Towards a Convivial Civilisation[1]

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Working together for life,
Taking care of one another and the natural environment

The ideas expressed here concern us all, in France, in Europe and in the whole world where we are confronted by xenophobia and a host of other widespread problems. Fortunately there is resistance everywhere and attempts to experiment in the similar directions. The aim of this essay is to make us aware that our initiatives, our experiences, and our analyses, rely on the same fundamentals, those of a convivial practice. The recognition of this common base is indispensable for massive mobilisation so as to shunt humanity towards conviviality. The choice of direction should be affirmed and defended to prevent certain tendencies from forming, which, if they take root, will lead the majority of us to disaster.

This contribution to the debate follows in the line of the ideas introduced by Ivan Illich. The conference I organised in Tokyo involving Japanese and French authors and intellectuals in 2010 had this end in mind. French speakers, including Alain Caillé, Serge Latouche, and Patrick Viveret, addressed the subject from different directions and together we edited two books on the theme, one in French *De la convivialité*, in 2011, published by La Découverte, the other in Japanese with Commons publishers, in the same year. Alain Caillé picked up my manifesto idea[2] (*Pour un manifeste du convivialisme,* Le Bord de l'eau, 2011) and organised a collective work which led to over sixty intellectuals getting together to discuss and produce a collective work, *Manifeste convivialiste* (Le Bord de l'eau, 2013). In it there is a general political philosophical argument in favour of *convivialism*, as a way of reaching beyond other "isms", such as liberalism, anarchism, socialism, and communism. Conviviality may not have a definite doctrinal reference, but as a concrete practice, I have the impression it is already present in the day-to-day. It is characteristic of the behaviour of most human beings within a wide range of groups, even if they are constrained by dominant forces to submit to totally unrelated rules and regulations as a priority.

What I wish to maintain here is the idea of an already widespread practice that is integral to our long history, an idea that is diffuse and not collectively recognised: conviviality. Awareness is required so that as many people as possible can mobilise effectively to turn it into a shared reference. It is the foundation of living together properly and it is around this idea that it is possible to organise a future that is better than our present.

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[1] This text is the English translation of a book published in French: "Vers une civilisation de convivialité" Editions Goater, Rennes, 2014.
[2] Marc Humbert "Manifesto for a convivial society." *Revue du MAUSS permanente*, 20 January 2011 [On Line].
http://www.journaldumauss.net/spip.php?article762

Introduction

A choice of civilisation

The forces of life are multiple and diverse, but today, as never before, they have to confront a steamroller of technical and economic efficiency. The operators of the machine ignore billions of people who are hungry and excluded and whose livelihoods hang by a thread. They also ignore the natural environment that deteriorates everyday, leaving only a vague promise that tomorrow will be better. The forces of life however are beginning to mobilise more than ever. They have at their disposal a treasure trove of ingenuity capable of appeasing suffering, to construct, wherever and whenever, spaces for communal living that can be shared and appreciated in a safe environment. Behind this observable reality the future of our humanity is being played out, with no organised "voting" procedure, and what will be our civilisation of tomorrow is being chosen for us.

Common will

The battle in hand is a daily grassroots combat. There are oases springing up everywhere, but however numerous they are, they cannot stop the desert creeping in. The mega-techno-economic-machine (Serge Latouche) is rolling systematically onwards even if the boilers are overheating and discharging ever more swathes of outcasts to the fringes. Do we have to await the explosion before we seize back our futures and stride forth together for life, so that the desert may flourish luxuriantly once more? To halt the disaster in progress, and not only to adapt to it, we must pool our diversities and affirm what brings us together: **our desire to work together for life, taking care of each other and of the natural environment.[3]**

A general overhaul

For this to be possible, the organisation of our societies has to undergo a general overhaul. States and international relations, the fruit of our ancient history, i.e. the laws and rules, should be guided to enable and promote this way of life we desire. Currently, the rules and laws we have to observe serve the techno-economic steamroller. Naturally, there are a handful of laws that enable the creation and survival of certain oases; others leave cracks in the pavement where new oases may form. But if we want to change scale and watch the desert turn green once more, we have to find the resources for a general overhaul.

Changing our priorities

One of the most important steps in our mobilisation involves more specificity about what brings us together and what makes us strong together, apart from the wealth of our great diversity. To do this, we must understand the origins of our common foundations, that desire to work together for life, paying attention to others and the natural environment. This foundation is an integral part of a movement that has been fundamental to the world since the dawn of time. Examination of this common foundation helps us to articulate a vision that reveals our great diversity and how we can lead this towards a common goal. What we all actually want is to prioritise conviviality and not technical performance.

A choice of civilisation is already being made. It is up to us to make our power felt to encourage a civilisation based on conviviality. This is necessary so that we do not end up

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[3] Phrase directly inspired by that of Ivan Illich.

just resisting and experimenting in dispersed ways. We should not be satisfied with only asking for and occasionally obtaining the measures necessary to maintain a particular oasis in existence. We have to be more forward thinking and reach beyond our daily practices, beyond our immediate fields of reference and imagine what form this new organisation might take and what coherent collection of rules might govern it. This is indispensable to be able to imagine a complete overhaul, to take initiatives, and lay down the groundwork for a different civilisation, a civilisation not based on the priority of techno-economic performance. It is essential to undertake a huge societal transition towards a convivial civilisation.

Part 1: a choice of civilisation

Humanity is going through a period where the old systems of functioning are running out of steam. To overcome the crises resulting from this loss of impetus, the two major directions for change available trace out very different paths and may lead to two diametrically opposed civilisations, one civilisation based on technical performance or the other based on conviviality.

