

GROUNDWORK

**No free lunch
in the green
economy**



groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice service and developmental organisation working primarily in South Africa, but increasingly in Southern Africa.

groundWork seeks to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in Southern Africa through assisting civil society to have a greater impact on environmental governance. groundWork places particular emphasis on assisting vulnerable and previously disadvantaged people who are most affected by environmental injustices.

groundWork's current campaign areas are: Climate Justice and Energy, Air Quality, Waste and Environmental Health.

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In this issue

- 3 From the Smoke Stack
- 5 The green economy
- 7 My COP17 reflections
- 9 Getting to know it for themselves!
- 12 A road trip through Mpumalanga
- 14 Pmb set to recycle... maybe
- 16 Cyanide kills cows
- 17 Green economy bad for your health
- 19 Europe's Eskom
- 21 Putting the world on sale
- 22 Green economy in the news
- 23 Towards collective action across SA
- 24 Amandla to global waste pickers
- 25 A Nobel Laureate's problem at home
- 26 Vale, the baddest kid on the block!



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groundWork is affiliated to the following international organisations:

Health Care Without Harm

International POPs Elimination Network

Basel Action Network

Oilwatch International

Global Anti-Incineration Alliance

groundWork is the South African member of Friends of the Earth International

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The greedy industries and corporations of the world make a meal out of the planet while making millions through false solutions proposed in the green economy. Cover illustration by Barry Downard



From the Smoke Stack



Photo by FoE

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

So the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's 17th Conference of the Parties (aka COP17) has come and gone – and for those who do not know that COP stands for this annual gathering, shame on you. Once again the poor and the environments they depend upon lost in this boxing ring. Round 17:0 to the world – 17 to the polluters and the political elite. The next round is happening sooner than we think; it will play itself out at the United Nations gathering in Rio, in June. This is twenty years after the first Rio conference and ten years since the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. Once again people are flocking to the next big gathering, trying to make sense of a system that is set up for the elites of the world.

There is a growing recognition amongst NGOs – grassroots movements had an earlier recognition of this – that the global multi-lateral processes have not been successful in delivering meaningful change and thus engaging on the inside is being questioned in various approaches towards Rio+20. This is after the hard experience in Durban, Cancun, Copenhagen and beyond. Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) has taken an approach of working with and strengthening “peoples’ movements that are contesting the elite agenda of the 1% by supporting local struggles globally and at The Peoples’ Summit in Rio”. This approach is shared by the technically orientated International Persistent Organic Pollutants Elimination Network's (IPEN) in their reflections that, “while the Rio+20 process has been disappointing, and the Rio+20 Conference does not provide much promise with

forward-looking political commitments, this is a global stage where IPEN believes a common toxics-free mission should be presented for future collaboration and solidarity among civil society: a re-commitment to the work on toxics-free green livelihoods.” There is a recognition that saving the world is in the hands of social movements and not the elite.

But before we get into Rio+20 we have to mention that despite the monumental failure of the COP17 – emissions targets (or lack thereof) which leave us with a five degree increase in temperature, and a green climate fund with no money – President Zuma, in his State of the Nation address, congratulated the “inter-ministerial committee on COP17 for making the conference a huge success” that made sure the “final outcome of COP17 (was) historic and precedent setting, ranking with the 1997 conference where the Kyoto Protocol was adopted”. In Kyoto the US forced the world to accept carbon trading as a solution to climate change before it would join the Kyoto Protocol – which it subsequently did not join anyway. But, since then emissions and temperature have increased. So, ranking Durban with Kyoto says a lot about how the political elite view these multi-lateral agreements. Success is seen in terms of maintaining the status quo and this was aptly put by the Chinese spokesperson after the COP15 process in Denmark, indicating that it was successful for China if it had to make no compromises. Indeed the global political elite made no compromises in their continuing attempts at screwing over the poor.



From the Smoke Stack

For the political and corporate elite, success means they can go on with business as usual, making money and growing their economy. This is embedded in the State of the Nation address even more starkly; while we are struggling with a dying fossil fuel economy – which every now and then is revived by finds of shale gas and tar sands – South Africa continues to develop an economy that is resource-extractive and export dependent and dependent on fossil fuels (import). This makes us vulnerable to the global mafia economy. The State of the Nation address was peppered with reference to increases in mining exports through increased rail and port capacity. The Budget presented by our Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, built upon this business-as-usual approach while the Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC) warns against “spending on big business infrastructure in the vain hope that by doing so the private sector will invest in the economy and stimulate growth benefitting the majority of South Africans who remain poor. However, South Africa now has over a decade of hard experience that private sector-led economic growth does not translate into the creation of jobs or reduction of inequality.” Nor has it in any way addressed the environmental injustices inherited from the past and climate change that goes along with this.

Coupled with this, there is a push by government to have incentivised Special Economic Zones (SEZ) focusing on local investors after the failure of the Industrial Development Zones (IDZ) such as Coega and Richards Bay. Social justice commentator Glen Ashton warns that these zones are notorious for getting perverse incentives such as tax breaks, weakening of environmental legislation and social contracts. So, despite the warnings of discontent from people and the failing planetary ecological systems, the push for economic growth continues – but now we have a relatively new spin, started by Deutsche Bank. Something that will play itself out at Rio+20 and which global resistance is building up against, for it is capitalism in another guise... the green economy.

Soon the world's attention will be focused on Rio, where in June the world's elite will gather in air conditioned rooms plotting the green economy and the dismantling of peoples' rights, while local

communities from across the Americas, with their global counterparts, will engage on the outside, building a countervailing force. While Durban's gathering was large in climate terms, especially considering it took place in the South, Rio promises to be bigger – and I hope more meaningful to the many millions of people who have to face the impunity of corporations and governments in the far corners of the world, away from the buzz of Rio.

The business as usual approach is in no place better personified than at the World Bank. The Inspection Panel report on the World Bank's US \$3.75 billion loan to Eskom has been finally completed and the World Bank management will be discussing the outcomes of this in May 2012. I am not holding my breath. Why, you ask? Well, after the very public global campaign on Eskom, the World Bank continues its practice and is now involved in Kosovo, with the support of the US government which abstained from voting on the Eskom loan. And, once again, the US got its way by muscling in their candidate, Jim Yong Kim, to replace Robert Zoellick at the World Bank. Will Kim make the changes that are so urgently needed at the World bank, or will it be business as usual? What will his stance be on Kosovo and Eskom? As I say, I am not holding my breath for change!

Finally, as I always try and do, I look for where there is hope. Shell is at last going to be hauled in front of the Dutch courts for their actions in Nigeria. The court in The Hague decided that an open sitting in Milieudefensie's (Friends of the Earth Netherlands) Nigeria case will be held on the 11th of October 2012. This is indeed a victory for the very many years of struggle in the Delta by local people supported by Environment Rights Action (Friends of the Earth Nigeria) and Milieudefensie. For far too long, people in the Delta and, indeed, Africa have been ignored as they have tried to challenge big oil. The case could not have come sooner. It can only be hoped that the Dutch legal system follows through and acts if Shell is found guilty, as this was not the case in the Nigerian experience where, despite flaring having been outlawed, it is still done by big oil with impunity.

Aluta continua! ✕



The green economy

by Bobby Peek

New green economy is simply the old economy with a coat of... well, greenwash

The green economy debate is fermenting and soon, in Rio, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, it will pop its cork. It is going to emerge as the solution to the world's problems. I use the word fermenting specifically for there is generally a rotten smell when something ferments, and in this case something is foul in the 'state of the UN'.

Generally there are mixed feelings and different understandings by society of what this thing called the green economy is. In a discussion with one of my long-term comrades, she explained a process where, within the indigenous communities in Columbia, the unpacking of the words green and the economy gave a startling account of how these two words do not resonate positively for indigenous communities. The experiences of the economy that have been imposed on indigenous people have been the taking away of their lands, the destruction of their forests and the pollution of their waters. A very dark experience where colours of brown and muddy shades inhabit the mind. In this economy their lives are destroyed. The environments in which they have co-existed for centuries are taken from them in the name of the economy and the healthy, wholesome shades of green no longer exist in this economic world. So, for the UN to join these concepts – green and economy – is sacrilegious and does not make sense for people living in harmony within environments which have, up till now, secured their livelihoods.

On the 21st of February, the United Nations Environmental Program launched The Green Economy Report. The author of the report indicated that a "green economy is not about stifling growth and prosperity, it is about reconnecting with what real wealth is; re-investing in, rather than just mining natural capital; and favouring the many over the few. It is also about a global economy

that recognises the intergenerational responsibility of nations to hand over a healthy, functioning and productive planet to the young people of today and those yet to be born". To the person in the street these waxed lyrics sound great. They make sense. But what we do not find in these words is any mention of the poor. Not surprising, considering that the main driver behind the report is Pavan Sukhdev, on secondment from Deutsche Bank, head of UNEP's Green Economy Initiative and chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council. The same Deutsche Bank that is funding Eskom's coal-fired power plants and is sixth on the list of the top ten banks globally funding the coal industry, with a funding portfolio of €11 477 million.

