

Report by Ethan Hirsch-Tauber

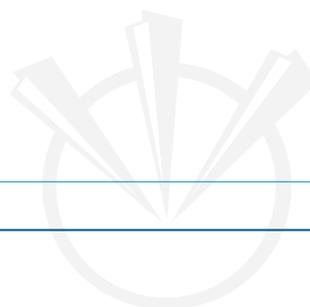
GEI – Global Ecology Institute

GEN – The Global Ecovillage Network

The Grace Foundation

THE NEW WATER PARADIGM at COP22

**UN Climate Summit in Marrakesh, Morocco,
7th-18th November 2016**





Global Ecology Institute and The Grace Foundation

Introduction

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The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) International invited a representative from the Global Ecology Institute (GEI) to represent the Water Retention Landscape concept of Tamera and the New Water Paradigm at the UN COP22 Climate Summit in Marrakesh, Morocco. As, GEI's director, Bernd Walter Mueller, was unable to attend the event, I, Ethan Hirsch-Tauber, former GEN staff, and current GEN Ambassador and member of Tamera's Ecology Team attended in his place. At the summit, I, along with water activist Rajendra Singh and a team of 20 GEN representatives, coordinated the presentation of water as a key component to climate restoration, and the potential for the New Water Paradigm (NWP) as a platform for this process. I met with key contacts at the event to promote the NWP and make links for future potential partnerships. Such contacts include Wanjira Mathai, John D. Liu, Kosha Joubert, Joshua Konkankoh, and several other governmental and NGO connections. During the summit, Julia Maryanska, co-founder of the alternative media collective Re/Culture Media, filmed multiple pieces for a short film about water and climate, with a focus on the New Water Paradigm.

About GEN

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is a growing network of sustainable communities and initiatives that bridge different cultures, countries, and continents. GEN serves as an umbrella organization for ecovillages, transition town initiatives, intentional communities, and ecologically-minded individuals worldwide.

GEN supports the implementation of the New Water Paradigm through promotion in its network of thousands of communities and projects around the world. Many of the communities of the GEN network are already working hard to protect their watersheds and do ecological restoration within their bioregions. These projects can act as grassroots leaders and spreaders for the vision of the New Water Paradigm in their local regions and neighborhoods. GEN is also working to share this information through its active GEN Ambassadors and representatives. Through events, such as the UN COP22 Climate Summit in Marrakesh, Morocco, GEN supports the idea of the New Water Paradigm to inform governments, NGO's and other stakeholders about this important work.

For more information about GEN, please see: www.ecovillage.org



Key Presentations and Events Attended

Ecovillage Solutions Session: I joined a panel of nine GEN representatives who presented on different Ecovillage Solutions for Climate Change at a session in the Green Zone of COP22. I gave a six minute synopsis of Water Retention Landscapes and the New Water Paradigm as a solution for climate restoration. Feedback was highly positive.

Visit to Marrakesh Organics: On Sunday, 13th of November, the GEN team of representatives visited Marrakesh Organics, an organic olive farm and ecological training center, which has been created in the last four years by Moroccan members of the GEN network. Omar Hajji, whom I first met at a GEN Africa event in 2012, is the landowner and central builder of this project. He has incorporated permaculture design and ecological agriculture techniques into the project. During the visit I spoke with Omar about water and his plan for water harvesting. More information about the project is available at <https://marrakeshorganics.com/>

GEN Featured Webinar: On the same night of the farm visit, I offered a live-broadcasted one-hour webinar entitled “Water Retention Landscapes and the New Water Paradigm”. The webinar did not have many attendees, but it was recorded and will be available for future viewing. It also encourages the possibility for similar webinars and events in the future, for myself and other Tamera or GEI representatives. The PDF version of the webinar is included with this report.

Global Landscapes Forum: John Liu invited both me and Julia Maryanska of Re/Culture Media to attend the Global Landscapes Forum, a one-day event during the COP which focused on ecological restoration as a key piece of climate restoration. Over 5,500 people from 95 different countries attended either in person, or online. The event was held off-site from the main COP event, at one of the partner hotels for COP22. This event and the group organizing is one that GEI should highly consider attending in the future, and even becoming a supporting partner of.