The civilisation based on technical performance

The current dominant forces guiding humanity, north and south, east and west, are leading us on the path towards economic and technical excellence, and towards catastrophes with a detrimental effect on the majority, but from which a hyper-cyborg-humanity might emerge, formed by an oligarchy of the best performers.

Evolving along the technical axis

The first direction of change today follows the technical axis. By following this axis, our species has become the champion of all species when it comes to our ability to act on the world around us, on other species and on ourselves. Those who promote it are from the same lineage as those who managed to control fire, long before humanity, or *Homo sapiens* appeared. They are the heirs of those who improved our language skills and who invented and miniaturised cut stone tools over hundreds of thousands of years. They follow the most recent movement, ten thousand years ago, of the agricultural pioneers who revolutionised farming. At that time there was no competing species, as there had been during the period of *homo neandertalensis,* who had disappeared 15,000 years previously. *Homo sapiens* went onto to domesticate the natural environment, develop the cultivation of plants and animal husbandry. The result was a proliferation of our species, the urbanisation of groups, the appearance of writing and the formation of vast empires. These new changes to the planet forged a deep gulf with other species. Gradually *homo sapiens* colonised the whole Earth.

The industrial revolution

Our interventions on the world around us expanded considerably all around the globe and took on a particularly vigorous, spectacular and powerful form under the Industrial Revolution. The world's technicians were no longer satisfied with taming the natural

environment or drawing upon it for support, as wind turns mills or water operates machines. Now their interaction with the natural environment sought innovation. First they created a force comparable to that of horses: steam power. The world's technicians now became engineers and invented processes to transform matter, by combining minerals together to make steel, for example. They devised tools ever more efficient than those used thus, which had been produced with natural materials, such as wood and stone, and crudely processed materials, such as iron and bronze. The natural environment was exploited, dug, tilled, modelled and sucked dry, becoming a refuse dump to a vast factory for metamorphosis. As the tools grew to ever more gigantic proportions they began to be driven by ever more powerful artificial energies. This energy eventually became nuclear.

Mastering knowledge
Having augmented the performance of tools in two primary dimensions – those of energy and matter - the industrial revolution was completed by providing a formidable impetus to the third dimension of instrumentality to act within and on the world around us. This third dimension concerns information and the way it is coded to enable its transmission. Information becomes knowledge when it acts upon the world and develops an instrumental dimension. How then might we find direction on land or sea? For long, observation of the sky, with bare eyes, and no other instrument than knowledge, was sufficient. The navigation tool was simply information transformed into knowledge. It required neither materials nor specific energy. All that was required was to seize the moment, the positions of the stars and planets, to interpret them and glean directions.

The God particle
The 20th century more or less brought the idea of the human species as master of knowledge to its conclusion. The premises appeared with the storage, processing and transmission of information. They were first implemented analogically in audiovisual form and with the first telecommunications, then in digital form using electronics fostered by the progress of optics and space. As they observe traces of the Big Bang and inspect far away galaxies, scientists read into the history of the world, deciphering the major forces of the universe while promoting the Higgs Boson, the so-called God particle, to confirm their theoretical model of the physical world. After the discovery of DNA, gene sequencing of living species and of the human genome opened the way to creation-transformation, not of physical-chemical phenomena, but of living creatures. Human knowledge seems to tend to total knowledge. The technician can believe he is God. He has managed to grasp the basic bricks, and he holds the key to understanding the elementary mechanisms of life and can now bring them together in laboratory conditions or in real life.

The crazed dream of cyber-humanity
Technology's vision is of a future owned by a well-controlled hyper-humanity over supermen. Internet already enables constant surveillance of everybody with a mobile phone and/or connected computer. Drones can pinpoint and destroy undesirables in the furthest-most corners of the planet. We can wear glasses enabling us to view a reality that is augmented in order to decipher and/or share it through audiovisual means with whoever; we can insert chips underneath our skin which enable us to be recognised, localised, and protected, or rather monitored and controlled, maybe. Nanotechnologies are deeply transforming our possibilities for production and intervention on the physical world. Why not switch from genetically modified plants to genetically modified animals.

And why not to genetically modify humans to eradicate illness and mortality? A crazed dream, the reality of excess.

Leaving crisis from the top

Artificial foods, and a thousand other inventions could save us from today's threats. For the technician, there is no cause for concern. When one day, climate reports, or other similar indicators, will prove to have been right, all things equal, technology will rescue us from our predicament. Even in the worst situations, we'll find solutions to get by. People are already talking for example about implementing artificial clouds to diminish the negative effects of CO_2 emissions. Above all technicians are showing confidence and there is a whole variety of systems currently being devised thanks to the progress of science.

Rational efficiency is the operative word of the partisans and promoters of the technological axis. According to them, to combat the threats before us, not only will there be massive mobilisation from the rational forces of the technicians of the natural environment but also those of society's technicians, that is to say, politicians and financers. It is no doubt possible to emerge from the crisis by eliminating the weakest and the most recalcitrant. Efforts will be made to save them nevertheless, but they shall have to give something of themselves by becoming more rational and competitive. This is what the technological axis's cheerleaders call exiting the crisis from the top.

Homo cyborgus

This civilisation will bring in a super-humanity, the humanity of the *homo cyborgus,* currently under construction by the dominant political oligarchies (Hervé Kempf). The organisations they are implementing are founded on the model of the *homo economicus.* The technical axis is supported by the efficiency of competition between individuals, competition that is stimulated by the pursuit of individual enrichment and the promise of boundless economic growth. It would seem that today's world is hell bent on completing the construction of this civilisation of technical performance.

