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Facing the Eight Plagues from the 21st Century-A resilient and friendly society needs citizen communities

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Facing the Eight Plagues from the 21st Century-A resilient and friendly society needs citizen communities

Homo Sociabilis Research Collective, August 2020

Abstract

Confined, the entire planet begins to think, read, talk to each other... After Covid-19, what will remain? The will to change is in all the speeches, ideas and initiatives for after abounding. But true new ideas are rare. The story we want to tell is that of Homo Sociabilis, this person whose primary motivation is not to consume the maximum of goods and to provide the minimum of effort. No, this individual is motivated by the desire to achieve himself, to be useful, to enjoy and to please. Homo Sociabilis is not suited to the capitalist system which is based on selfishness and individualism; it thrives in a system based on reciprocity and sociability. It's time to change models.

Keywords: Covid-19, Homo Sociabilis, reciprocity, proximity, community, development, geographic llobalization, individuation, professional corporations, workers' associations, production, agroecological, Anthropocene, farming extractivism.

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1 – CHANGING MODELS

The economic model of reciprocity

Reciprocity is almost as old as humanity, especially in village economies or family lines where it is the natural functioning. It is very present through mutual aid and assistance in the developing world. Much more than a rule organizing trade, it is a real economic system, a way of producing, of distributing the product, of circulating goods and of consuming.

Reciprocity as a basic economic system

Reciprocity is an economic system alternative to capitalism and the market which is based on the social and altruistic inclinations of the human¹ Work in the usual sense no longer exists. The need for achievement, to be useful, to please and to relate is realized in activities that humans exercise freely, either as independents or in cooperatives of which they are co-owners. There is no longer a wage-earning system where the employee has no other choice than to exercise an alienated and impoverished job, than to slip into an already formatted job. The activities to be offered depend on what one knows how to do useful.

In reciprocity, there is no market, no money, so prices do not exist. Participants in the system provide the goods and services they perform and receive those they need. It is the principle of equity that works: everyone contributes according to his/her abilities and receives according to his/her needs. In the economy of reciprocity, people are not compared on what they own, nor on the value do they create. Whatever their activities, they are considered equivalent. There is no social differentiation linked to work, sex, age or origin. A single criterion is used to assess the capabilities of members: it is their productive effort measured by working time in hours. All jobs are equal: one hour of work equals one hour of work. In other words, reciprocity is fundamentally fair because it erases differences related to the “value” of activities or people. It takes into account the amount of effort each limb can put in due to its health. The elderly, sick or disabled are supported by the working people. Reciprocity is therefore an economic system without unemployment and bosses, without economic crisis, without overconsumption or poverty.

¹ Homo Sociabilis : 1/La Réciprocité, L’Harmattan, 2019.

An economy of reciprocity and the domesticated market

It is easy to understand that this system of reciprocity can only work under certain conditions. Not all goods and services can be produced on a reciprocity basis. Whatever the extent of the economy of reciprocity, there are needs that will be difficult to meet within its framework: exchanges between communities will not always be governed by reciprocity, as for certain raw materials, goods imported or produced outside of reciprocity, certain complex technological goods and certain public goods such as security or major infrastructures. These goods will continue to be provided by the market or by the State, under conditions that have been greatly changed, where the market and the State have become partners of reciprocity, and no longer of capitalism.

The economic model to be built must be at the service of people. We must put an end to the illusion of a “self-regulated market economy”, which should be left free from any intervention by society and the State in order to be deemed to serve the general interest. Karl Polanyi demonstrated in 1944 that this lie has been used by industrial capitalism since the 19th century to take hold of the entire Western world², then the whole world, circulating like poison through the veins of the market. In fact, what most often circulates through commodity exchange are the toxic ultra-low and destructive prices by which capitalist firms impose their economic might. In a healthy market economy, prices provide transparency on the manufacturing conditions of products; trade and competition aim to meet demand. In capitalism, on the contrary, prices are completely opaque on the often-shameful production conditions and serve to destroy competitors in order to impose the power of firms on the consumer³. In other words, the market economy is not harmful by itself; but it was captured by capitalism. The market economy has many virtues such as the creation of spaces for exchange or the information on consumer demand. These virtues can be expressed if the market becomes stabilized and controlled, domesticated by society. Buyers will check in the prices whether the information on the goods sold is truly transparent and honest and whether the competition in the market is healthy and truly serves the public. Thus, to be complete, the economic model to be built will have two floors: the economy of reciprocity as an egalitarian base that meets basic needs, then the market economy, which has become backed by the society that controls it. Reciprocity is directed against capitalism; from whose influence it manages to shield the market. The market is eliminated within reciprocity, but it is not its enemy. It accepts him outside and works with him to take advantage of its economic virtues and to gain access to certain goods.

