poaching and conflict between the Department of Wildlife and farmers. It has also economically empowered the communities as they benefit from some of the ecotourism activities.

- 'Biodiversity' can be experienced as a 'cold technical word', which may well be useful in a scientific treatise, but it may not be particularly helpful in encouraging people to cultivate a warm feeling towards biological conservation. Rohan Wickramasinghe from Sri Lanka reflects: 'To my mind, calculations of 'biodiversity' resemble what is termed in other contexts as 'bean counting'. Let's face it - if I wanted to increase Sri Lanka's score for biodiversity all I need to do is to add in the number of species found in the Colombo Zoological Gardens and the three botanical gardens or the species in the plantation crops such as tea, rubber, coconut, pines, eucalyptus, oil palm, and agricultural crops of potatoes, chillies etc etc, which are all exotics. I wonder if an alternative word could be found for 'biodiversity' for use other than in scientific texts?'

— Add your story —

Can you identify examples of re-imagining possibilities in your country or local context?



postscript



a few words about theory

Readers interested in theory will notice that we haven't examined the foundations of environmental ethics. This is because this book is meant more as an introduction, to open the field of enquiry in an active and engaging way. However, for those with a theoretical interest, we thought it would be useful to point towards some major influences within this field, especially those that have influenced our thinking.

As environmental ethics emerges as a field of research and inquiry much of the work has been, and continues to be, directly or indirectly derived from the traditions of the philosophers Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham. Many scholars in the field have focused on finding ways to convincingly extend thinking about 'human' ethics into the more-than-human world. These have often, and perhaps misleadingly, been lumped together as approaches focusing on 'rights'. There are, however, important differences between these two lines of inquiry.

Other scholars have found theorising based on Kant and Bentham inadequate. In ongoing attempts to shed new light on the issues a number of alternative approaches have emerged. These approaches are rich, varied, sometimes divergent, even contradictory, but always exciting to the creative theorist. We now identify some other philosophers, and outline lines of inquiry that have challenged and inspired us in the preparation of this book:

- Aldo Leopold, the often enigmatic American philosopher, has been a founding figure in the field of environmental ethics.

In addition to writing with passion and elegance, a notable part of his contribution has been to foreshadow many issues and methods of a, broadly conceived, post-modern period.

- Another influential figure has been Arne Naess. This Norwegian Philosopher, who first coined the term 'Deep Ecology,' was in turn inspired by the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza and the Indian activist Mahatma Gandhi.
- Canadian philosopher, Neil Evernden, has inspired us through his critique of Cartesian traditions. To develop a forward-looking thesis he draws on the European traditions of Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.
- Feminist and eco-feminist perspectives have contributed greatly to this field. Some of the leading writers who have been particularly helpful to us have been Americans, Carolyn Merchant and Karen Warren, Indian Vandana Shiva, and Australian Val Plumwood.
- Working within traditions of Karl Marx, the German scholar Hebert Marcuse has shown us new possibilities that have worked well, especially alongside some ideas framed by the American curriculum theorist Elliot Eisner.
- Work from a number of other authors, posing contemporary challenges to

Modernist theorising, has also influenced our thinking. Notable in this category are French philosopher Michael Foucault, Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, and American philosophers Jim Cheney and Anthony Weston. We have also drawn on the pragmatism of Johan Hattingh, a philosopher working in South Africa.

- Another source of intellectual and practical challenge has come from African philosophies, most notably the philosophy of Ubuntu⁵⁷ as well as from aboriginal and First Nation colleagues and friends in Canada, and Australia. These are often similar to many Eastern philosophies that strengthen our understanding of relationships between the human and the more-than-human world.

From this snapshot of our own journey, we can see that environmental ethics has fertile origins. But there is always much more than one set of authors can represent. Moreover, environmental ethics continues to unfold as new perspectives are brought to light. We encourage readers to be a part of that unfolding. We encourage you to bring your voices into the conversation and, in the words of an aboriginal colleague, we encourage you to

'look into your own cultures to find the very best that your culture has to offer,' particularly those ideas, stories, ceremonies, and daily practices that help us to meet the environmental challenges of our time. And we encourage you to share your ideas and tell your own stories.

Now we want to hear from you

This has been a collaborative effort. Many people have contributed to this book and we have learned a lot from each other. Now we want to learn from you. What activities worked well? Or, didn't? How have you adapted ideas presented here? What stories would you like to tell?

We'd love to hear from you. Please send your thoughts to:

Bob Jickling, bob.jickling@lakeheadu.ca and
Heila Lotz-Sisitka, h.lotz@ru.ac.za.