It is claimed by those pushing the green economy that the concept is derived from the principles expressed through the United Nations 1972 Stockholm Conference and the subsequent Brundtland Commission findings. But what the report, managed by Sukhdev, does not tell you is that, in Rio in June, government and corporations will be plotting the demise of the founding principles of Rio+20 and the rights of people to access basic rights and services such as nutrition and water. In this context of absent principles and stolen rights, the green economy is going to form a framework of how the world's future will be constructed by the global elite.

Now this construct of the green economy has been adopted quite uncritically by many politicians, NGOs and the public in their support for this 'greenwash' project of the UN. One of the early announcements by Minister of Economic Affairs, Ebrahim Patel, was to support the call for a green economy. The green economy even got traction amongst NGOs and community groups. So a simple Google search will highlight the confusion



on the green economy. Recently, however, there has been a critical response to this idea. People are not going to stand back and be screwed over by the elites. We cannot have the same governments that have failed to deliver, the same world leaders who are calling for social austerity measures, the same corporations that are implicated in human rights abuses and the same NGOs that are not willing to call for system change, lead the call for a green economy.

The green economy is going to ram home the very many false solutions that we are resisting in the climate change debate. Carbon trading, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), incineration of biomass (waste) and things such as agro-fuels are going to be the future. The UNEP report is strangely silent on nuclear energy and is ambivalent on genetically modified crops. These are the very same things that are impoverishing the poor now and will continue to do so in the future when they are formalised as part of the future economy.

But resistance has been coming from across a range of role-players. Even in the UN, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, talking about 'green growth', warns that "[o]ne should not deceive oneself into believing that such evolutionary (and often reductionist) approaches will be sufficient to cope with the complexities of climate change. It may rather give much false hope and excuses to do nothing really fundamental that can bring about a U-turn of global GHG emissions." So, within the UN structures there are serious concerns about this new push.

In January, at the World Social Forum, despite the many possible approaches that could have been adopted by peoples' movements, NGOs and Trade Unions towards Rio+20, it was agreed that the green economy must be the central focus. Besides local communities raising concerns about the green economy, social justice activists have warned, and Uruguayan Silvia Ribeiro points out, that "in the wake of the largest financial crisis in history, the same bankers who can't even keep their own house in order now claim they can manage the planet. Excuse us for not believing them." But deep-rooted concern is not only a recent trend in civil

society's thinking on corporations as they continue to seek ways of reinventing the making of profits on profits. When one considers the corporate social responsibility approach by corporations (endorsed by government) we can learn from the critique of this and relate it to the green economy. Joel Bakan, author of *The Corporation* warns that the "benevolent rhetoric and deeds of socially responsible corporations create attractive corporate images, and likely do some good in the world. They do not, however, change the corporation's fundamental institutional nature: its unblinking commitments to its own self-interest." This is how we must understand the green economy.

groundWork has been clear about what society needs in order to attain environmental justice. People need to work for reasonable remuneration in conditions that are safe, rewarding and secure, rather than in dehumanising and exploitative situations. Communities must have decent levels of affordable basic services and infrastructure that are enjoyed by all and not only those who can afford them. Individuals and families must be able to access, at a minimum, the basic goods of human life starting with nutrition and safe and comfortable accommodation, and finally there has to be a clean and healthy environment – where people live and work – that is nurtured by the very way in which people live. This means an alternative economy – maybe even a green economy.

As in Bolivia's critical stance in Cancun at the climate negotiations – sadly not carried through to last year – they have been vocal in the preparations towards Rio+20 and have indicated that the Rio+20 process has been thwarted by corporate dominance. Pablo Solon, Bolivia's ex-ambassador to the UN, has been more clear about Rio+20 and the green economy. It is "repackaged green capitalism" and the "new forms of mercantilism and speculation being proposed could further despoil nature while entrenching existing injustices".

So we need to be very cautious about how we inform society about this new fad. We need to be truthful. We need to recognise it for what it is. There will be no free or equitable lunch in the green economy. ✕



My COP17 reflections

by Siziwe Khanyile

After having spent much of 2011 deeply involved in preparing for COP17, Siziwe has now had some time to think about both the preparations for and the conference itself

I wish to reflect on COP17 from the perspective of the civil society engagement with the process from outside of the formal negotiations in the International Convention Centre.

Upon hearing, early in 2010, that South Africa would be host to COP17, South African civil society started on a process of discussions and planning about what civil society's activities and engagements would be outside of the UNFCCC precinct.

We shared lessons from WSSD where there were many mistakes and divisions within civil society, and we were inspired by civil society actions in Copenhagen.

After Cancun, we were quite clear that we did not want a repeat of Cancun where there were three different civil society marches, and politics linked to the spaces for civil society engagement. We were determined to make COP17 a uniting space for all civil society. South Africa was going to be the place where a cohesive front would be forged against the "system", the environmental justice (EJ) movement would be strengthened and ideological divides would be bridged. We would be inclusive in organising, including groups across the board, from community organisations, to labour, to social movements, international NGOs, environmental NGOs, religious groups and the list goes on.

Through rose-coloured glasses we resolved that the history of a divided civil society would not repeat itself!

At a Johannesburg meeting hosted by Earthlife Africa, an interim COP17 planning committee was

elected whose mandate was to develop consensus on a civil society strategy, campaign/action plan and structure for COP17, to establish shared goals, calls and objectives and to establish and mandate a joint civil society committee to raise funds, establish a secretariat and coordinate civil society activities in advance of COP17.

The interim planning committee also went about developing a political document for discussion which made proposals on key demands by civil society, proposed what the South African government should deliver on at COP17, and what the negotiations ought to produce.

At the first broad civil society meeting in January 2011, in Durban, eighty national organisations and coalitions were represented by over 160 participants. We had a good cross-section of South African civil society present. The meeting successfully held discussions on climate impacts, discussed the outcomes of Cancun and expected limitations of Durban, and elected a new committee. The meeting was a disaster in developing a common position. It was impossible to come up with demands and positions that could be agreed to by all. The meeting had no independent facilitator and was chaired by members of the interim planning committee. Some organisations walked out as they felt that the messages were too weak, others stayed inside to ensure that wording that they couldn't live with was not put into the final document.

Our coming together had the aim of challenging the economic system of production and consumption to achieve carbon reductions necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change.



To do this, we needed a strong climate justice movement that would define the climate agenda and hold governments accountable to it. Understandably, compromising to please the broader collective was therefore not an option, because the aim and focus of coming together ought not to have been unity at all costs, but rather to develop a radical movement supported by all sectors, making real demands of our government and of the negotiations, rather than broad, meaningless statements.

Having been a part of the interim planning committee, groundWork was once again elected onto the new committee of seventeen people from sixteen organisations representing the cross-section of South African civil society. Others who had been on the interim planning committee withdrew.

As the new committee we set out to establish a way of working, appointing an independent facilitator to help us work, developing an identity, fundraising, creating a listserve, opening a bank account and giving ourselves a name. We held face-to-face meetings, organised broad civil society meetings and literally got to work.

In the process of working within the Civil Society Committee for COP17 (C17) there were personality clashes. None of us were being paid to take on this work and, in most instances, organisational work took priority. There was attrition as some members resigned. Decision making was by consensus and by a quorum and therefore took longer. Weekly telephone meetings were the norm and, with more than ten people, proved to be quite a challenge. Unfortunately, until the very end, we did not have a dedicated secretariat and at times members of C17 would fail to deliver, therefore requiring much of the work to be done by even fewer individuals on the committee. There was a lot of pressure on members of the committee and organisations based in Durban and Pietermaritzburg to do a lot of the work. Funding and fundraising was a huge challenge, with donors who promised funds pulling out and those who contributed reducing the amounts originally promised. Although we had planned to not take money from our government, at the eleventh hour we did.

There are certainly many lessons to be learnt by civil society from this process. It was the first of its kind for the environmental movement in South Africa and the criticism and lessons are plenty. These are as wide-ranging as there are people and organisations that were part of this process. Certainly a debrief and review is essential for us all to critique and learn together.

A lot was achieved but it all seems inadequate without the changes to the system that we sought. The civil society space lacked a richness in dialogue and debate, the awesome 15 000 strong march didn't deliver the necessary punch and militancy that would make governments stand up and take notice, the refugee camp that we organised as an accommodation for comrades, but also as a statement on the future impacts of climate change, was government-funded and government sought to prevent us from branding it a Climate Refugee Camp. Instead it became highly political as comrades expressed their dissatisfaction with aspects of the camp.

At the end of the day, the logistics and spaces for civil society were created and availed, and it was up to organisations to ensure that they used these effectively. Certainly C17 should have done much more to link with both the international community and the African civil society community, and lead a strong political process.