The model of society based on reciprocity communities

Changing models also means changing society. For too long, societies have been viewed as passive and immutable entities that witness and undergo the action of companies, economic powers and States. Sometimes intermediary bodies or NGOs manage to make their weak voices heard. Voiced too punctually during the vote, the expressive capacities of society are very insufficient. The idea of the Homo Sociabilis collective is that today we must tackle the task of changing society so that it becomes an active force as much or more than the State, so as it gains the resilience needed to cope with the shocks it experiences. Changing society today means to organize around

² Karl Polanyi : La Grande Transformation, Aux origines politiques et économiques de notre temps, Gallimard, 1944.

³ Cf. Homo Sociabilis : 3/ Les communautés et le marché contre le capitalisme (forthcoming).

communities, real alternatives to individualism. In Western countries, the challenge is to create thousands of communities that foster reciprocity. Where there are already existing communities, in the emerging world, and also somewhat in the West, the challenge will be to enable them to change their economic model and face the challenges of the 21st century.

Changing society through reciprocity communities

Choosing reciprocity also means choosing to change society. The economy of reciprocity cannot function without communities. A reciprocity system needs a sufficiently broad match between activities and needs for goods and services and a mechanism that can ensure fairness in the system. Since the practice of reciprocity consists in realizing and giving goods or services, and in receiving their equivalents without going through the market and through prices, the question of equilibrium in reciprocity arises. Experience shows that for old, well-established reciprocities between participants sharing the same values, such as peasant villages, family clans in Asia or communities in Africa, the problem is naturally resolved because it does not arise. The norm of reciprocity behavior is internalized in the local culture, it is transmitted through education and spontaneously regulates practices. On the other hand, for systems of recent creation, which have not yet established routines and which relate to activities inserted in a capitalist economy, a balance can only be found after having removed the risk of seeing the emergence of opportunist behaviors, where one would seek to receive without giving, or to receive more than to give.

Speaking of Western countries, Ferdinand Tönnies had shown in 1887 in his book *Community and Society* how the birth of individualism created “cold” societies, resulting from “societal” social relations, founded on the “reflected will” of individuals, whereas there were “warm” societies in the sense of warmth, as result of “community” social relationships based on the “organic will” of individuals⁴. Hannah Arendt pointed out in 1958 that the individualism of our mass societies in fact deprives us of true individualities. They encourage a certain conformism that opposes what Arendt calls “action”⁵. In her opinion, joining a community these days is about acting. Deprived of a “human world”, men seek new landmarks on a level they can comprehend. The community provides this secure framework for operation and action and allows the “complete man”⁶ to express himself, instead of a few fragments of himself as in commercial exchanges.

Changing the economic model and building reciprocity requires the establishment of the community. The idea today is not to reconstitute the community of soil or blood of Tönnies to which one belongs by birth or by marriage, but to rebuild “warm” societies from communities truly chosen by their members. What type of community do we need to set up reciprocity? A condition for a social organization to become a system of reciprocity economy is to know unambiguously who belongs to the community. Another condition is the existence of a mechanism for learning and

⁴ Ferdinand Tönnies : *Communauté et société*, 1887.

⁵ Hannah Arendt: *La condition humaine*, University of Chicago Press, 1958.

⁶ Friedrich von Schiller (1795-1796) : *Lettres sur l'éducation esthétique de l'homme*. Original text and French translation by Robert Leroux [1885-1961]. Paris: Aubier, 1943, 1992, 375 p.
http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/schiller_friedrich_von/lettres_sur_education/schiller_lettres_sur_education.pdf

incorporation by each member of the operating rule of reciprocity, which is a kind of art of living. It is necessary to delimit an inside and an outside the system of reciprocity to know what the contributions and the needs of the families are who are part of it. As membership gives access to community resources, there needs to be a formal commitment from members to respect the principle of reciprocity, a kind of social contract.