You can also join an ongoing conversation on ethics as an everyday activity on the UNEP website: www.unep.org.



Some comments from educators at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress:

Participants at the 3rd World Environmental Education Congress had many complimentary things to say about the book. They also had some useful suggestions as to how the book could be used. Here we share some of their insights with you.

Some comments on the 'everyday ethics' project and the work book...

'This is a crucial project!'

'The book provides an excellent starting point as it allows teachers to get started with ethics work without needing lots of sophisticated training in ethics.'

'A marvelous environmental education resource!'

'The workbook has practical value to educators around the globe: teacher educators, teachers, community development workers, adult educators, university lecturers and many more could use the book.'

'The workbook is conceptually coherent, and avoids the traps of relativism and dogma.'

'The workbook invites engagement from the educator.'

'The book is good because it takes us beyond the cognitive approaches to environmental education, to include a stronger values discussion, which is not prescriptive.'

'The book is useful because, in a concrete and simple way it helps people to understand

ethics in everyday life, and the implications for environmental issues.'

Some thought on the teaching of ethics ...

'I think that the long term solution is to give people the chance to gain awareness of the consequences of their actions. Environmental education is not about telling people how to act in the right way, and we don't have the right to change people as we want. Only through personal thinking and reflection can change be lasting. I think the key words are understanding, thinking and awareness.'

'These ideas can be used as a reference to discuss everyday choices. These ideas are important and they can be effective if we understand that they are part of a social context which involves relations amongst people – it's a little like the ecosystem concept in ecology – its not just the individual that counts, but it is the whole that is important.'

'Environmental education is not an exact science, it cannot be written exactly in a book. So it asks to be continuously built through interactions with people.'

Some thoughts on how the book could be used ...

'NOAH (Friends of the Earth, Denmark) is considering integrating elements of the Workbook into new or revised versions of its environmental education text books for secondary level education (e.g. on sustainable consumption or sustainable home economics) and/or the instructions for teachers that go with each of them. It furthermore thinks that a Danish version of the handbook would be a very useful learning tool for nature interpreters, that are being employed by municipalities, protected area management authorities, or schools.'



notes and references

- 1 We have begun to use the term 'more-than-human' coined by David Abram and made popular in some circles through his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996). This is a conscious effort by Abram, and us, to disrupt the human-centeredness in the term 'non-human.' In this spirit we have also begun to use the phrase 'the rest of Creation,' at first simply as another alternative to 'non-human,' but later as a gesture of inclusiveness. Here I think of aboriginal persons who often talk about a Creator, other faith communities, and those that believe in evolution as a process of Creation. For those who do not feel comfortable with these terms, we invite you to find, or invent, your own alternatives.
- 2 John Ralston Saul, *The Collapse of Globalism: And the Reinvention of the World* (Toronto: Viking, 2005).
- 3 Nelson Mandela, *Make History. Make Poverty History.* Speech, The Campaign to Make Poverty History, Trafalgar Square, London, United Kingdom, 3 February 2005.
- 4 Here we take full account of our own ideologies. For example, through the examples we have included in the book, we signal a dissatisfaction with consumerism, trans-national corporations, and policies that work against social justice and a concern for the environment. We thus state our position clearly here, to avoid our own 'absences,' and invite readers to critically engage with the themes opened up by our choice of examples and language.
- 5 Arundhati Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (London: Harper Collins, 2002).
- 6 Anthony Weston, *Back to Earth. Tomorrow's Environmentalism* (Philadelphia: Temple, University Press, 1994).
- 7 First Nations is a term often preferred by aboriginal persons living in Canada. It has served as a powerful political reminder that these minority, and often marginalised, groups were the original inhabitants of this country.
- 8 Louise Profeit-Lerblanc, 'Transferring wisdom through storytelling,' in B. Jickling, ed., *A colloquium on environment, ethics, and education* (Whitehorse: Yukon College, 1996): pp. 14-19.
- 9 Catherine Austen, Update on federal endangered species legislation, 1996. Retrieved from Canadian Endangered Species Coalition website on May 26, 2004 (<http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/~otto/biodiversity/cesc.html>).
- 10 EnRoute. (Air Canada, August, 2002).
- 11 This story is taken from Bob Jickling, 'Making Ethics an Everyday Activity: How Can We Reduce the Barriers?' *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 9, (2004): pp. 11-26.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Sawubona, *World Summit Special*. August 2002. Three years later, Nikki Köhly and I were travelling to Durban, and we saw the same advertisement. Nikki again drew my attention to the advertisement, and the irony/paradox in relation to sustainable development discourse.
- 14 Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
- 15 Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
- 16 John Cushman, 'Critics Rise Up Against Environmental Education,' *New York Times*, April 22, 1997, pp. A10
- 17 Ken Bolton, "Corporate Money Is Seductive, But Do We Want It?" *Yukon News*, March 9, 1994.
- 18 Eliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On The Design And Evaluation Of School Programs*, 2nd Edition. (New York: MacMillan, 1985).
- 19 Jeannie Burke and Eric Walker, *Rock On Yukon*, (Whitehorse: Yukon Chamber of Mines, Government of Canada, & Yukon Department of Education, undated).
- 20 This material is based on a workshop activity originally prepared by Anthony Weston. See also, Weston, *Back to Earth: Tomorrow's Environmentalism*; and A. Weston, 'Self-validating Reduction: Toward a Theory of the Devaluation of Nature,' *Environmental Ethics* 18, no. 2 (1996): pp. 115-132.
- 21 Robert Rosenthal, *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectations and Pupils' Intellectual Development* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).
- 22 Frederick Douglass, in Weston, *Back to Earth*, p. 97.
- 23 Leigh Price (pers. comm. 2005) points out that self validating reduction may sometimes be a useful thing. She notes that it may not be the process of self-validating reduction that is wrong, but rather it may be the dishonesty with which it is employed that is wrong, i.e. pretending it is just 'how things are' rather than bringing forward the process into open discussions. She also notes that self-validating reduction may well be a potential process by which we transform the world – is not all language a reduction of sorts, and as we commit to one set of words rather than another, does this not transform the reality we are merged with? While it is important to show up the hidden aspect of self-validating reduction, it is difficult to see how we can avoid it altogether. Just because we prefer the outcomes of our favourite reductions does not mean that we are not reducing.
- 24 Arundhati Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (London: Harper Collins, 2002).
- 25 Story adapted from Carlsen, *New Internationalist*, December 2004, p. 12-13.
- 26 Anthony Weston, *Back to Earth*. pp. 98-99. See also, Jim Nollman, *Dolphin Dreamtime* (New York: Bantam, 1987), pp. 94-97.
- 27 'Alberta: One expensive big-horn sheep,' *The Globe and Mail*, November 4, 1995.
- 28 CITES: Convention International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora.