The civilisation of conviviality

This goal of a civilisation founded on technical performance cannot be achieved without confronting certain difficulties. Furthermore, within our world's current evolution, there is another current, pulling in a different direction, that of conviviality, which could lead to a very different civilisation. The courses that this movement is taking are being mapped out by civil societies everywhere on the globe, using experimental forms, which may be tolerated by the dominant political organisations at best, although none actually refer to this activity at all. Among the rare exceptions drawn to mainstream attention, several examples should be cited that are frequently mocked and maligned.

The rare political entities seeking conviviality

The pursuit of happiness is a founding principle of the small Asian kingdom of Bhutan, neighbouring the Himalayas. This pursuit roughly corresponds to the idea of "living well"[4], an objective shared by the constitutions of various Latin-American States, Bolivia, Ecuador, again lying in proximity to another of the world's tallest peaks, the Cordillera of the Andes. These are the only political entities governing people with a discourse

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[4] Translation from the Spanish translation of the expressions, aymara (*suma qamaña*) and quechua (*suma kawsay*).

referring to the objective of happiness, a discourse that could be interpreted as aiming to establish more conviviality. Former political forerunners of this perspective were eventually swept away. This was the case in revolutionary France in 1793, which descended into the Terror[5] and in the United States after the euphoria of independence in 1776, both of whom focussed instead on the material organisation of their society[6].

The great promoter States of the technical axis
The political organisations in power in the leading countries belonging to the technical axis are all eager to advance in the techno-economic direction, where performance is measured by growth in GDP. In the face of the many threats and crises, they claim that, by persevering in this direction, we can reverse any negative effects and emerge untouched from the crisis. As the long the development of their axis is not endangered and long as they feel they can allow themselves to tentatively support any of the various experiments and different approaches underway, they will. But this support is increasingly being eroded away, and today is characterised mainly by tolerance, or is a simple feature of formal discourse. The "democratic" political form constrains this tolerance and voting merely ensures the reproduction of the political oligarchy. The political oligarchy meanwhile makes sure it is sufficiently instructive to "sell" electors the technical axis, a phenomenon that can be observed in the United States, in Europe and in Japan, among others.

Playing catch-up: technologically less advanced States
In lands far removed from the frontier of technological drive, we find several different profiles. All are guided by the desire to catch up their technological shortfall. In many cases, the political form is more authoritarian than democratic, which means they can pursue this approach despite the fact that a large part of the population suffers great material deprivation and enjoys limited benefits from any improvements. Without further analysis, to begin with, we might say this is the case for China and India. Other countries offer their populations in difficulty the support of their religious convictions and of the crystallisation of the difficulties encountered by the leading countries of the technical axis. Depending on the different approaches, we might consider that this is what is happening in Indonesia and Iran. In some countries revolt against the technical axis provides the chance to rebel against authoritarian regimes without giving any impression of a desire to adopt a different approach. Maybe these movements would redistribute the profits of any advances made along the technological axis between different groups of their population and according to different methods? The difficulties experienced in maintaining cohesion are exacerbated when technological development lags behind or when the slender benefits of any slight advance are too poorly redistributed. In this case, they become the source of rebellions against authoritarianism, and stoke inter-clan warfare as well as religious quarrels. The Sri Lanka of the past and Syria of today are both examples of this.
Such a brief, and simplified overview naturally does not allow us a full precise panorama of the global situation.

The possibility of a different direction
It is worth reiterating that only a few rare countries have a political organisation based on a desire for happiness and better living – a desire for greater conviviality. It is however possible to imagine that, after the agricultural and industrial revolutions, humanity might

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[5] Shortly after the Declaration of Rights of 1793, in the constitutional introduction of which, article 1, states "the aim of society is common happiness", the country descended into a long period of Terror.
[6] The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 posited "life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness" as an ideal. This ideal disappeared in the text of the constitution elaborated afterwards.

sets forth to overcome the crises and dangers of its age towards a convivial revolution. This would involve a radical change of approach in a direction no longer aligned with that of technical performance.

Development towards conviviality
In reality, this path towards the development of increased conviviality is nothing new. It also comes from the dawn of time and formed a little before the last fork in humanity's development. It was followed firstly by two species of hominids of the Homo genus, *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens*. Its first form was that of the expression of an explicit relationship between the living and the dead. Collective consideration of the dead is a sign of a shared personal feeling, of belonging to the same entity, common beyond death, but also before birth. It is a sign of a shared feeling for life and the collective life of society, and even of the species, of the natural environment and of the universe. It means thinking beyond personal, individual and immediately perceptible existence. The evolution towards enhanced conviviality begins with the first inhumations, the first respects offered to the dead. The first traces date back 120,000 years.

The birth of religions
The development to enhanced conviviality underwent its first revolution with the birth of religion and art. Systems of thought shared by groups of people emerge leading them to organise their own societies with their own members, the flipside of the material and the perceptible. The first painted caves dating back 35,000 years show us the proof of this revolution. The nascent religions mastered or, at least, regulated violence between individuals and groups and organised the powers exercised over them. The practice of human sacrifice, or ritual cannibalism, was the fruit of religion and enabled the regulation of violence. This regulation was accepted because of a common belief that religions are based on superhuman, supernatural power, through the vector of individuals indeed, but individuals who do not actually exercise free will; they are merely mediators with the afterlife. The religion becomes essential to all not because of the power of certain individuals as mortal individuals over other individuals but as the exercise of an unattainable human will. Human sacrifice was practiced in various forms, in ancient Egypt and China, the Inca and Aztec empires, and in Europe and Africa.