More information can be found at <http://www.landscapes.org/glf-marrakesh/>

Key Contacts and Connections

Rajendra Singh: Rajendra is a well-known water conservationist from Alwar district, Rajasthan in India. Also known as the „waterman of India“, he won the Stockholm Water Prize, an award known as „the Nobel Prize for water“, in 2015. He has previously won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for community leadership in 2001 for his pioneering work in community-based efforts in water harvesting and water management. He runs an NGO called ‚Tarun Bharat Sangh‘ (TBS), which was founded in 1975. The NGO based in western India, has been instrumental in fighting slow bureaucracy and the mining lobby and has helped villagers take charge of water management in their semi-arid region. This has been done through the use of johad, rainwater storage tanks, check dams and other time-tested as well as path-breaking techniques. Starting from a single village in 1985, over the years TBS helped build over 8,600 johads and other water conservation structures to collect rainwater for the dry seasons, has brought water back to over 1,000 villages and revived five rivers in Rajasthan, Arvari, Ruparel, Sarsa, Bhagani and Jahajwali (biographical information referenced from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajendra_Singh).

Rajendra, along with Michael Kravcik, took part in the 2016 International Water Symposium in Tamera, from which the text of the New Water Paradigm emerged as an outcome. During our shared participation in the 2016 Walking Water pilgrimage in the deserts of California, Rajendra learned that I would also attend COP22, and asked me to help with a visa invitation letter to the event (Moroccan visas are more difficult to acquire for Indian citizens). I also assisted in inviting Dr. Rajendra Poddar, a co-worker of Rajendra’s and professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad, India. After helping the two acquire visas, I connected with them at the event, and attended several of the sessions at which Rajendra Singh spoke, also using these opportunities to promote the NWP with session leaders and attendees.

More importantly, I helped connect Rajendra to the GEN network, setting up a shared dinner with GEN International’s CEO, Kosha Joubert as well as the entire GEN team representing at COP. This allowed for a collaborative connection around the NWP and clearly sparked the potential for future partnerships between GEN and Rajendra’s community-based work with water. Dr. Poddar presented GEN with the recently signed “Dharwad Declaration on Water, Climate Change, and Agriculture 2016”, agreed upon at the Global Water Meet 2016 for Climate Change Adaptation in Dharwad, India. (<http://www.newskarnataka.com/dharwad/dharwad-declaration-for-eco-balance-mooted-at-global-water-meet>). These connections appeared to further GEN’s support for the NWP and the larger network of organizations working towards collective water and climate restoration. One possibility which I believe could be highly effective and impactful would be that GEN and Rajendra collaborate next year as the GEI launches a larger campaign for spreading the NWP to a global network of participating partners and organizations.

Rajendra also played a major part in framing the planned water film by Re/Culture Media.



Wanjira Mathai: Wanjira is the Director of Partnerships for Women's Entrepreneurship in Renewables (wPOWER), Wangari Maathai Institute (WMI). She previously directed International Affairs at Green Belt Movement (GBM), which was founded by her mother, the late Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai. There, she managed International outreach and resource mobilization. For six years prior to joining GBM, Mathai worked as Senior Program Officer at the Carter Presidential Center (USA), monitoring and evaluating disease eradication programs. She Chairs the Green Belt Movement and is a Board member of WMI, Wangari Mathai Foundation and Resonate, a women's empowerment. She is also a World Future Councilor, Advisory Council Member (Global Cookstoves Alliance), Member of the Global Restoration Council and Member of the Earth Charter International Council. (biographical information referenced from <https://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/authors/wanjira-mathai>).

I made contact with Wanjira at the Global Landscapes Forum on 16th November. She spoke in the main plenary of the event, and referred to the importance of protecting watersheds by indigenous women in Africa as a key piece of climate change mitigation. After her talk, I approached and spoke with her, briefly explaining the NWP and giving her one of the NWP reports. I also supported Julia Maryanska of Re/Culture Media in filming Wanjira speaking about the importance of water for an upcoming short film.