- 29 Brigland, F. 'Why 5000 elephants must die', Sunday Herald, 2004 (<http://www.sundayherald.com/45602>); 'Elephant Debate Not a Ploy to Reintroduce Culling', Bua News, October 2004; Leakey, R. & Morell, V. Wildlife Wars. My battle to save Kenya's elephants. (New York: Pan Books, 2002); Whitehouse, A. & Irwin, P. A field guide to the Addo elephants (IFAW & Rhodes University, 2002); Hammond, S. 'Kruger won't cull elephants', 2004 (<http://www.news24.com>); 'The WESSA Elephant Debate', 2004 (<http://sanwild.org/noticeboard/news2005>).
- 30 Salim Fakir, 'Notes on the Ethics of Elephant Culling,' Talk at the Ethics Society Congress of South Africa, 30 March 2004. Pretoria. IUCN.
- 31 UNESCO, 2004. Draft International Implementation Scheme for the UN Decade for Sustainable Development. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001403/140372e.pdf>).
- 32 The Earth Charter (www.earthcharter.org or http://www.earthcharter.org/innerpg.cfm?id_menu=19)
- 33 Johan Hattingh, Unpublished MEd course notes, Rhodes University, 1999.
- 34 Anthony Weston, A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): p. 190.
- 35 See for a discussion of these issues and 'reframing' examples see, Sue Hamel, A participatory approach to community-based curriculum development for the Living With Elephants Outreach Program in Botswana, Unpublished MEd thesis, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University, 2004. For a literary interpretation of events from the perspective of elephants see, Barbara Gowdy, The white bone (Toronto, Ontario: Harper Collins, 1998)
- 36 From Bob Jickling, (in press). 'Ethics as Research in Environmental Education,' Southern African Journal of Environmental Education, 22.
- 37 These comments do not represent a systematic survey of the fishing regulations, though that would be a good project. Rather, they are a sample of the regulations published between 1998 and 2004 by Yukon Environment.
- 38 This issue has also been explored in a more 'traditional' way in the journal Environmental Ethics. See for example A. Dionys de Leeuw, 'Contemplating the Interests of Fish,' 18, no. 4 (1996): pp. 373 - 390.
- 39 Nikki Köhly wrote the first draft of this story. Others in our Department, notably Ingrid Timmermans, were 'leaders' in making the policy turn into practice. A more comprehensive version of the story was produced by Ingrid and Heila in 2003, but the story continues. See I. Timmermans & H. Lotz-Sisitka, 'Learning through Environmental Policy Implementation: A case story of the Rhodes University Department of Education's environmental policy,' The Declaration, 6, no. 2 (2003): pp. 14-17.
- 40 The Eziko project is an exploration of action research in African democratic contexts, based on Nguni Foundations.
- 41 Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).
- 42 This material is based on a workshop activity originally prepared by Anthony Weston. It also draws on stories from around the world published in the New Internationalist Magazine (<http://www.newint.org/>)
- 43 Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).
- 44 Holmes Rolston III, 'Ethics on the Home Planet, in A. Weston, ed., An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 107-139.
- 45 Story adapted from Peter Yu, New Internationalist, July 1999, p. 4.
- 46 David Lake, 'Waging the War of the Words: Global Warming or Heating?' Canadian Journal of Environmental Education 6, (2001): pp. 52-57.
- 47 Story from New Internationalist, December 2003, p. 6.
- 48 Story adapted from Culver, New Internationalist, January 2002, p. 29. (See also www.tobintax.org.uk)
- 49 Story from New Internationalist, December, 2003, p. 6.
- 50 See for example: E. Galeano, Upside Down (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002); Fernando Funes, Luis García, Martin Bourque, Nilda Pérez, Peter Rosset, Sustainable Agriculture and Resistance: Transforming Food Production in Cuba (Havana: First food books, 2002); and Jules Pretty & Rachel Hine, Reducing Food Poverty with Sustainable Agriculture: A summary of New Evidence. Final report of the SAFE-World Project, Centre for Environment and Society, University of Essex. England (www2.essex.ac.uk/ces/).
- 51 For a preliminary discussion about religion in environmental education see the Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 11 (2006).
- 52 Story adapted from the New Internationalist, September 2002, p. 16-17
- 53 Story by Ching-Ching Ni, LA Times Staff Writer, (April 2004) (http://www.ban.org/ban_news/dantes_digital_040406.html)
- 54 Story from www.rightowater.org.uk
- 55 Story adapted from the New Internationalist, April 2000, p.11
- 56 For a more complete description of this research project see Mortari, L. (2004). Education to care. Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 9, 109-122.
- 57 Ubuntu is a Nguni (an African language group) word comprising one of the core elements of a human being. The Nguni word for human being is umntu which is constituted by the following: umzimba (body, form, flesh); umoya (breath, air, life); umphefumela (shadow, spirit, soul); amandla (vitality, strength, energy); inhliziyi (heart, centre of emotions); umqondo (head, brain, intellect), ulwimi (language, speaking) and ubuntu (humanness). The humanness referred to here finds expression in a communal context rather than the individualism prevalent in many Western societies. Ubuntu is said to originate from the Xhosa (Nguni) expression: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye Bantu. "Not an easily translatable Xhosa concept, generally, this proverbial expression means that each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others and, in turn, individuality is truly expressed". (This explanation of Ubuntu is taken from Le Grange, L. in press. Southern African Journal of Environmental Education. Vol 22.)