The disappearance of human sacrifice
As well as this evolution towards increased conviviality, a second revolution, within certain religions and spiritualities, took place: the disappearance of human sacrifice and cannibalism. This revolution is recent and maybe took place a thousand years before Jesus Christ in China, whereas it continued to be a common practice in many places, up until the 15th century in Latin America, and later elsewhere. It could even be said that human sacrifice has not totally disappeared today, when we consider the flux of recent genocides and merciless wars. Similarly, without going as far as sacrifice, torture still persists, including bodily mutilation, especially to women, in the name of certain beliefs. This revolution could be said to be incomplete when we note that over forty States (out of 192) still practice the death penalty. There is however a universally acknowledged objective to avoid war and prefer negotiation in the case of potential conflict, as well to combat torture of any kind. "Thou shalt not kill" has become a constraint that strives for universal status.

Care for others and for the natural environment
From attention to the dead, we moved to attention to the living. This movement still requires completion; a third revolution is required, i.e. from attention to the Living, and by extension, to others, to everyone else and to the world in general, including the natural environment from which all life is borne and to which we belong.

Within civil societies of all countries of the world, in varying degrees, despite the systems of power that scorn the move towards conviviality, there exist groups working in this direction. For inter-individual relationships, some embrace theories of *care*, which in their attention to others and their vulnerabilities, reach far beyond the premises of the political theory defending human, civil, political and social rights. This theory has obtained almost universal recognition from so-called "democratic" States that have included articles in their constitutional texts, without necessarily respecting them systematically. Legal experts explain that these are "inalienable" yet "non-opposable" rights: if I am unemployed, I cannot take the State to court to gain employment even if employment is a constitutional right.

When it comes to the environment, there are many variations and currents within the ecology and degrowth movement. States meanwhile have recently adopted a favourable discourse towards ecology, but do so little that the state of the planet continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate.

For a different practice of economic activities, more in conformity with conviviality, we may note the many and significant projects, under various guises, based on mutual economics, popular economics, social economics, fairtrade practices, exchange systems and local currencies. They are structured around associations and cooperatives but also take on entrepreneurial forms where action is not motivated by accumulation of wealth and profit but by quality and accessibility of the service rendered to others, to society.

A wide range of movements, such as the world and local social forums, the outrage movement, peoples' university movement, ATTAC, etc, have strived long and hard to attract a critical mass to adopt these approaches. All these various experiences and experiments have their own contribution to make in the development of the requirement of conviviality, to stimulate a form of crisis through a change of approach.

The common base: the practice of conviviality
Faced with the ever present crises and dangers, the world risks going to the wall and/or towards the kind of cyborg humanity described above. Life would become artificial. Each hyper-individual would be no more than a kind of boson and the relationships between individuals would be reduced to collisions between elementary particles, efficiently producing new particles, matter and energy.

This is not something shared by those people throughout the world, along with a few rare States, who aspire to play a more original and different score that as the same obstinate bass line (*basso ostinato*), resonating from the practice of conviviality. Together they have a conviction that our direction must change. This doesn't mean abandoning all technology and production, but our priority is to make progress towards conviviality.

This conviction is non-negotiable. It is neither technical nor scientific. It is a belief, a fundamental common conviction. It is rational. It is the shared idea that energy should be channelled in this direction towards the civilisation of conviviality. If this way of thinking needs a name, the best term would be the *convivialist ideal.*

Part 2: a common vision

Day-to-day, actors in the field offer a very clear and concrete expression of our desire to *work together by taking care of each other and the natural environment.* One thing on which we can all agree is that beyond our diversities, we have a common basis to our activities. This basis is integral to one of the main themes of humanity's evolution, that of conviviality.

We have to bolster our conviction in what we have in common and affirm it to those who seek to take us along the axis of technical performance. We have to reach beyond to create synergies and transform them into initiatives that would enhance conviviality. We have to make explicit our common horizon, share the same vision that enlightens our multiple approaches. This common vision will help us lay down the groundwork and initiate projects informing the great societal transition towards a civilisation of conviviality.

Conviviality is an art of living together which, to be fully cultivated, requires the right framework. It needs a mode of social functioning, in the natural environment, that is adapted to the construction of an expanded common sociality. Together we have to give ourselves the means to become the humanity we want to become, a humanity that recognises and protects the gift of life.

Recognising the gift of life

The acknowledgement of the gift of life is the foundation of the general interdependency between humans and the natural environment. Life involves the interaction between multiple forces but a temptation might arise in one or other of these forces to desire to control the others. This is the vision of the work that the technical axis promotes: a humanity that masters and dominates the natural environment to exploit it. The exploitation of man by man, denounced by Karl Marx in the 19th century, also disrespects our interdependency.

The only value is life

Viewing the world through a convivial perspective is very different to the vision of the world advocated by the partisans of the technical axis. Life is posited as an essential value. John Ruskin, whose work inspired Gandhi, wrote, "There is no wealth but life." It could also be said that there is not other value but life. There is no point measuring this value, there is no equivalent. On an individual basis, life is ephemeral[7]. Life, with a capital "L" is the air we breathe, the source of sunshine and the earth. It is a swarming interacting mass that has existed from the Big Bang right out to the unknown extremities of the universe. Life is nature and the human being is one of nature's species, who came late to this Earth and who is only one among 9 million species living on the planet. Humanity is born from our natural environment. We owe it our lives and we must pay attention to it and respect it.

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[7] It is worth remembering that the stars themselves, on a different time-scale to that of humans, are ephemeral. One day they too will disappear, as will our sun, and blend into life as it continues…

The gift of a life of sharing
All human beings are made up of cells, DNA, molecules and physicochemical matter. The gift of life is there to be received. The sun, air, water, sky and stars, their parents, their family, and their groups interact with them from their birth and even before.

