

Manifesting a future beyond Rio+20: Seeding a global citizens movement

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The official Rio+20 outcome was - somewhat predictably - a bit of a disappointment. However, the real seeds of progress were sown on the sidelines. A number of events at the People's Summit held the promise of effective citizens' action towards sustainability and equity, building on the past and carrying on into the future. One of these was the initiation of a host of [Peoples' Sustainability Treaties](#), dealing with a range of issues and actions, starting from the very local, going all the way up to the global.

The low expectations for the outcomes from formal process suggested that an alternative centre of energy needed to be created. Uchita de Zoysa, a sustainability activist with a history of engagement pre-dating the original Earth Summit in 1992, conceived the idea to develop a set of [Peoples' Sustainability Treaties](#), with the hope to coalesce the thinking of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the direction of a strong social movement towards an alternative and desirable future.

The basic idea was to establish a network of Treaties, with each Treaty being driven by a collaboration of partners, and with all the Treaty circles being linked together through a loose coalition structure. Uchita reached out to a handful of individuals, who were themselves part of existing networks, to seed the Treaty process. The process was then thrown open to CSOs. By the time Rio+20 commenced, 14 Treaties were already established and a [Synthesis Report](#) had been created.

During Rio+20, a series of side events were organised, both for the overall process and for specific Treaties. From these a common [Manifesto](#) emerged, encompassing both a set of broad principles and a framework for action that CSOs could converge around, even while retaining their own diverse objectives and strategies. The [Manifesto](#) was then opened up for [endorsement](#) by both CSOs and individuals.

The objective of the Treaties, from the very start, was to focus on the post-Rio+20 process while building on many years of work done across the world. The question we asked: what needed to happen, post-Rio, for the world to transition toward an authentically sustainable future? What would we, as engaged though somewhat disenfranchised partners in the process, like to see happen over the next few years? The answers began to emerge quite clearly.

Three areas of concern stood out strongly. Firstly, the recognition that the official process was largely disregarding issues of equity as they pertained to the poor and disenfranchised. Secondly, that the focus on the green economy was almost entirely centred on global economic or political actors (corporations and governments) and disregarding the significance of localism (anchored in communities, both rural and urban). Thirdly, the recognition that democracy, already stunted by an almost exclusive focus on representative politics, was being taken even further away from everyday people.

Our Manifesto points to three sets of solutions and actions to overcome these problems:

Equity and sustainability for all are the overarching demands from the world of civil society, and must be the foundation of any collective global response. We call for equity within generations, equity across generations, and equity between humans and nature, respecting the rights of both.

Localising our economic systems, decentralising governance, and advancing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods must become the new social order of sustainable societies. Localism is the theme emerging across the board, linked to the principles of devolution, of decentralisation and of subsidiarity, turning localism into a world-wide movement which must be the key to unpacking many of the complexities we face.

A Global Citizens' Movement is the collective response towards transitioning to a sustainable world and linking the local to the global. All sections of society must converge upon their visions and convictions, finding common ground for collective action that can bring about the transformation required to ensure planetary wellbeing for all, humans as well as nature, and the envisioning of a new global governance order.

In conclusion, this much has emerged from the Rio+20 process so far: we need a Global Citizens Movement focused on equity and the linkages between localism and globalism. And all of this can, indeed must, happen independently of actions by nation-states engaged in the official Rio+20 process ■

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Only One Earth takes retrospective look at successes and failures in the environmental movement in the last forty

and a look ahead to what critically needs to happen at Rio+20 and beyond. This book offers recommendations that everyone concerned with the global collaboration process should know.

For more information click [here](#).