John D. Liu: John is a Chinese American film-maker and ecologist. He is also a researcher at several institutions. In January 2015 John was named Visiting Fellow at Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. John is also Ecosystem Ambassador for the Commonland Foundation based in Amsterdam, Netherlands (biographical information taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_D._Liu).

John is a long term contact of Tamera and the GEI. He spoke at several of the International Water Symposiums held in Tamera, and has maintained continuous contact with Bernd Mueller, Christoph Ulbig, and other representatives from GEI and Tamera Ecology Group. At COP22 he was moving forward with plans to create Ecosystem Restoration Camps around the world. I met and spoke with him on 15th November about both the NWP and Blueprint, which John also expressed a renewed wish to connect. He also made an invitation to attend the Global Landscapes Forum the following day. Julia Maryanska of Re/Culture Media also shot footage of him speaking about water for an upcoming film about water.

Additional Contacts:

Kosha Joubert, CEO, GEN International - Kosha expressed a strong interest for bringing in Tamera and the GEI for potential Water Retention Landscaping projects through its developing GEN Consultancy as well as its new Pan-Africa Ecovillage Development project, which involves collaboration with multiple African countries and governments. During COP22, GEN signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the regional government of northern Morocco for developing ecovillages in the region. GEN is scaling up its activities, particularly in Africa, as at least 15 governmental and NGO representatives from a variety of African countries expressed strong interest in implementing ecovillage-based solutions. The opportunity for exponentially larger funding for GEN-related projects also emerged (potentially \$100 million USD for such projects). This could have immediate possibilities for the GEI, though of course care must be taken with energy and time commitment.

Joshua Konkankoh, Better World Cameroon and Bafut Ecovillage - Joshua, representing GEN Africa as well as his project in Cameroon, has requested consulting from GEI for building a model of Water Retention Landscapes at Bafut Ecovillage in Cameroon. This project is already influencing the entire region, which has 54 other villages already looking to it as a model. Water retention is an immediate and pressing need, and Joshua has asked for GEI support.

Saad Dagher, Farkha Ecovillage in Palestine - Saad attended COP22 as a representative of the newly forming GEN Palestine network and specifically Farkha Ecovillage. Farkha is located in the West Bank and is a home to 1,500 residents, 3,500 sheep and goats, and 30 cows (<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2016-05-03/an-eco-village-in-palestine/>). Saad served as director of the Arab Agronomists Association, which signed a memorandum of understanding with the Farkha village council to develop an environmental teaching garden. Saad strongly believes and practices the core concepts of water retention landscapes, and is a key contact for bringing this information to the crisis areas of Palestine and the Middle East.

Julia Maryanska, Re/Culture Media - Julia attended COP22 on behalf of her newly formed media collective, with the specific intention to create a short film based on the water story in regards to climate. Together we developed a narrative to capture the various characters and information they offer in connection to the New Water Paradigm. Through her contacts at the event she also created plans to make two other short videos, one for GEN International, documenting GEN's presence at COP22, and another describing her experience of the visible and shadow sides of the event. Re/Culture Media, as a newly launched collective, released a video for the Standing Rock movement as its first project, which has so far received over 440,000 views on Facebook. These numbers seem to suggest that the short water film, and its crucial topic, could reach quite a wide audience.



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Photos: Re/Culture Media, Simon du Vinage, and others

Layout: Boris Bonjour

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Recommended Next Steps:

- Continue crafting the relationship between GEN, Rajendra, John, and the NWP, to develop a strong water campaign for 2017.
- Follow up with GEN Consulting and connect to Pan-Africa Ecovillage Development project for possible access points for Water Retention Landscapes and points to further introduce the NWP.
- Register for future observer status at the COP's. This would allow for GEI to apply for its own passes, and give the organization a step into this work.
- Arrange a WRL consultation with Better World Cameroon and Bafut Ecovillage for Spring 2017. Building a WRL model in Bafut Ecovillage (which Joshua seems very eager to do) will have the immediate impact of being an educational tool for the 56 surrounding villages of the region.
- Sign up to present at next year's Global Landscapes Forum (GLF). This event has many like-minded organizations, many of which are doing related work to that of the GEI. Presenting at the GLF and building relationships with these organizations will help the GEI promote the NWP within a highly-relevant network of influence.





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