No human being can choose the day or place, she/he will receive this fragment of life that her/his human body, with its own specificities, will bear. No human being can choose from whom they shall receive it, or from which group they will originate. Human beings are all different but are however all similar and, without having any decisions to make, share, on an equal footing with each other, a fragment of this Life. This is shared with the whole living universe, with its plantlife and minerals. The physical body would lose its material life, animated by a unique individual, but would continue as its medial body (Augustin Berque), in another form to participate in Life. Whatever the initial differentiations, and whatever subsequent differentiations become, because of their personal lifestories and different living environments, all human beings share the necessary humility to recognise that life has been given to them.

Life together
Life received cannot flourish in individual solitude. Mankind's offspring cannot survive from birth. It cannot move or feed itself independently and it takes several years to acquire the aptitudes necessary for survival. Human beings are beings whose lives can only be led together, in interaction between them and with the natural environment. As Maurice Godelier writes, because of humanity's group existence, it takes more than a man and a woman to make a child. In order for human life to flourish, humans have to become a part of the group. They must not only develop physiological and physical aptitudes, but also aptitudes for life, i.e. for interaction with others and with their environment: they have to learn the gestures, language, words, and attitudes that are suitable at the right moment, in the right place. An individual's construction begins physically and culturally by training, an education received by the human being. Our life together gives us characteristics unique to our species – above and beyond the planet's vast diversity – and which make our humanity unique. Today, there is only a single human species.

Aspirations to a good life
When we talk of wanting a life that is more human, when we aspire to more humanity, in all languages and societies, this means that we aspire to enhanced conviviality, or in other words, to more attentive interpersonal relations. Humanity effectively aspires to a good life for all, so that everyone does what is done and doesn't do what isn't – Orwell's "common decency". Life is an essential value, human life is a value that has no equivalent and the quality that is experienced increases with the quality of relationships with other human beings and with their natural environment. Good relationships marked by a good feeling of humanity are the widespread desire and enable everyone to feel acknowledged as a human being, a representative of the whole of humanity. This is what forms the fundamental equality between us. The lives and humanity of each and every one of us and this is what drives the ethics of a good life (Ricœur).

Interdependent individual life
Every human being is welcomed into and educated by a group that is part of a concrete natural environment where she/he gradually creates and constructs her/his own unique individuality by developing her/his power to be and to act (Spinoza). The ideal of paying

attention to others implies leaving everyone the autonomy necessary to the affirmation and evolution of her/his own individual life, which responds to everyone's universal need. This freedom to exercise ones power to be and act offers individuals an autonomy that does not extend to autarkic independence enabling her/him to make an abstraction of others and the natural environment. Autonomy and solitude can only be relative, as is their role in the construction of everybody's individuality. Interactions with the environment and with others are permanent and essential. In parallel, we must refuse the idea that individuality is only a product of environmental conditioning and of ones social group, on a given physico-chemical basis. But as long as any subsequent outside influence on the thinking, acting individual does not lead to dependency, outside influence is essential. Combined with autonomy it enables us to consider that individuality is formed and lived in interdependency. Interdependency between human beings and with an environment constitutes a fundamental reality that a humanity in search of conviviality has to recognise. Recognising this overall interdependency is the corollary of recognising the gift of life.

Organising a common sociality

All human beings together have to recognise the gift of life and to build their lives together, in interdependency of each other and with the natural environment, within constituted groups. Every human being is a locus for one of an infinity of life forces, the interactions of which have be modulated to constitute, without endangering, their common sociality within a group. Each member of a group is relatively dependent on this and benefits from relative autonomy.

The word "collective" could apply to the informal personalisation of the common sociality of individual human beings living in a group within an environment, who thus form an "us". The direction this collective takes supposes that a general will can form to clearly express the framework accepted and respected by all, the Common Law, under which all human beings can interact with the feeling of living a good, worthy, just life together.

Humanity and the natural environment, constructed and changed by the forces of life

Throughout its very long history, humanity has grown and spread throughout its small corner of the universe by the formation of organised groups of people and communities, peoples and States. Within and between all these entities, relations have often been difficult, conflictual and, in too many situations, highly murderous. This long history has been accompanied by the formation of various types of borders between groups and with the environment, the crossing of which brings a permanent threat of tragedy.

The relationships between individuals are interactions between the relatively autonomous dynamics of exercising our powers to be and to act, i.e. interactions between the dynamics of their life forces. The harmony between individuals and the natural environment cannot be established spontaneously. Rivalry and conflict create futures and often lead to destruction in the present.

Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and the fangs and venom of other species remind humans that the forces of nature are powerful. A crushed shell liberates its seed which in turn dies so that the plant can bear fruit. As long as the natural equilibrium is respected, ploughed soils and drained swamps improve human environments without deteriorating them.

Struggle engages the body and makes it stronger. Ideas collide so that minds may expand and so that discussion and negotiation might take place between conflicting positions. Conviviality has to transform enemies into adversaries (Patrick Viveret) so that conflict can take place without massacre (Alain Caillé, via Marcel Mauss), and so that collectives may flourish in order for everyone to live to the full. The common social bond must be preserved. Peace must reign. Enemies must disappear, as well as the desire to kill, or at least the enactment of this desire.

The different scales of collectivity
Collectives start at the scale of inter-individual relationships where the multiple and never-ceasing interactions basic to our common material and spiritual life take place, which need a certain harmonisation. This enables us to live together in peace. By ensuring that what can be obtained at this scale functions correctly, it enables a good life for all. Rivalries and oppositions that arise within collectives, and the potential destruction that ensues must be overcome in order to preserve the framework that governs the common sociality and natural environment that brings human beings of this "base" collective together.