The process was a challenging one and I personally had some exciting moments and lessons. I learnt a lot about our civil society in this country, negotiating with the Durban municipality and seeing them shift the goal-posts, play hard-ball and eventually crumble on the issue of the march route. I learned lessons on organising, taking government to court to enforce our right to march on an agreed route. I experienced government oppression first-hand when a peaceful civil society action in the City Hall turned violent in full view of our president. Working with a broad range of civil society was an eye-opener. Mobilising in new communities and working with and making new friends was the cherry on top. ✂



Getting to know it for themselves!

by Rico Euripidou

The onset of winter raises the problems of Vaal pollution once again

Winter in the Vaal means average temperatures of about 8° Celsius. When it's that cold, you need to keep yourself warm but many communities in this area are not afforded the basic right to electricity, which forces them to rely on cheap fossil fuels to do so. On top of this, dirty industries situated near these communities pollute throughout the day and night, adding to the mix of noxious gases that people breathe in.

There has long been a promise by government that they will be tackling indoor air pollution. From the early 2000s there was a proposal for a three-prong strategy: one, moving to alternative energy sources (instead of burning coal and other biomass indoors); two, designing and building energy efficient homes; and three, pushing the Basa Magogo which results in the continuation of community people burning coal and other biomass 'upside down' indoors to prevent pollution.

Millions of Rands and much senior political time have been spent by Ministers pushing the Basa, but alternative housing and energy is still a pipedream producing loads of smoke.

The public is becoming aware of the lack of service delivery and how this potentially endangers their health and well-being. The increasing number of public protests and utterances by senior ANC

members are evidence of society's discontent. But let us be careful not to fall into the trap of "lessening our demands" based upon Mathews Phoswa's statement that the ANC is pitching their "promises too high, and then there are expectations". Damn right there are expectations for the basic human rights which our constitution promises us.

groundWork, together with local community organisations, is starting to reinforce the importance of collecting evidence as substantiation of the health implications of government's failure to deliver. The Vaal Justice Environmental Alliance (VEJA), in partnership with groundWork, undertook indoor air quality monitoring in the Vaal Triangle Priority Area to measure actual levels of indoor ambient air quality and compare these to National ambient standards for particulate matter (PM₁₀) as well as the heavy metals contained within this.

Communities' ongoing reliance on using fossil fuels indoors for spatial heating and cooking is a growing concern, particularly when the fossil-burning methodologies, such as the Basa, are the only solutions to the energy crisis suggested by the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA) and the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME).

In August 2011, community people measured indoor air quality in four houses over a period of

Table 1: Representing the total volume of air filtered through oil Teflon filters and their particulate (PM₁₀) concentrations.

Sample number	Average flow rate (dm ³ /min)	Total volume of air filtered (m ³)	Particulate concentration measured in ug/m ³	Current & future South African ambient air quality standard (24hr)	
				Current	Future (2015)
1	5.5	7.92	114.00	120 ug/m ³	75 ug/m ³
2	5	7.2	13.89	immediate	effective from
3	5.25	7.56	595.24		1 Jan 2015
4	5.5	7.92	252.53		



twenty-four hours. Table 1 presents these results and compares them to the South African ambient air quality standard which was established to protect public health.

In comparison to the current and future ambient air quality standard for PM₁₀ these results are quite alarming – in one instance the ambient air quality standard is exceeded fourfold. If compared to the current WHO recommended standard for PM₁₀ (24hrs), which is only 50 ug/m³, the results are even more alarming. It is clear that the National standards are simply good-looking numbers on a page... And, with the Basa being the 'solution', that's what they will remain until the fog of fossil fuels stops clouding the ideas of the DEA and DME and they begin to use cleaner renewable sources of energy.

Once the filters were analysed to determine their PM₁₀ concentrations they were digested¹ at a SANAS accredited laboratory to determine the metals present and their respective concentrations. Table 2 shows the concentrations of various metals which were found on the filters. The harmful effects of toxic chemicals are well documented in the medical literature.

Annex 1 summarises some of the health effects of exposure to toxic metals. It is important to note that this analysis did not address emissions from building materials and household products such as benzene and formaldehyde, or other indoor air contaminants.

We are demanding from the government ministries that an integrated approach to air quality management and planning becomes fundamental, especially in the context of the poverty, sub-standard housing and spatial heating that is a common feature throughout the Vaal and Highveld. People are simply asking for the democratisation of our energy supply and consumption, so that those in most need of energy to protect their basic rights are afforded a meaningful say in the way South Africa's energy future is decided. This future needs to answer to peoples' basic needs. In other words, energy sovereignty is a must. ✕

¹ The filters were digested using an aqua-regia digestion. The digests were analysed by ICP-MS by Talbot & Talbot Laboratories in Pietermaritzburg.

Annex 1: Summary of harmful effects of inhaling selected heavy metals

(Pb) LEAD: Clinical effects range from chronic exposures, including severe gastrointestinal disturbances with constipation, abdominal pain and tenderness. Other effects include anaemia, weakness, pallor, insomnia, renal hypertension and mental fatigue. Air Quality Standards: 0.5-1.0ug.m³ long-term (e.g. annual mean) (WHO, guidelines)

(Hg) MERCURY: Chronic exposure may lead to central nervous system disturbances such as personality changes, hallucinations, delirium, insomnia, decreased appetite, irritability, headache and memory loss. Air Quality Standards: 1 mg.m³ averaging time one year, indoor air (WHO, guideline)

(Cr) CHROMIUM: Breathing high levels of chromium(VI) can cause irritation to the nose, causing problems such as runny nose, nosebleeds, and ulcers and holes in the nasal septum. Ingesting large amounts of chromium(VI) can cause stomach upsets and ulcers, convulsions, kidney and liver damage, and even death. Skin contact with certain chromium(VI) compounds can cause skin ulcers. Some people are extremely sensitive to chromium(VI) or chromium(III). Allergic reactions consisting of severe redness and swelling of the skin have been noted. Air Quality Standard: Exposure limit (Massachusetts community air quality standard): 0.1ug/m³ or 100ng/m³ (MA Dv Air Quality Control, 1998) for environmental exposure.

(Mn) MANGANESE: Manganese penetrates the lower respiratory tract toward the alveolar membranes, leading to dyspnoea, pneumonitis, pneumonia and bronchitis. Manganism, or 'manganese madness', is characterised by headache, asthenia, irritability; transitory psychological disturbances such as hallucinations, apathy, confusion, insomnia, compulsive behaviour, decreased libido, impotence and emotional instability are often found early in the disease. As exposure continues, symptoms include generalised muscle weakness, speech impairment, nystagmus, inco-ordination, memory impairment, tremor, incontinence, paraesthesia



Table 2: Filter papers were digested then analysed using the ICP-MS and the results were back-calculated using mass and volume to represent the results in mg/kg:

Sample No	1 W 974/11	2 W975/11	3 W976/11	4 W977/11
units	mg/kg	mg/kg	mg/kg	mg/kg
Lithium	211	880	26	42
Strontium	7111	6900	256	315
Cadmium	49	60	10.23	7.00
Barium	37889	437000	7791	19150
Mercury	10778	81000	5279	5100
Lead	6444	6600	374	365
Magnesium	112778	270000	8233	8500
Aluminium	169444	221000	8465	10550
Silicon	44889	472000	6651	10400
Chromium	6889	38000	465	1150
Manganese	28333	13000	721	600
Iron	-	-	-	-
Cobalt 478	478	460	23	14.50
Nickel	1889	4700	86	250
Copper	7444	122000	12698	8050
Zinc	53444	256000	6674	13100
Arsenic	278	1100	40	105
Potassium	71667	591000	15070	30800

and muscle cramps. Advanced stages include excess salivation, inappropriate emotional reactions and Parkinson-like symptoms, such as a mask-like face, severe muscle rigidity, gait disorders and other extrapyramidal symptoms. Established neurological symptoms tend to persist or even progress in the absence of additional exposure. Air Quality Standards: 1 mg/m³ (WHO, guideline).

(Al) ALUMINIUM: Occupational exposure may result in asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease and pulmonary fibrosis. Long-term overexposure may cause dyspnoea, cough, pneumothorax, variable sputum production and nodular interstitial fibrosis; death has been reported. Chronic exposure may result in asthma which is probably related to the inhalation of fumes and particulate matter.

(Zn) ZINC: Excessive (especially chronic) oral intake of zinc reduces absorption of copper and immune

function. Zinc is very toxic to fish and is expected to bioaccumulate. Drinking Water Standards: Zinc: 5000ug.l-1 (UK, max), & ;300ug.l-1 (WHO, level where customers may complain). Soil Guidelines: Dutch Criteria: Zinc: 140 mg.kg-1 (Target)] and 720 mg.kg-1 (Intervention) · Air Quality Standards: no data available

(Cu) COPPER: Industrial chronic copper poisoning is associated with nausea, vomiting and liver complications. Exposure to copper-contaminated tap water has been reported to cause green pigmentation of blonde hair. Green discolouration of the skin may occur following chronic dermal exposure. Drinking Water Standards: 3000 mg.l-1 (UK, max); 2000 mg.l-1 (WHO, provisional guideline); 1000 mg.l-1 (WHO, level where customers may complain); Soil Guidelines: Dutch Criteria: 36 mg.kg-1 (Target) 190 mg.kg-1 (Intervention); Air Quality Standards: no data available.