Environethics

by Akpezi Ogbuigwe

1. Imagine a world where breathing kills
Where food becomes poisonous and ushers in
ills
Imagine a world with no fish in the sea
Where oceans rumble and stumble misery

Imagine a world where river water oozes acid
Where lakes are desolate, riddled with poison

A world devoid of birds chirrup because they all
fled to find shelter on another planet!
No forests because every piece of wood has
been felled by man's cravings

Extreme examples, for an extreme lifestyle

2. Let's take a walk through our daily lives ...

We wake up,
brush our teeth,
take a shower,
comb our hair
Look good
A lifestyle since childhood
Involuntary the need to take care of the body

It is just but a lifestyle

3. Stop, think, ...
is it difficult to take care of yourself?
Would you lean back and leave the job to
someone else?
No! I don't think so!

What if the person never shows up?
What if the person uses stinking clothing to
dress you up?
Would you say thank you and go out happy,
blissful?
No! I think not!

Extreme examples, for an extreme lifestyle

4. Wake up, look at me, your environment
Am I some form of entertainment?

why throw all your garbage on the streets?
why dump toxic waste into the rivers?
why fell trees without planting at least two
more?
why drive cars that blacken the skies?
why have that insatiable taste for the 'good
things' of life at my expense,
why have no regard for me, your environment?

Extreme examples, for an extreme lifestyle

5. Next time you take a bath,
Remember, I, the environment also need a bath
I need your day to day commitment
I need some environmental ethics

**ENVIRONETHICS, ENVIRONETHICS!!,
OUR ENVIRONMENT CRIES!!!**