Without entering into further details of what the base collective might actually form: family, clan, village, canton, conurbation etc, we have to be aware that there are various different scales of collectivity, the contours and definitions of which vary from one place to another on the planet. We must also be aware that, on its own scale, each collective develops a unique collective individuality. Throughout the history of humanity, groups have been formed, groups of groups, peoples and States which have been established on often narrowly defined territories. These have been formed of as many collectives, of "us"s at varying scales. The broadest possible scale is of course Us, "humans", full-fledged members of humanity.

The interdependence of collectives
The "us" of every collective takes the form of a collective force of life, a force hungry to exercise its collective power to be and to act, a force that will interact with other "us"s, other collective life forces. The interactions between "us" and "them", between collectives of the same scale, takes place under the same conditions as within each collective. Between "us" and "them", there is "common ground", that is specific and concrete, and different to the broadest common level, that of Life itself: we inhabit the same planet Earth, the same part of the planet, etc. If there is common ground, there is a larger "Us", a broader entity, a common sociality on a larger scale, not necessarily due to the intensity of the number of interactions, a scale with a greater quality of conviviality, which is indispensable to us and them. On one level there is river water, and on a broader scale, issues of global warming.

Interactions between collectives lead to rivalry and opposition; conflicts arise when each collective seeks to fully express a desire for autonomy and power that is incompatible with the desires of others. The convivial ideal is for adversaries to negotiate solutions in a peaceful way so that conflict between collectives does not transform into war. Each collective formed has to have its own autonomy which cannot take the form of autarkic independence, while exchange and exterior and environmental influences should not bring dependency and domination. Here again the concept of interdependency is crucial. Interdependency on every scale, up to the planetary scale of human beings, collectivities, and the natural environment. Thus generalised interdependency ensures the conditions of organisation of a common sociality applied to the scale of the natural environment.

The general will

The organisation of a common sociality from the base scale of collectives to that of the whole of humanity poses the problem of the expression of "us" on every level. How can the powerful components of "us", the multiple individual powers of action and life, be articulated? How are they harmonised, so that "us" is assured and the collective interacts with others, with those in the framework of a more extensive "Us"? How can a more general will, that of "us", form, become accepted, respected and implemented by everyone at every level? The answers to these questions ensure the conditions indispensable to the maintenance of our common sociality.

The problem here is that of how relationships between powers can be organised.

Relations between powers

The democratic ideal refuses the idea that the will of a single person should be imposed on all. Instead it sets out to contribute to the formation of a general will[8]. The process of participation in the formation of a general will cannot be organised in the same way in base collectives and that of the scale of the whole of humanity.

Without entering into legal details, the necessity and feasibility of direct and active participation of the greatest number of members has to be affirmed. This is definitely feasible at the base collective level and for smaller-scale collectives – we may think of what is generally known as local authorities – and provides a basis to discuss the organisation's direction and organisation, participating directly in the formation of the general will.

On more expansive levels (in most cases, at the national level and beyond), it could be understood that the processes of systematic direct participation are difficult to implement and they have to be combined with systems of representation and elections according to various modus operandi that should be agreed upon together. The practice of subsidiarity should be combined with direct participation at the base scale: any issue of debate should be discussed at the lowest scale that a solution can be found. Where relevant, coordination should be envisaged between collectives having expressed their general will at higher scales, when this general will is expressed in similar terms. This is the criteria of the maintenance of a common sociality that governs developments of scale.

Common Law for dignity and justice

When the general will is formed in a democratic way, it expresses itself through Common Law imposed on all and everyone so that common sociality may offer to everyone the means to exercise their own autonomy to flourish. These means are already known as civil, political economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which give everyone the right to a respectable life.

The general will also means that everyone's autonomous exercise of the power of life does not challenge shared sociality. Laws forbid any action that is not advantageous for humanity. By establishing limits, it guarantees implementation of the rights of all responsibly in respect of others and of the natural environment. By making sure that all collectives act with consideration in respect of others and the natural environment, the Law enables everyone to be recognized by others and by society, which is the foundation of justice.

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[8] The usual democratic rule of the separation of executive, legislative, judicial and adopted powers, officially at least, in a universal way.

The art of living together

The recognition of the gift of life, which is the foundation of the general interdependency between human beings themselves and between human beings and the natural environment is at the heart of the daily practices of conviviality. These still remain too limited in their effects, and a certain number of practices we would wish to implement, cannot emerge. This is due to the constraints of the current framework on the expression of our common sociality. The organisation of powers, of the law and rules, with the exception of experiments currently underway in various rare States we have mentioned, only allow incomplete practices in the art of living together (*con-vivere*) that is at the root of conviviality.

The force of life
Conviviality is a practice implemented by the force of life, of us, of sharing and of cooperation. Its driving force is the power of relationships between people, of the alliance between us and the natural environment, at the service of individual and collective life and of the life of the universe. It does not exclude the differences, divergences and even the oppositions that make debate and creation move forward. It invites us to recognise each other and the diversity of our positions. This practice prevents our desire for recognition and fulfilment to transform into the desire to impose our own points of view or projects on others come what may. It should not grow out of control and lead us beyond constructive rivalry with other perspectives and projects. When a sense of measure and tolerance is lost, the path to war potentially opens up, and our desire for recognition and fulfilment is transformed into a force for death. This is what undermines the functioning of the techno-economic axis's goals which, along with the practice of capitalism, are based on a death drive (Bernard Maris). Common Law has to prevent such excesses.