For more information on the harmful effects of chemicals on human health please see the following weblinks: <http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/en/> and <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/index.asp>



A road trip through Mpumalanga

by Musa Chamane

A recent trip visiting waste pickers in Mpumalanga brought home the fact that waste pickers have a better chance of success if they organise and work together

It's a morning of scorching summer sun in South Africa. I am travelling with Simon Mbata from the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) from Johannesburg to Mpumalanga. The temperatures are above 30° Celsius and time is tight as there are many towns to visit, where we aim to recruit more and more waste pickers to be members of SAWPA. Mpumalanga reminds me of the Free State due to its vast and flat land. We drive through different towns with a one-hour stop at each town to visit our prospective friends. We have had many different experiences in this province. I have never eaten so much tropical fruit in all my life as I have during past visits here. Mpumalanga has many farms farming fruits and maize. One can literally park the car on the side of the road and walk to a field of mango or avocado. People here speak a language that is closely related to the Zulu language, which is spoken in more than seven of the nine provinces in the country, and therefore communication is never an issue.

The visit is scheduled to last three days. Accommodation is booked at different towns. Luckily we never encounter any major road accidents which normally disrupt the travel time. The only delays we experience are the road construction "stop and go" controls. Mining activities have ravaged the environment in this province. Mining and agriculture co-exist; each area might have coal mining underground while above is the agricultural farm. This is a different experience for me – I never thought these activities could co-exist in this manner. I used to think that if there was mining one would see a vast, fenced area, with mining waste dumps and trucks to show that the work is in progress. What we see here is contrary to what

I had in my mind. The mine is characterised by just one moderate building, with not more than 200 parking spaces, and you will be told that more than 500 people are working for that mine and that they are underground.

The very first landfill we visit is Secunda Landfill. Men are in the majority and dominate this site. Actually, this is our second attempt to try and engage with waste pickers from this side of the world. The landfill is located not far away from Sasol and its power plant. When chatting to waste pickers they mention a number of challenges they are facing at the landfill. The low price for recyclables is the main issue that the waste pickers complain about during our meeting. Different buyers offer different prices and most of the prices offered are exploitative. Ill-discipline and harassment are also a problem for the waste pickers in this landfill.

We also visit Standerton landfill and waste pickers have problems that are similar to Secunda landfill. At least waste pickers in Standerton have been forced to organise themselves in the past. They once campaigned against privatisation of the landfill by the Standerton council. The council had appointed one of their ANC comrades from the nearest township to take over recycling activities at the landfill and waste pickers were not consulted about this. The waste pickers led a march to the council's offices in 2009 in protest against this. The tender was cancelled and waste pickers are still at the landfill but have not worked together since then.

The ill-discipline amongst waste pickers is the main concern during our meeting. There is also a



concern about the current committee and they ask us to assist them on how to democratically elect the leadership. We take them through the process and we leave them to elect the committee. Later they call us with the names and contact details of the newly elected leadership. It has been interesting to listen to the stories told by waste pickers. It has become clear that no one has ever spoken to them about organising to solve the problems that they have.

In Middelburg Landfill, waste pickers have only three more days to work, and thereafter they are no longer allowed to continue working because unbecoming behavior to customers has ended up with complaints to the municipality. It looked like it was the biggest landfill that we visited in Mpumalanga during this visit, with about 300 waste pickers on site. The landfill is located next to a large coal-mining plant. The relationship between waste pickers and municipal employees has been sour. The waste pickers have been refusing to take orders, such as refraining from intimidating customers, from the municipal employees. There are mature men at the landfill who raise the issue of ill-discipline by the young men. It all boils down to the fact that they are not organised and therefore there are no rules; everyone does as they please and it's clear that such behaviour from young men could cost the livelihoods of many people.

Due to the ill-discipline of the waste pickers, one landfill municipal employee has requested to address waste pickers during the meeting. He mentions that in four days waste pickers are no longer allowed to be on site and says that they have been informed about it. Most waste pickers are really not happy with the idea. The municipal security tries to stop the meeting before it even starts and I inform him that this is not the only landfill we are visiting in his province and that we need no approval from the municipality because meeting is our constitutional right. He refrains from the idea after he noticed that I was not intimidated by his utterances or his presence. He allows us to have a meeting on site. The other municipal employee who is in charge of the landfill staff mentions that, if the waste pickers fail to move, they are planning to dig a moat around the landfill to make sure that no one gets into the site without municipal approval. I inform everyone



Waste pickers at the Mpumalanga landfill site are harassed by municipal workers.

Photo: groundWork

that the problems that they are experiencing are due to being disorganised. If they were organised there would not be so many challenges because there would be a structure where the grievances would be reported and addressed. They agree with what I say.

The meeting resolves that a committee will be elected and that they will invite everyone who works at the landfill to be part of the meeting to be held the following day. At this meeting the leadership of waste pickers will be elected and Simon takes them through ideas on how to elect a democratic leadership. We also agree that the issue of being kept out of the landfill is something that the newly elected leadership needs to address with the municipality. The following day the leadership is elected and a series of meetings amongst themselves take place and the municipality has, to date, not yet kicked them off site. The leadership is currently trying to secure a meeting with the waste management unit of the Middelburg municipality.

The lessons we are learning from the landfill visits is that landfills that are not organised usually experience many problems, unlike those that are organised. Waste pickers seem to suffer from inferiority complexes and, when you tell them that they can request a meeting with the manager of the waste management, they tell you that it is impossible and that he/she won't meet them. SAWPA has to work hard in capacitating the leadership of waste pickers and inculcating the idea that nothing is impossible if you work together as a unit. ✖



Pmb set to recycle... maybe

by Musa Chamane

A recycling pilot project for Pietermaritzburg is on the cards, but, given the sad history of recycling at the city landfill site, it may not be safe to hold your breath

Municipalities are not completely hopeless after all; there are officials who are prepared to go an extra mile in doing their jobs. We have seen people marching against municipalities in different regions complaining about poor service delivery and corruption. Msunduzi municipality is notoriously known for failing the people of Pietermaritzburg – in 2010 it was put under provincial administration following the suspension of more than five senior managers. The big sister municipality, uMgungundlovu district, is trying to assist Msunduzi to recover from the ordeal it has suffered. Msunduzi Municipality has been struggling to control waste pickers at the local dumpsite. Fences were erected and extra security brought in to keep waste pickers off the site. All the plans have failed to keep the waste pickers off the site.

It has taken energy and time to try to teach various municipalities the advantages of recycling. The Waste Act of 2008 compels every municipality to have some sort of recycling initiatives. Waste disposal is deemed to be the last option of dealing with waste. On the waste management issue we are now singing a different tune, despite all the challenges the council had. The district has managed to secure R21 million from the Provincial Cooperative Governance department. This money is allocated for proper waste management, focusing on recycling and composting of waste.

Department of Economic Development offered recycling funding

Umgungundlovu District has seen the importance of waste recycling and they have applied for funding to have a materials recovery facility (MRF) for Pietermaritzburg. Luckily, the district managed

to secure funding for the MRF and composting facility (CF). The first phase of the project is the MRF and the second one is CF. The project costs will be just over R20 million.

More than 100 green jobs to be created

More than one hundred people are going to be employed by these two phases of the project. The phase has the potential to employ waste pickers who are currently informally operating on site. A super cooperative with seventy-five members is currently in the process of registering with the department of economic development. For the past three years waste pickers have been encouraged to work together as cooperatives so that government will listen to them. Government does not listen to individuals; therefore it is important for them to work as a formal group. In the past three years, since engagement with groundWork, some waste pickers have formed more than five cooperatives, reclaiming various recyclables from the landfill. The cooperative training has been open to everyone interested as long as that person recovers waste at the landfill and is self employed. Those that were interested brought their identity documents for a two days training offered by the Department of Economic Development in January.

Political leadership approved the project

The joint Msunduzi and Umgungundlovu executive committee (EXCO) gave their blessing to the project. I had anticipated that the Msunduzi EXCO might stop the project before implementation because the landfill or the land where the project will occur belongs to them. It is encouraging to see that the municipality that was once on its knees financially is trying to make things right with citizens.



The project implementation phase starts on the 1st of April, 2012. Tenders have been adjudicated and a contractor has been appointed. Soil tests have been done and the project area has been leveled for construction to begin. Waste pickers are looking forward to the day construction begins. Waste pickers who have been left out and those who chose to work informally, have started to regret their decisions while others are swearing that the project will not start. "There are so many promises the council have done in the past. None of those promises were delivered, so why this one?" asked one waste picker. The municipal employees are in the dark about the whole plan, especially the landfill staff. The employer needs to assure them that their livelihoods will not be threatened by the project.