Elinor Ostrom, Nobel laureate in economics, described this kind of community contract in 1994: it is like a property that is neither individual nor State⁷. For example, when a group owns and manages a common good, such as a natural environment or an irrigation system. In our story, the common good is reciprocity, and the group that has access to it and manages it is the community. How to define and enforce the principle of reciprocity in communities? In fact, setting the standard for reciprocity is natural for humans. Just think of a circle of friends who take turns inviting each other: everyone instinctively feels who is ahead and who is behind in invitations. However, in the newly created communities, taking into account the market environment which dominates and which values individualistic and selfish behaviors, rules are imposed which use the evaluation of mutual contributions: this evaluation is done in an egalitarian way by measuring the hours of work contained in goods and services. The community knows how to spot any imbalances in reciprocity and how to remedy them. The transition from one economic system to another, from capitalism to reciprocity, will be an exciting but delicate time too. New behaviors and new economic rules of the game will have to adjust in a hitherto unknown universe. But this should not make us lose sight of the essence of reciprocity which is generosity, solidarity and trust, with the transformation of behavior that goes with it. The community with reciprocity will therefore be a community of contract, whose members will adhere individually by showing their agreement with the rule of reciprocity and with the Charter of values of the community. We will call these contract communities “citizen communities” as they result from individual and reasoned choices to establish reciprocity, and as their Charter is based on universal values.

What makes communities effective?

Several factors confer exceptional properties on reciprocity communities. We may find these features in sometimes attenuated forms in other types of communities. It is also these features that will make societies composed of communities much more resilient than societies of individuals and nuclear families.

Shared values

As Max Weber recalled, humans endowed with rational thought and free will are guided by values. In accordance with the tradition of associationism of the 19th century and that of the Solidarity and Social Economy of the 20th century, citizen communities unite their members first around shared values. These values are carried collectively in communities by social innovations applied to the daily life of their members: solidarity, altruism, cooperation, social equity, ecology, and anti-capitalism. Members meet frequently, exchange knowledge, ideas and opinions, cooperate and render services. These shared values give exceptional social cohesion. They make them a powerful driving force for social transformation, far more enduring and resilient than that of

⁷ Elinor Ostrom, James Walker et Roy Gardner: Rules, games, and common-pool resources, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1994.

simple groupings of individuals guided by interest and ensure the autonomous existence and expression of community members in society.

Sociability

The community is inseparable from the history of mankind and its disappearance in the Western world represented a loss in conviviality and social bond. The sociability needs of humans, the need to achieve himself, the need to be useful, the need to please and the need to relate, had ideally been fulfilled within the framework of the community. Sociability results from free adherence around a project and shared values as well as daily activities of production, teaching and learning, services and leisure. In addition, direct democracy increases interactions between members and establishes new affinities between them. It follows that the community atmosphere is spontaneously friendly and benevolent, that trust reigns and that conflicts are resolved more easily. The human size of the community confers proximity between its members and thus protects sociability.

Proximity

The community has a human scale, it responds to a need for proximity: it is first of all the possibility of physically meeting the members of the community, of establishing direct contact between the producer and the consumer, or quite simply between its members. Proximity is also an economic model. The establishment of short circuits makes it possible to undo some of the damage caused by globalization, to relocate production and to resist the opacity of capitalism on the manufacture of products and the formation of their prices. The Internet multiplies the opportunities for direct relationships, even at a distance, between people. It allows communities to shine beyond the limits of the territories and create virtual communities. This proximity via the Internet ensures the national and global expansion of reciprocity, it is not a withdrawal into the local. The community creates proximity because of the shared values and because its project. Proximity is a component of conviviality: it is the fact not only of knowing those around you, but also of having some of your loved ones close to you. More generally, proximity is the happiness of being among acquaintances. Finally, it responds to a need for transparency in everyday life, because in the globalized and digitized world, humans have less and less control over their daily activities and their destiny. No longer knowing who to believe, distinguishing truth from fake, or who to trust, the proximity of communities will help citizens overcome the isolation of mistrust and rebuild certainties and true relationships. Proximity makes it possible to avoid total withdrawal into the domestic sphere and to rebuild socialization, it restores faith in the human.