Human activities
A convivial society considers all human activity, which is a sign of life, as a prosaic or artistic creative activity. It is performed in an autonomous way, and provides resources that contribute to feeding the life of society and life in general. We would be happier if we could "*work together* and *take care* of each other" (Illich); it is a condition of humanity's survival. Society needs work, i.e. the creativity of people and of the natural environment that makes our lives. To share resources, we must first have created them, in a logic of work and of "doing and living together", not in a logic of activity motivated exclusively of possession in itself (what use is it to me?) and by the drive to accumulation that drives the techno-economic axis.
Resources are created by the combination of new resources and with "primary" resources. The natural environment is full of primary resources that often have to be processed to created other resources from which the necessarily elements can be derived, not for abundance, but for enjoying the happiness of life together. Each stage of fashioning or creation is that of a human activity learned and developed from a human resource, which is also processed. To maintain the conviviality of our practices, in the course of the organisation of creative activities and the sharing of resources, we have to turn our backs on all forms of exploitation. We have to bring an end to the exploitation of humanity by counterproductive, gigantist tools (Illich), just as the exploitation of man by man must come to an end (Marx).

The creation and sharing of resources (economics)

Some activities and their results are shared at the moment they are shaped or they are constituted of essential resources, the sharing of which should be organised by rules to be decided in common. But also, what has been created has to be circulated, from the site of creation to the place where it will nourish life. This requirement is that of exchange, i.e.; the relevance of a market system. This system must function so as to serve the collective concerned, whether it is free in relation to the personal powers of any actor who does not have the legitimacy of representing the general will. The laws of competition, a series of norms and regulations should frame and regulate these "markets". This would prevent any resources created from following arbitrarily long circulations as is too often the case these days for the motive of individual profit. A convivial society privileges short circuits, especially in the domain of food and agriculture, for obvious reasons.

The question of the sharing of tasks for the creation of resources, like that of the sharing of resources has barely been touched on here. It is clear that it has a relationship to the exercise of power, as we have underlined the necessity of laws framing the market (which must not turn into a personal law to be the strongest on the market). Where there are markets, there are also prices. On the one hand, a price for a resource is also a symmetrical remuneration for the people who have created the resource. On the other, prices (or remuneration) require the use of a currency, if a bartering system is not deployed. A couple concrete questions that would help our reflections and visions on these issues are: how should the prices from a community supported agricultural scheme be fixed to remunerate farmers while taking retail prices into account? And how could a local exchange system, or local currency work?

Experiments into task sharing have mainly revolved around the reduction of work time. Here more than elsewhere, in the framework of the functioning imposed by the mega-machine of the techno-economic axis, it seems difficult to find methods for significant improvement. Restructuring after a change of direction towards a convivial civilisation should be based on the analysis of a political economy of conviviality which is still to be elaborated and discussed. Among others they should specify the contours of the political framework required, enabling the creation of the convivial sharing of the tasks that create resources indispensable to life in society.

The exercise of powers (politics)

A convivial society is the opposite of a totalitarian society. The repression on fulfilment in the lives of all human beings and groups by the techno-economic axis is permitted by the confiscation of the exercise of powers to profit an oligarchy (Hervé Kempf), dressed up as democracy. Elections influenced by monstrous expenditure, abstention rates generally involving up to a third of voters, the multiplicity of mandates, constant re-election, collusion between professional politicians and public and private sector directors ensure that a ruling class maintains power.

The exercise of powers has to approach the ideals of democracy so that the widespread aversion to "this policy" ceases enabling the implementation of an organisation according to the guidelines discussed above. Politics, like economics, is an indispensable activity, but it cannot be monopolised by an oligarchy imposing its ways of doing and seeing on the way groups, peoples and States work. It has to be subject to the Common Law, an expression of the general will.

Here again the size of administrative apparatuses in the service of the exercise of powers constitutes a giganticism of the tool (Illich) which has an inversely proportional negative effect in terms of the enslavement of the citizen and in terms of counter-productivity, on the productive tools of material and immaterial resources. The implementation of

subsidiarity and the importance of the base scale of collective organisation should avoid these excesses of the concentration-centralisation of powers. Its driving force comes from those who have power who seek to enact it and not the necessity to ensure common sociality on a broader scale.

The primacy of cultural life
The art of living cannot be freed from the necessity to create resources in order to share them and ensure material and immaterial life. Neither can it free itself from the preoccupation with an organising framework that enables the cultivation of this art of living together. In short, economics and politics need our active participation, an indispensable condition of preventing the partisans of the technical civilisation from monopolising them.
These are not objectives or ends, they are the necessary means. What is most important to us, and the area in which we should be deploying the most means, is life, i.e. the relationships between us and the natural environment, the source of our general interdependency, that we create "together".
At the heart of this relationship between us and the natural environment is life, in the dimension relating to the sharing of emotions and sensations. From the individual scale to collective scales, from the local "us" to the Us of the whole of humanity, it enables feelings of self-surpassment and of the elevation towards the ineffable. Shared smiles, the global fascination of an eclipse, admirers' wonderment before a pyramid, a temple, a mosque or a cathedral, a crowd enthralled by music, songs sung together, the grace of dance, the beauty of drawing and painting, the collective emotion during a ceremony, etc. Primacy is everything about the culture of life. It is here that we live the unforgettable and moments of great happiness. It is shared by the whole of humanity around the planet. It is shared by all generations and by past generations from those that painted caves (in Lascaux and elsewhere) to the generations of the future.
Yes. As long as our world chooses the civilisation of conviviality!

Part 3: a project for a universal declaration

The main reflections presented in the first two parts constitute on the one hand, general convictions on the place and life of everyone within society, on the relationship between us, the interactions between societies on a world scale, and on the relationship between the whole of humanity and the universe. They are compatible with what most of us think and feel, with less common, less general, but more precise convictions that individuals and groups may nourish, in terms of the intellect, spirituality or religion. They should be affirmed so that humanity chooses the path towards a civilisation of conviviality.

The aim is to imagine measures that ensure participative and representative democracy on all scales and a form of organisation that respects interdependency.