Pietermaritzburg a pilot for labour-intensive MRF

I always have a negative attitude towards government promises that are made to people; I hope that Msunduzi and uMgungundlovu municipalities will prove me wrong this time. The soil turning is scheduled to take place on the 1st of April. Pietermaritzburg will, in a few months, cease to

experience the burning landfill, especially in winter months, since most cardboard and plastic will now be recycled and therefore nothing burnable will be on the working surface. The landfill operations will be much improved because the volumes will be decreased by recycling. Come July or August, Pietermaritzburg will be a demonstration for waste picker-oriented MRF.

Here's hoping...

Hopefully every milestone for the project will be reached on time. Those who still think that this is just another promise by the municipality will hopefully be disappointed. This approach by the municipality must extend to waste in townships so that every township corner or river bank will be free of waste. More and more people will attest to the fact that waste is a resource, especially for the recyclers. People will begin to treat waste as a commodity and this will increase the recycling rates. This project is for waste pickers and will be run by the waste pickers. This will be the first of its kind and it will be a big achievement for the South African Waste Pickers' Association (SAWPA). ✕



Waste pickers in a workshop about forming cooperatives.

Photo: groundWork



Cyanide kills cows

by Rico Euripidou

Following a cyanide spill from a synthetic rubber manufacturing factory near Newcastle into a nearby stream, which resulted in a cattle kill and threatened the Ngagane River, the source of Newcastle's raw water supplies, we examine the fragile state of small local authorities and the potential for disastrous environmental pollution.

A Karbochem spokesman reported that it was found to be a mechanical failure of equipment that caused the contaminated water to leak into the storm water system. However, no further details about how cyanide gets released from a mechanical failure were provided, nor were details disclosed about what the physical and chemical state of the cyanide was. This is in itself a very worrying revelation because mechanical failure is not uncommon in industrial operations and the release of chemicals linked to mechanical failure sounds fishy.

Cyanide salts are commonly used in metal cleaning, gardening, ore-extracting processes, dyeing, printing and photography and in resin monomer production (e.g. acrylates), and are very toxic and often cause cyanide poisoning. Hydrogen cyanide gas is even more toxic and is very harmful to aquatic life, even in very low concentrations.

In humans, cyanide is absorbed by inhalation, ingestion, through the eye and through even intact skin. It acts by inhibiting cellular respiration and causes inadequate oxygenation of the blood. Hydrogen cyanide inhalation can be lethal within minutes. Similarly, ingestion of inorganic cyanide salts such as potassium or sodium cyanide may produce clinical effects and sometimes fatalities within minutes, which is probably what happened to the fifteen head of cattle that were found dead

following this cyanide spill and which alerted the environmental authorities to this incident. In response, the stream was flushed and chlorine was added to the stream to neutralise the cyanide in the water.

The reporting by the mainstream media did not, however, ever disclose exactly the quantity of cyanide released, how or even why this incident occurred in the first place. Furthermore, it appeared that following the spill the environmental sampling was undertaken by the industry rather than the environmental regulatory body, the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development, and Water Affairs, and herein lies the problem. In order to have good environmental



Photo: Estella Naicker, Newcastle Advertiser

governance, you need to have good regulations (which we have), underpinned by good and adequate monitoring and strong enforcement, which is clearly lacking, especially in our small local authorities. Let's hope that the compliance monitoring and enforcement unit of the Department of Water Affairs, which has jurisdiction over this incident, take the necessary actions and impose the right penalties to mitigate against future incidents occurring.

Considering that Newcastle is a heavily industrialised zone, the relevant government authorities (from local to national) should have a strategy to deal with oversight and enforcement in Newcastle. A fully functional, fully-staffed office for environmental management and enforcement must be present in Newcastle. They cannot rely on remote control from Pretoria (national government) or Pietermaritzburg (provincial government). All three spheres of government must come together and work on a solution for the area. ✕



Green economy bad for your health

by Rico Euripidou

Continued climate change will certainly affect public health

Will climate change turn into an African public health crisis – or, more importantly, a South African public health crisis? Yes, absolutely. African populations are least able to mitigate the impacts of climate change and least able to identify and address priority areas to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Because of our relative poverty and the fact that Africa will warm more than other continents, as a region we are the most vulnerable to climate change – in SA we might be a little better off than some of our fellow Africans, but we have already experienced the impacts of economic and social migrants over the last ten years and the social upheaval associated with competition in resource-poor settings.

So what exactly is the green economy and how might it address this looming public health disaster? To different stakeholders the green economy means a different suite of things. For example, for industry achieving some of their green economy goals might mean being water self-sufficient with zero input and zero discharge or, similarly, a target to achieve zero waste. However, while the intent might be noble, for industry the green economy generally means no more than increased competitiveness by whatever means to maximise profits regardless of the externalised costs to society.

From civil society's perspective, the green economy concept is not all congruent and aligned. We know what is wrong with the present model of production and consumption. Eskom is an example of how the economy should not be working. It produces centralised electricity that is given away to rich multi-nationals, at way below the cost of environmental pollution and external human health impacts and just above the cost of production. (BHP Billiton gets electricity at approximately 10c per kWh compared with 70-100c per kWh charged to domestic users.) They achieve this by using a strategy that regularly holds the country

to ransom, with cynical and deliberate centralised electricity shortages and favouring and diverting electricity to heavy industry. In comparison, developing sustainable, decentralised and locally managed grids, employing diverse small industries and working with less pressure, especially in small and poor municipalities, is critical to achieving an economy that has less negative impact on society. This is tantamount to servicing people's needs rather than corporate needs! A new energy future and peoples' economy will mean that we have to fundamentally rethink notions of economic growth. The world cannot deliver the economic growth and financial accumulation that is demanded by corporate capital. Even the UN recognises this.

Recently, at a side event that we hosted during COP17 (organised by groundWork, UKZN and Health Care Without Harm, among others) we heard from a variety of international experts about the public health co-benefits that can be derived from low-carbon strategies. This was in the context, pronounced by international contributors to the Lancet, a leading global public health journal, that climate change is now the greatest global public health threat of the 21st century.

We learnt that these researchers tried to get quantitative estimates of the collateral benefits to health of low-carbon strategies, because up till then, although researchers have talked in general terms, particularly around the air pollution co-benefits of low-carbon approaches, nobody had really tried to look across a range of different sectors and determine what the totality of these co-benefits might be. To do this on a global scale is, however, very difficult, with very short time and limited resources. Thus, what has been done by a consortium of researchers from various leading public health schools was to use a number of case studies to exemplify, using different situations (for both high and low income countries), what



Environmental Health

might be achieved. They focussed on four sectors: household energy; urban land transport; food and agriculture; and electricity generation.

These four sectors were chosen because they are responsible for large amounts of GHG emissions and, at the same time, they are also quite closely inter-related with health, through a range of different pathways. The approach was to try and demonstrate the health impacts from radical reductions in GHG (up to 50%), in developed countries.

In the first case study the researchers modelled the impact on health of introducing a low technology intervention to address indoor air pollution from biomass use for cooking and spatial heating. This is a common scenario in many low income countries (including South Africa) where you have large numbers of households and people cooking using traditional biomass stoves or open fires. The latest WHO estimates suggest that perhaps around two million deaths occur worldwide from indoor air pollution, particularly in women and children. However, using a 50 USD gasifier stove, you can achieve dramatic reductions in black carbon (up to fifteen times less) and substantial reductions in some of the other GHG pollutants.

The researchers modelled the effects of this stove program in India, introducing 150 million stoves over ten years. The Chinese government did something similar in the 1980s, with 100 million stoves – so it is feasible to do, with political will. What the researchers calculated was that about two million premature deaths are averted by such a program (mainly women and children) from acute respiratory infections and chronic obstructive airways disease. In addition to that you get up to a billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent reduction over the decade.

For the transport sector the researchers modelled two scenarios for London and New Dehli, looking at the effects of a low-carbon strategy – that's to say, using less polluting vehicles, but also more walking and cycling. The researchers also looked at the impact of air pollution and traffic related injuries and deaths and also the beneficial effects of less sedentary lifestyles and the beneficial effects of more walking and cycling. What the researchers

found for a city like New Dehli were the following headline statistics:

- Substantial reductions (up to 25%) in ischemic heart disease, and
- A massive reduction in road traffic accidents because of the uptake in public transport

When the researchers looked at the health care savings from this strategy they found that the savings from introducing these interventions could begin to fund the move towards low-carbon public transport systems.

For the electricity generation sector the researchers modelled the effects of a low-carbon electricity generation strategy for India and China using a number of different technologies and estimated what number of deaths could be prevented from particulate air pollution reductions by putting in place low-carbon electricity generation. They found that by 2030 we could be avoiding over 90 000 deaths per annum in India, and over 50 000 deaths in China, along with associated air pollution illnesses. These estimates are, however, quite conservative because they did not look at the total removal of fossil fuels. If we consider the benefits that are achieved through this, and value these benefits in economic terms, health benefits in India, for example, actually offset the costs of moving to a low-carbon energy economy.

