

## Dear friends from the “convivialism” movement

When we had met last June at the Theater of the Tempest, in Vincennes, the theme of our conference was “Convivialism now or Apocalypse tomorrow”. This theme cannot be more fitting, as we realize the urgency to act in order to prevent major risks of collapse for our human family. But this title also points at the value of resilience which will be key as we need to overcome catastrophes and regressions if logics of blindness come to dominate the world.

We have entered an era of global conflict of a new kind whose object will be to avoid war and ultimately, preventing, if not the total annihilation of humanity at least the full-fledge realization of the Great Regression. Instead of this Great Regression we need to offer the perspective of the Great Transition – to which the “convivialism” movement is one of the many contributors.

Indeed, I believe it is not excessive to say that the destiny of humankind is at stake during this century. Before the election of Trump there was already a state of social and ecological emergency – because of the widening of the global chasm of inequality (63 persons have more wealth than half of humankind) and because of the extremely concerning ecological crises - climatic disruption, sixth extinction of species, great pollutions causing hundreds of thousands of deaths each year. It would have been necessary to change course in the direction of social justice and ecological responsibility, and to take the path of the Great Transition.

Instead, the election of Trump and the reinforcement of the "democratorships" (democratures, *democraduras*) , to use Pierre Hassner's expression, which worsen social inequalities and ecological irresponsibility, are throwing the world on the path of the Great

Regression and raising the risks that humanity could be confronted to a deadly cycle. That cycle could even prove fatal to humankind, as psychopaths have weapons of mass destruction at their fingertips.

It is therefore imperative that a Great Global Alliance be formed for the protection of Life in front of all the logics of death and destruction that can lead us to the abyss, as expressed by Edgar Morin in his recent book.

### **The Great Global Alliance of the Forces of Life**

We need to define the strategic heart of this global alliance, as well as its wings. The heart is composed by all the actors who recognize the urgency of the Great Transition Project, guiding the metamorphosis of our societies and economies towards a society of Buen Vivir.

In France, those efforts have led to the convergence of several citizen networks through the constitution of “Pouvoir citoyen en marche” (Citizen Power Rising), uniting in the same platform the Civilian Pact, the Roosevelt Collective, the Convivialist Movement, the Solidarity Economy Lab, and the Dialogues in humanity, among others. This convergence has led to a common vision, as summarized by Edgar Morin’s text “changeons de voie, changeons de vie” (changing path, changing life), and with a series of founding texts (by Alain Caillé, Patrick Viveret, and others) that we are putting on a common website in the first few weeks of 2017.

This Great Transition constitutes a double alternative to the fundamentalism of the market (based on the belief of the almighty power of economic and financial markets) and to the fundamentalism of any unidimensional identity (White supremacism, Islamic

fundamentalism, etc.) – knowing that this second type of fundamentalism is often the monstrous offspring of the first.

The sociological basis of this alliance is composed by the category of the population that has been named “cultural creatives” by American sociologists Sherry Anderson and Paul Ray. These cultural creatives have been defined as simultaneously taking part into 4 types of deep societal transformations:

- 1) ecologically engaged, moving towards low carbon footprint and low ecological impact modes of consumption;
- 2) embracing equality in gender relationships and moving towards the fluidity of gender definitions, celebrating both the feminine and masculine energies in men and women, and celebrating the diversity of the community of the rainbow (LGBTQ)
- 3) engaging in non-dogmatic spiritual quests, beyond any constraining framework of institutionalized religions
- 4) engaging into multicultural openness, and celebrating the multiplicities of their own identities, embracing the changing nature of these identities over time.

They represent the exact opposite of the deadly quartet combination symbolized by Trump: ecological irresponsibility, machismo, cultural and religious fundamentalism, racism and defense of a white supremacy.

Cultural creatives are the only ones to be able to propose a strategy to overcome and transcend the traditional conflict between traditionalists and modernists, as the two major socio-cultural families evoked by Anderson and Ray in their sociological analysis.

The modernists are blind to the "damage of progress" to quote the title of a bestseller from the 70s, and the traditionalists are irresistibly attracted by identity fundamentalisms, either religious or nationalist. "Creatives" cut across both categories, by proposing to keep the best of modernity, without the worst (which is the commodification of everything, including life), while keeping the best of tradition, in that it offers a system of reliance with nature, and with the others, and with a deep sense of identity, but without its worst aspects, which are the fundamentalist temptations.

If they constitute the potential heart of the Global Alliance of the forces of Life, cultural creatives must first give themselves the means to constitute themselves as a creative force (and not a dominating one). They must go beyond the stage of creativity which often times is too fragmented and prevents them to gain enough visibility in order to build convergence from all the diversity of this emergence. They need to invent a model of convergence inspired by Life, without reproducing artificial forms of convergence that previous paradigms have proposed.

If cultural creatives continue to be peripheral, at the wings of either the modernist camp or the traditionalist camp, they will not succeed to have enough of an impact and influence on all macrosocial and economic issues, which are in the hands of the forces of death and destruction.

So it is essential that creatives move to the heart of the alliance. Only a strategy that addresses both the fundamentalism of the market and the fundamentalism of unidimensional identities can create a positive new paradigm of chance. Otherwise, if we address only one of these twin plagues, we will continuously be treating the symptoms of the disease without attacking its root causes.

And only Cultural Creatives have in their sociological and psychological “DNA” the keys to address both aspects of the global twin-plagues of the market AND identity fundamentalisms.

But once they have constituted themselves into a political force of renewal, Creative Culturals will have to make alliances with others, who don't necessarily share all of their values, but who will form the wings of the alliance. We indeed will need all the forces we can gather considering the magnitude of the risks we are facing. Those alliances will form a coalition that will include the part of the modernists who may support market economy and technological progress but are fully aware of the need to fight against social inequalities and the need to regulate against the risks of uncontrolled technological evolutions . But the alliance will also include the cultural traditions, for instance of the Native indigenous peoples, who are the guardians of the earth and the waters everywhere around the world, as long as all these traditional societies refuse the temptation of identity fundamentalism - for instance all the spiritual traditions that are also open to the other, and to interfaith and intercultural dialogues, with leaders such as Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama.

In this way, this Great Alliance of the Forces of Life can constitute also a preventive alliance as well as a resilient alliance, in the worst case scenario where the preventive strategy would not have succeeded to avoid some of the collapses to occur. We have proposed at the Etats

Generaux of the solidarity economy a Grand Strategy that we called REVER (= to dream) and is spelt as follows:

R for Resistance – a creative resistance

E for experimentation – to anticipate the future we will need to experiment quickly all possible alternative strategies

V for Vision – the transformative Vision that we collectively need as our unifying goal

E for evaluation – through innovative forms of democratic evaluation and constant re-evaluation of the path we are collectively taking and of the values we are collectively sharing, the radical values of protection of Life, chosen as our compass (which implies a complete reinvention of democracy along the way, based on active participation of all concerned citizens, taking part into the decision-making processes through digitally based forms of direct democracy)

R for Resilience – the Resilience we will need to face the unknown, a key factor for the re-foundation of our global society

Only then could we, as children of the two philosophers Nietzsche and Kant, combine the calling of Nietzsche to mobilize the forces of life (Eros) but not to the detriment of others, as reminded by Kant's ethical admonition. The perspective and the practice of a convivialist Vision bring together Eros and Ethics – at least this is the proposition that I am making to you for the New Year... Happy 2017, where more than ever, we will have to combine "the pessimism of intelligence with the optimism of free will".

- Patrick Viveret