These measures have to ensure the responsible enactment by each individual and group of their relative autonomy, which by being subject to the general will, to the formation of which everyone has contributed, to pay attention to others and to the natural environment.

Actions undertaken by all thus contribute to the smooth functioning of a good society in which people work together for life, taking care of each other and of the natural environment.

To this end, we propose the adoption of a universal declaration of interdependency enabling us to affirm our convictions and undertake the necessary transitions to create a convivial civilisation. Here is the project[9] for a text of just such a declaration.

Project for a universal declaration of interdependency

Introduction. *Throughout its very long history, humanity has grown and spread throughout its small corner of the universe by the formation of organised groups of people and communities, peoples and States between which relations have often had dramatic consequences. This universal declaration recognises that life is an essential value that proceeds from the interdependency between people, groups, communities, peoples, States and the natural environment. The universal aspiration of every being and person for freedom and equality can potentially find a right response in the recognition and respect by all of interdependency. This respect requires us to practice conviviality to organise good societies and ensure the peace of humanity within the universe. It cannot be created without the observation of a certain number of rules and adherence to the convictions of the articles below.*

Article 1: Life
Life is an essential common value shared by all over and above differences of sex, skin colour, nationality, language, culture, religion, social origin, political opinions, birth or prosperity. It is consubstantial with the existence of the visible and invisible, material, plant, and animal world that forms the natural environment from which humanity was born. Humanity is indebted to this natural environment and owes it respect.

Article 2: Humanity
There is one single humanity. It is made up of various groups who have each forged their living environment within the natural environment. Humans are beings who have to live together in interaction between them and with the environment in which they aspire to a good life. This quality of life increases with that of the relationships maintained between them and with the natural environment.

Article 3: The individual
The individual is born within a group which is part of the environment that welcomes and forms her/him in this way of life as an interdependent human being, participating in a common sociality. The humanity of each member must be respected. Each person must be recognised as such, without discrimination of any kind. People should be able to create, build, affirm and develop their unique individuality by developing their power to be and act.

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[9] I wrote the first version of this declaration of independence after writing the convivialist manifesto, in April 2013, as an attempt to synthesise the manifesto's ideas. The project received suggestions for corrections from the manifesto's co-authors, which were not included in the manifesto text but which have the sub-title "declaration of interdependency" (on the initiative of Christophe Fourel). The version that includes the first suggestions features on the http://lesconvivialistes.fr internet site in the "supporting text" section. The current version benefitted from remarks posterior to those received from other readers.

Article 4: The collective
The collective is the expression of the common sociality of individuals living in groups within the environment.
1. Everybody shows their own particular individuality in interaction with others and with the natural environment, which inevitably leads to oppositions and conflicts. Individual dynamisms and rivalries upset humanity but remain fertile as long as any resulting destruction is creative and does not threaten the framework of common sociality or the natural environment of collective existence.
2. Human beings live together and form groups, groups of groups, peoples, States, groups of States which, at each level of their group, their unique collective individuality can be flourishing, while preserving, between people, the highest level of conditions of collective existence to the uppermost scale, that of the whole of humanity.

Article 5: The general will
To ensure the maintenance of common sociality without imposing the will of a single person on others, the general will should be able to take form, and be accepted by all.
1. Human beings group together to live together and form associations, peoples and States.
2. Each individual participates in the organisation of interactions within groups of which she/he is a founding member, or joins and contributes to the formation of the general will of these groups, peoples and States.
3. The modes of participation and contribution of everyone constitute a political process through which the Law is established, as an expression of the general will.
4. The general will is formed within the framework of direct participative processes on the scale of base groups, with small numbers, and according to heterogeneous formulae with systems of representations at the highest level, involving a larger number of people.
5. The general will is expressed by the Common Law and is imposed on everyone. In the same way that it is elaborated gradually from the smallest scale to the largest, it is affirmed and implemented according to the principle of subsidiarity. It should be expressed, in the service of life, at the lowest possible scale.

Article 6: The Common Law
The Common Law emanates from the expression of the general will and applies to everyone through justice.
1. The Law ensures that everyone has access to the means to exercise their autonomy to flourish. These means are already known as civil, political economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which give everyone the right to a respectable life.
2. The Law prohibits any action that is not fertile for humanity. By establishing limits, it guarantees implementation of the rights of all responsibly in respect of others and of the natural environment. This consideration in respect of others and the natural environment is the foundation of justice.

Article 7: Conviviality.
Conviviality, the art of living together (*con-vivere*), promotes relationships and cooperation between all and with the natural environment. This does not exclude divergences or oppositions that enable the recognition of all and the perspectives they may have. Conviviality is a life force. It prohibits the desire for recognition and

flourishing does not grow to such a degree as to create a rivalry that would transform into war between groups and into a force of death.

Article 8: The primacy of cultural life
Culture is at the heart of interdependency between human beings and with the natural environment.
1. The creation and sharing of resources (economy) and the exercise of powers (politics) are indispensable activities but they cannot impose their primacy over the functioning of groups, peoples, and States: they are subject to the Common Law.
2. Primacy is given to the cultural, i.e. to life in its dimension of sharing emotions and sensations that encourage at the inter-individual and collective scales, the impressions of happiness and of surpassing oneself.

Article 9: The fruits of interdependency
1. The practice of conviviality enabled by the implementation of the articles of this declaration form an individual ethic of common life, in interdependency, for a good society.
2. Everywhere on Earth, the extension of conviviality among all human groups, according to methods suitable to their specific characteristics, gives everyone the feeling of living with happiness and dignity in a just society. It ensures that humanity flourishes with a natural environment that is respected.
3. Thus all human beings can gradually regain hope in a better future and build the potentials and promises of the present together.
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