We cannot allow the debate on the green economy to become nothing more than repackaged capitalism. If civil society is going to adopt the mantra of the green economy we must speak about decent jobs and, to quote the Alternative Information Development Centre's (AIDC) Million Climate jobs campaign, "a just transition to a low-carbon economy [that] provides opportunities both to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the quality of life of South Africans through reducing localised pollution and providing decent job and skills development opportunities. Such a transition provides extensive opportunities to create over a million jobs."

This is how we can achieve and fund the transition to a new economy. Maybe we will refer to it as a green economy, but then we have to fight for and own it, and not let it be dictated to us by the corporate and political elite! ✕



Europe's Eskom

by Sunita Dubey

The World Bank seems bent on repeating the mistakes that it made in South Africa in Kosovo

A feeling of *déjà vu* and the memories associated with the Eskom campaign are haunting us again. The World Bank approved a \$3.75 billion loan to South Africa to build one of the largest coal power plants in the world. The Bank's approval came despite strong opposition from the local communities, labour unions and many faith-based groups. We thought that our effort had not gone in vain as we believed that the Bank must have learned the lesson that the gigantic, carbon dioxide spewing coal project didn't make sense in this climate-constrained world. The Eskom Medupi project was not even acceptable to the local communities, despite the Bank's claim of increased job opportunities and local development. But, two years later, the Bank is again on the verge of approving an even dirtier, lignite-based power plant in Kosovo, in the name of national energy security, development and job creation. The plan in Kosovo involves building a new lignite-based, 600MW power plant and the rehabilitation of the 680MW Kosovo B project, along with the opening up of a new lignite mine called the Sibovc South Lignite Mine.

The Bank using similar arguments: "Eskom=Kosovo"

In 2008, the Bank adopted a Strategic Framework on Development and Climate Change (SFDCC) – a framework that addresses the challenges of promoting development in a changing climate. Both Eskom and Kosovo projects were assessed under this process and approved by an expert panel constituted by the Bank. Based on their assessment that the project met developmental criteria as well as environmental and low carbon requirements, they gave their approval to the Kosovo project on the 30th of January, 2012. A similar approval of Eskom under this framework left many baffled, as it was difficult to comprehend how a 4800MW coal power plant with an annual emission of 30MMT of carbon dioxide met the environmental and low

carbon requirements. This somehow implies that these processes are just used to legitimise coal projects, casting doubts on the Bank's intention and role as a "climate-friendly developmental bank".

The controversy around the Eskom loan has raised many critical questions about energy access, and the environmental, social and health impacts on local communities. The debate around the need for a huge coal power plant versus renewable energy options to meet the energy requirements of poor communities has been central to the Eskom campaign. Once more, these critical questions are overlooked in favour of a "big fossil fuel project" and add another dirty coal-based power plant in Kosovo. A report by the Inspection Panel, a grievance mechanism at the Bank, has listed many violations and oversights in approving the Eskom loan. While detailed enquiry and response by the management is still awaited, the Bank's intention to approve Kosovo without any resolution on the issues raised around the Eskom project goes against any measure of common sense.

The US hypocrisy between Eskom and Kosovo

While the US State Department is keen that this new coal-fired power plant in Kosovo be funded by the World Bank, this is in complete contradiction to their position on the Eskom vote in the Bank, where they chose to abstain based on the project's substantial greenhouse gas emissions, uncertainty about future mitigation efforts associated with the project and local pollution controls, weaknesses in environmental impact assessments, and procurement deficiencies. However, a letter written by the US Department of Treasury lends its full support to the construction of a 600MW coal-fired power plant, as lignite is the only resource available in Kosovo, with no real alternative energy options. A newly published report by the Bank, titled "Development and Evaluation of Power Supply



Options for Kosovo"¹, does take into consideration some alternative energy sources, efficiency measures and revised cost estimates, but sticks to its stance that Kosovo still needs a new coal plant.

In the case of Eskom and Kosovo, the alternative energy options, energy efficiency and demand side management (DSM) are just an afterthought or a fig leaf attached to these coal power plants, but are not treated as real solutions to meet peoples' energy needs.

Coal vs renewables – Eskom mistakes repeated in Kosovo

In 2008, the South African government produced a policy document called "Long Term Mitigation Scenarios" (LTMS), which proposed various climate change mitigation interventions based on "peak, plateau and decline" of GHG emissions. The document also laid out renewable energy growth by setting more ambitious national targets for renewable energy of 27% by 2030 and 50% of electricity generated by 2050. The overall aim was to promote the transition to a low-carbon economy and society and all policy and other decisions that may have an impact on South Africa's GHG emissions. Despite having such a robust policy framework in South Africa, the World Bank decided to fund the 4800MW Medupi project, while also approving a 250MW solar and 100MW wind project to save face. The impact of World Bank funding is multifold, as the long languishing Medupi coal power project became not only financially viable, but also gave the encouragement to the South African government and other international financial institutions to invest in another 4800MW coal power project called Kusile. These two huge coal power plants have ended up putting renewable energy projects on a back burner again.

A similar study done by Prof Daniel Kammen from Energy and Resources Group, University of Berkeley, shows that a low-carbon path exists for Kosovo that integrates aggressive energy efficiency deployment and the use of both large and small-scale hydropower, solar, biomass and extensive wind energy, while reducing human and ecological damage. This path, whilst delivering 38% of the energy demand through renewable resources, can

¹ http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTENERGY2/Resources/Kosovo_generation_options_report_12312011.pdf

also provide almost 30% more jobs than a business-as-usual path and it does so at an estimated cost saving of 50%, relative to a base-case scenario that includes a new coal power plant.

A lesson drawn from Eskom's experience shows that once you have a new coal power plant built with excess capacity, it actually discourages not only energy efficiency but also the deployment of renewables. Once you start the coal addiction, it is very difficult to stop.

Learning from your mistakes

There is no denying that Kosovo needs energy to grow its economy and ensure a better quality of life for its citizens. However, the World Bank has an opportunity to fund a developmental model that is not just based on their GDP and is not just a sum of economic activity but also includes its natural capital. Poverty alleviation should not be just looked at from an angle of increasing consumption, where GDP per capita, income and energy consumption are the sole metrics. Environmental well-being and sustainability for the future needs to be part of poverty alleviation.

South African civil society groups and communities, who have seen decades of devastation because of coal extraction and burning, support Kosovars in opposing World Bank funding to build the new coal power plant in Kosovo. There are still many lingering issues with the Eskom loan and Medupi coal power plant. There are hardly any benefits for the local communities and the Bank's energy access rhetoric is merely a front to justify their coal funding. The rising electricity prices have forced many families to drop off the grid, while cheap electricity is being supplied to big corporation and industries.

The Bank should not fund this project, and there is no logical justification for using public finance to fund another coal power plant in Kosovo, where many studies show that the needs can be met with a mix of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. It is abundantly clear that the Bank is not going to listen to society – they never did and they never will. Ask the people of Kosovo and South Africa. ✖



Putting the world on sale

by Greenfly

The market is likely to be king at Rio+20

The world's governments are gathering in Rio de Janeiro in June for Rio+20 – the 20th anniversary of the 1992 Earth Summit. They will dedicate a document to the occasion with the inspiring title 'The Future We Want'. That might sound a bit like 'the hamburger we want' or 'the chewing gum we want' and indeed Rio+20 comes with strong assurance that everything is for sale. That's because anything that is not for sale just doesn't make sense.

So the river, the watershed, the forest, the whole ecosystem must be re-defined as providing ecological services with a price on the services. Otherwise the river is a non-thing – a void in the map – and the people there are nowhere. With a price on it, the ecosystem can be privatised right down to its DNA and then traded. That is what makes it real to the world's rulers. When they can own it – some hope – maybe they won't trash it. It might also be hoped that, if they own the people they won't trash them either. Regrettably, the history of slavery does not confirm this.

This is the 'green economy' that suddenly became so fashionable when the banker's economy went bust in 2008. Even South Africa got in on the act with the Department of Trade and Industry hosting big green economy conferences. It is driven by the desperation to find something more to profit from. The green economy does not mean that renewables will now replace coal. It means that renewables will be added to coal. There must be more, always more.

The first draft of the Rio+20 document, called the zero draft, was nineteen pages. The next version, with every nation's brackets, amendments and deletions, comes in at over 250 incomprehensible pages. Fortunately Paul Quintos of the Ibon Foundation, a Filipino NGO, is there to tell us what's going on. Any text that says people have rights must be expunged: "the 'Right to food and proper nutrition' – delete says one major power ... 'Right to safe

and clean drinking water and sanitation' – delete!" On the other side of these deletions is the sacred market: "'promoting open and transparent markets; ... promoting secure rights to land and natural resources, ...' – by secure rights they mean property rights – that is fine for them!" But do not mess with the market: "'Regulating financial and commodity markets to address price volatility' – delete!"

Bracketing text is preparing it for deletion. All the Rio principles, says Quintos, "are being bracketed: the Polluter Pays Principle, Precautionary Principle, Common But Differentiated Responsibility."

This last principle is the one that means that the North is more powerful than the South – and got rich on causing the destruction – and must therefore contribute more to cleaning up the mess. The US does not like allusions to inequality of power. Such allusions suggest that there is something wrong with the world in which it is top dog, that it owes something.

Indeed they do. For the Southern elites, common but differentiated responsibility means that the North must put cash on the table. It also means that, in the name of equality between nations, it is the South's turn to destroy. Money, not destruction, will be at the heart of the divisions at Rio+20.

Yet North and South are all agreed that equality between classes may not be discussed. If it was, how could they push down the price of labour? How could they plunder the land?

In June we will see if they arrive at an agreed text. With any luck, the conference will end in mutual recrimination and they will leave Rio in shame and disarray. But however that may be, they will keep coming with the common and undifferentiated agenda to wipe out all rights but the rights of the market. ✕



Green economy in the news

by Megan Lewis

The concept of the green economy has captured the mind of the public and various sectors of society in different ways, in large part through the media's reporting on it. Looking at the green economy from a media perspective takes for granted that the media is an important lens through which to look at a concept that has captured the minds of various sectors of society. While not giving too much power to it, one may say that the media is shaped by society, as well as being part of shaping the way society views and understands itself.

Being of a rather broad and ambiguous nature, the green economy is not, however, defined by the South African media but rather by the sector in society that the story is being written about. In other words, if a report is being made about the government's 'contribution' to the green economy, it is usually from the point of view of government creating policies to increase 'sustainable' business practices and employment opportunities. In many ways, the media has often been the vehicle through which the idea of the green economy has been used as a 'greenwash' strategy for dirty industries and mediocre government policies. Media has not questioned where this notion of the green economy comes from, and whether it is answering the peoples' needs on the ground.

Thus, the South African media reports on the green economy from, for example, the perspective of labour in the country, such as the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU) and other such trade unions. In an online Engineering News article about a conference held by the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) – an affiliate of COSATU – in February, it is clear that this sector of society obviously looks at the green economy as a source of jobs. More importantly, however, the green economy and, in particular, the energy sector should move into the hands of the greater majority of South Africans. As the journalist points out, NUMSA is for the green economy if it is "not all about profiteering and a new form of worker exploitation".

Whilst the trade union perspective is portrayed as looking out for 'the worker' in South Africa, the media's reporting on the governments relationship with the green economy is somewhat based on national and international policy, as well as locating investments in the green economy through private interests. Whilst the media reports that government speaks with the mass public and civil society, it seems that the way the green economy has been constructed by the government often directly favours the private sector... if the public benefit, well that's just a bonus!

Nevertheless, as reported throughout the South African media, the Green Economy Accord sees the merging of government, business and organised labour to create jobs that will lead to sustainable development. As indicated in an article by the Business Hi-Lite, President Zuma's advocacy of the Accord is clear as he states that "it includes a strong commitment to ensuring that the benefits of the activities reach young people and all those historically excluded from our formal economy".

So, from a sceptic's point of view this would read that South Africa is not going to change its neoliberal economic policies to include those that have been previously marginalised, but rather set up another market-based and profit-based system within the existing economy, call it green because a large majority of society understands the word as necessarily being a good thing, and appease the poor by making them think that the government is doing something for them.

Whilst the South African media continues to include civil society's response to issues such as these, it is just that – a response. It is high time that people's organisations began defining the green economy according to what the public needs, and get their perspective into the media. It is important that we shape the media and society not only through being reactionary, but also through setting the people's agenda. ✎



Towards collective action across SA

by Megan Lewis

groundWork hosts a community planning meeting

Towards the end of January, groundWork facilitated and hosted our annual Community Planning Meeting in Pietermaritzburg, where community members from across South Africa gathered to discuss the past year and future plans in their struggle for environmental justice. Those at the meeting included community members from Olifantsfontein, the Highveld and the Vaal Triangle in Gauteng. South Durban community representatives came from KwaZulu-Natal, community members from Port Elizabeth and East London in the Eastern Cape. There were representatives from Lichtenberg in the North West and Zeerust in Limpopo and the various representatives of the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) from all but the Limpopo and the Northern Cape provinces'.

The communities and groundWork gathered to create a collective plan of action for the year ahead, where communities address the environmental injustices of their areas as well as support other struggles across the country. And, of course, regional differences abounded due to the various kinds of industries and other difficulties that communities face. But, despite these nuances, communities agreed that environmental injustice imposed by multi- and trans-national corporations in particular, and capitalism in general, is what unites their struggles.

Whilst members from some communities had already worked with the Centre of Environmental Rights' (CER) lawyer, Robyn Hugo, for others this was the first time that they heard about and grasped an understanding of the kind of legal advice at their fingertips. Having this legal backing means that communities are provided with extra confidence on another level, where they need not only meet dirty corporations on the street but also through legal processes.

Also new for some individuals was the idea of using social media for internal communications as well as

to aid in their awareness and publicity campaigns. Some community members had expressed their concerns about developing better relationships with their local media as well as improving their internal communication, and thus social media was positioned as a possible option for both these areas. The success of using social media for community struggles is dependant upon both the community's need as well as accessibility to technologies needed for this type of communication.

The outcomes of the meeting were threefold, some specific, whilst others were more general to most, if not all, communities across South Africa. Firstly, processes that are part of the struggle against Eskom, such as the upcoming annual price increases, and the construction of the Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power plants using World Bank loans, affect all in South Africa. This struggle involves all communities at the level of access to and affordability of electricity, and more specifically those communities living next to coal-fired power plants, where they are directly impacted upon by the air, water and soil pollution from the power stations and the mining of coal for these power stations.

Secondly, those communities that can, will work against large toxic waste industries such as Thor, AMD and, in particular, lend support to the people in Olifantsfontein who are fighting against Thermopower Process Technology, a plant that has been commissioned to 'deal' with hazardous organic waste.

Lastly, the end of 2012 will see a national protest against Shell on the anniversary of Ken Saro-Wiwa's death on the 10th of November. Mass action will occur at Shell petrol stations across South Africa, in remembrance of Saro-Wiwa, who died trying to protect the environment and people of the Niger Delta, Nigeria against the destruction of Shell. ✕



Amandla to global waste pickers

by Simon Mbata, from SAWPA

This year, the 1st of March marked twenty years since eleven waste pickers in Columbia were murdered, and it is in their memory that the Global Waste Pickers Day is celebrated. Waste pickers from across the world stood up and united under the slogan "There are no borders for those who fight", to remember not only those waste pickers who have suffered brutality at their place of work, but also to recognise the many battles that have been won. The Global Alliance for Waste Pickers, or Globalrec, played a large organising role in getting as many of the fifteen million waste pickers around the world to take part in this day.

Simon Mbata with members of the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers/Globalrec during COP17 in Durban
Photo: Global Alliance of Waste Pickers/Globalrec



In March of 1992, the bodies of eleven waste pickers were found dead on the premises of the Universidad Libre Seccional Barranquilla (Barranquilla University) in Colombia. The waste pickers had been tricked by university employees to enter the building with the intent of recycling. Once inside, they were beaten and shot with the purpose of selling their bodies for research and organ trafficking. Out of the group, one of the waste pickers had pretended to be dead, and it is through his recount of the story to the police that we know about this horrific incident.

As part of the day's activities, the national waste picker's movements in Latin America and the Caribbean held marches, demonstrations at embassies and spoke at press conferences. Approximately 6 000 waste pickers mobilised in Columbia to demand the inclusion of Colombian waste pickers in the waste management system, payment for the public service they provide to society and a transparent bidding process.

Simon Mbata, on behalf of the South African Waste Picker's Association, wrote this letter in support of the Global Waste Picker's Day.

The South African Waste Picker's Association (SAWPA) is in solidarity with waste pickers across the globe. We would like to commemorate the day of remembrance of all waste pickers around the world who die on the streets or landfills: those men and women who we witness every day being brutalised, beaten to death, shot and run over by trucks while trying to earn a living through waste recycling.

We will forever keep strengthening ourselves and fight privatisation of waste by our governments, cutting out the middlemen. We will push industries to recognise our role in recycling. We will fight against all false solutions to waste management such as incineration, waste to energy and landfill gas capture. All these false solutions displace waste pickers globally and we vow to stand against them.

We embrace zero waste programs and say no to waste privatisation. We also embrace the idea of waste separation at source where organic waste material should be used as compost or aerobically digested.

For those who have recognised the importance of our work and have supported us, keep up the good work. The struggle is not yet over until globally waste pickers are recognised and respected.

Amandla!!! ✂



A Nobel Laureate's problem at home

by Silas Kpanan'ayoung Siakor and Rachael S. Knight

On [the 16th of January 2012], President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was inaugurated for a second term. She is often depicted in the press as a postwar leader successfully rebuilding a country destroyed by decades of conflict. For her many admirable accomplishments, she recently shared the Nobel Peace Prize. However, unbeknown to many outside Liberia, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf's government may now be sowing the seeds of future conflict by handing over huge tracts of land to foreign investors and dispossessing rural Liberians.

Between 2006 and 2011, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf granted more than a third of Liberia's land to private investors to use for logging, mining and agro-industrial enterprises. Today, more than seven million acres have become forestry and agricultural concessions. In 2009 and 2010, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf's government awarded more than 1.6 million acres for palm oil production. The land went to the Malaysian corporation Sime Darby and to Golden Veroleum, a subsidiary of the New York-based Verdant Fund L.P. These concessions come at a delicate time, as violent local-level land disputes both between and within villages are still widespread throughout Liberia.

More than a million people live in the regions where the palm-oil concessions were granted. And roughly 150 000 will be directly affected in the first five years of plantation development. Many could lose access to their homes, farms, cemeteries and sacred sites as well as the forest and water resources they depend on for survival. Yet the government negotiated these deals without consulting those who would bear the greatest burden.

In recent months, Sime Darby has begun developing its first 25,000 acres in Grand Cape Mount County in northwestern Liberia. Already, local communities are raising concerns about environmental degradation, desecration of sacred areas and the company's failure to pay workers promised salaries. They have filed a complaint against Sime Darby

before the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, an international certification body.

In response, Sime Darby representatives traveled to the area on Jan. 6 and held meetings with villagers. However, according to Liberian newspapers, members of Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf's government, led by officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, disrupted the negotiations and halted discussions before any resolution was reached.

The president then visited the villagers herself. She told them, "When your government and the representatives sign any paper with a foreign country, the communities can't change it," claiming that the Constitution granted the government — and no one else — the right to negotiate with foreign investors. She also told villagers that, in their efforts to hold Sime Darby accountable for its human rights transgressions, "You are trying to undermine your own government. You can't do that. If you do so all the foreign investors coming to Liberia will close their businesses and leave, then Liberia will go back to the old days."

Taking legal action to protect one's home, land and environment from abuse by corporations does not undermine governance; it strengthens state and corporate accountability. By dictating that communities' only available means of redress is through the state — which has a less-than-sterling track record of prioritizing rural residents' rights over foreign business interests — Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf is obstructing more effective methods of achieving justice. ✕

For the full article, visit http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/21/opinion/in-liberia-a-nobel-laureates-problem.html?_r=2#

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Vale, the baddest kid on the block!

by Megan Lewis

*You know it's bad when over 25 000 people have called you out as
The Worst Company of the Year in the Public Eye Awards*

You know it's worse when you've beaten five other finalists that have track records just as embarrassing as your own when it comes to social and environmental injustices. These would be Barclays Bank, mining company Freeport, Samsung, agrochemical producer Syngenta and energy company Tepco.

Nearly 90 000 people cast their votes online for the People's Award in the 2012 Public Eye Awards, but it was Vale that ultimately won the award in January. This is Brazil's second-largest corporation, the world's second-largest mining firm, and the largest global producer of iron ore. According to the press release issued by the Public Eye Awards in January, Vale "has a 60-year history tarnished by repeated human rights abuses, inhumane working conditions and the ruthless exploitation of nature". British banking corporation, Barclays, was awarded the Global Award by a panel of experts at the Public Eye Awards for its food price speculation at the expense of the world's poorest populations.

The Public Eye Awards is an annual gathering, which has been organised since 2000 by the Berne Declaration and Friends of the Earth International (which was subsequently replaced in 2009 by Greenpeace International), that runs parallel to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It acts as a platform to critically challenge and expose the social and environmental wrong-doings of the worst corporations. Through naming and shaming these corporations, the Public Eye Awards hope to push the corporate world into rethinking their social responsibility measures.

Guest speaker at the 2012 awards ceremony, economist and Nobel Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz, spoke about governments creating and enforcing

stricter regulations on the way corporations conduct their business in foreign countries, as well as the need for the people of those countries to hold their governments and corporations accountable when they do not uphold these regulations. In other words, in 'occupy speak', Stiglitz is calling on the ninety-nine percent to understand seriously what kind of power they have over the decisions made by the one percent.

Vale was given this infamous award for entering into the Northern Consortium Energia SA in 2010, which is responsible for the construction of the Belo Monte Dam on the Xingu River (or Rio Xingu) in north Brazil. Vale owns nine percent in the consortium and, through its actions, will most likely displace approximately 40 000 people. It does not stop here as Vale has, in different ways, affected the lives of fourteen indigenous communities. For instance, 668 square kilometres of Middle Xingu has been flooded and dried up, and the Bend River of Xingu has had 100 kilometres completely dried. These, of course, all have devastating effects on the lives and livelihood of the people who live here.

In Part 3 of their report *How Corporations Rule the World*, Friends of the Earth International focuses on Vale and its leading role in the promotion of false green solutions to the climate change crisis. Once a state-owned company, Vale was privatised in 1997 despite public contestation due to alleged corruption of the privatisation process. What exacerbates this suspicion amongst the Brazilian people is that their government continues to be closely linked with this corporation and thus there is uncertainty in whose interest it works – private or government.

Whilst Vale's rhetoric purports to be in favour of sustainable development, it is clear that its nature



is one of sustainable profit-making at the cost of marginalised people and the environment they live in. It views the solution to climate change within the framework of tree plantation monocultures and other offsetting measures, such as financial gain by participating in the carbon market through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

The CDM is a fundamentally warped system, as it creates a commodity out of the very thing that causes climate change, namely greenhouse gas emissions, and thus does not call for a legally binding commitment by corporations or countries to reduce their emissions. Instead, monoculture projects such as tree plantations are used to gain carbon credits as they are believed to be carbon sinks and not emitters. They have repercussions, however, for the area's biodiversity as well as the local people.

Despite these blatant environmental injustices, Vale still lists various initiatives as part of their investment towards a sustainable future. When a corporation reports profits in 2010 of US\$17 billion and can invest US\$7.7 billion into mining in Africa (including South Africa), US\$150 000 donated to a sporting program in the Human League is simply a joke – albeit one that nevertheless helps both Vale and the governments that allow it to exploit their country's resources and people to sleep better at night.

In 2004, Vale was given a mining concession in South Africa's neighbouring country of Mozambique, where it is understood that the Moatize coal project in the Zambezi River produces eleven million tonnes of coal annually. Nevertheless, as with all corporate greed fuelled by capitalism, about 1300 families were forced to move off the land that was to be mined and resettle in unsuitable living conditions. And, whilst mines are often sold to the government and the public as opportunities for employment of the local people, it has been reported that Vale employees in Mozambique are treated as migrant workers with very few rights.

"There is no future without mining. And there can be no mining without caring about future"... Whilst Vale's website slogan may sound positive and 'green', what is happening at their sites on the ground is evidence that it is yet another corporation that is redefining the corporate social responsibility threshold. Actions speak louder than words!

Perhaps Vale's newly compounded bad reputation will cause a big enough complex to develop that it will start curbing its destructive action... One can only hope!

Even though Vale tried to extend their greenwash campaign by sponsoring nature photograph competitions in magazines such as the National Geographic, the Public Eye Awards are clear that Vale is 100 percent bad! ✖



Workers outside the Vale plant in Brazil

Photo: FoEI



Four months after the UNFCCC COP17 was held in Durban, broader civil society is still reviewing what the strengths and weaknesses of its role in this multi-lateral process were. Not only this, the question abounds throughout discussions of whether the process is itself a useful one to follow in the future after what civil society experienced in South Africa.

The Earthlife Africa Johannesburg publication, *COPin COPout COP17: A review of civil society participation in the UN conference on climate change, Durban 2011* was released early in March and is a research-based report that represents the perspectives of three sections of civil society, namely South African, international and the donor community and government. As the editor, Tristen Taylor (Project Coordinator of Earthlife Africa Jhb) states in the preface, it aims “not only to reflect on civil society’s impact on COP17 and the lessons learnt, but also to spark an internal reassessment of global civil society’s actions towards the UNFCCC”.

At the UKZN Centre for Civil Society presentation of the report, independent researcher and co-author of the publication, David Hallows, discussed the experience of South African civil

society at the COP and, in particular, the reduction of the C17 space to an apolitical process through calls to unite against climate change, which he labels as “pretty much the lowest common denominator imaginable”.

For international civil society, Oscar Reyes concludes his part of the report by noting that civil society thinking is shifting, whereby “some organisations are already moving their focus away from the UNFCCC, and some development organisations... are scaling back their climate work altogether”.

Trusha Reddy highlights the importance of understanding the impact of civil society at the COP17 through donor’s reflections, and how these findings can be used to negotiate relationships between civil society, governments and donors. Significantly, she pulls out

the false dichotomy that has been established between the formal ‘inside’ process and alternative ‘outside’ space, and the disconnection that the above three players face because of this.

All in all, this report provides an insightful overview of the feelings of various sectors in civil society towards COP17, the UNFCCC process and how involvement might be transformed because of these experiences in Durban.