Trust

Trust is the rarest and most precious commodity in life in society. It is an essential ingredient that makes everyday life livable and pleasant, it is a component of happiness. Moreover, trust makes economic activity efficient; it facilitates cooperation and the circulation of information; it fosters innovation, creativity and daring. Confidence encourages collective intelligence; it encourages action. Its absence leads to fear, hostility towards others, withdrawal, violence. By trust, we must understand the mutual knowledge between humans and transparency, the ability to predict and understand the behaviors of people and organizations. Confidence is not innate; it is not a blind faith, it is built. It stems from shared values, sociability and proximity. It is built through interpersonal relationships, through networks and through collective practices

and convictions, through habits and through consolidating social norms. Confidence grows in prosperous and peaceful environments. Trust is at the heart of reciprocity as an economic system: it is knowing that I can give freely to the community, because I know that I will receive the equivalent in return. It is also knowing that as a member I can benefit from its solidarity if necessary. This certainty is supported by the transparency of the economy within the community. The *raison d'être* of the community is to be, together with the family, the basic unit of society, that is to say the place where trust is the highest. Community is the crucible of trust.

Identity

The community is the bearer of identity. This collective identity will be added to the often-failing identity device of humans, with its regional and national, cultural and political dimensions. Identity is also the assertion of oneself, of a difference, in the face of pressures to trivialize or crush it. It expresses resistance to massification. It is an essential resource from a psychological, societal, economic and political perspective. Being made up of links between its members, which are generally stronger than those with the outside world, the community naturally becomes the bearer of collective identity. Community identities often have a local territorial dimension. A territory is a place, a set of resources, but above all a link between humans who together have a history, a mentality, a vision. A thousand signals indicate the rise of the territory in all areas in the face of the anonymity of the global, of global capitalism which kneads, massifies and deregulates. In other cases, non-territorial identities of communities will be found, for example with a complementary currency, a project or even in virtual communities. Collective identity is a powerful lever for action: it strengthens self-confidence, in the transformative capacity of the community, just as it strengthens the visibility of its autonomous action.

The community is also the cradle of individual identities. Western societies of individuals are massing populations as producers, consumers, spectators, followers. Being all the same, there is no longer an individual. The needs for personal development, difference, dignity and recognition can be expressed in the small space of the community. Its richness is the unique, the qualitative, the diversity of its members, strong in their unique identity.

2 - BUILD CITIZEN COMMUNITIES

To understand the importance and the stake of building citizen communities, let us broaden the perspective on historical and geographic levels.

Societies of individuals and societies of communities

For millennia, the community has been the natural habitat of humans. Then, since the 19th century with the industrial revolution and capitalism, the world has torn apart, there are two kinds of societies: societies of communities and societies of individuals.

The two types of societies in the world

In community societies, the well-being and fate of individuals are closely linked to those of the community that protects them. Their activities are supported by the community, they engage it and must not weaken it. The community is also a family and the beginning of a State. In societies of individuals, they are alone with their nuclear

family facing a society. Their well-being and fate depend on their actions, material resources, relationships and social background.

Community societies concern emerging and developing countries resulting from decolonization or communism which ended up being in the grip of late capitalism. These are societies of Africa, Latin America and the majority of Asian countries. Their structure has not changed; but after having undergone colonization, they undergo the unparalleled assaults of capitalism. In the post-communist world, village and clan communities have reappeared, and functional communities have formed. In these parts of the world, communities have remained the natural environment for most people, their main, if not their only source of livelihood and assistance. It is difficult to realize their importance. Without them, billions of people could not survive or simply cope with the terrible daily difficulties. It is thanks to them that populations often escape famine and absolute misery, that societies do not collapse, and powerful and uncontrolled migrations do not occur. These communities structure social life, they are also at the heart of the economy where they resist a late domestic capitalism that tries to absorb them where it has appeared, as in India or Brazil. In these parts of the world, these communities are not resurgences of the past, they are sources of daily initiatives, they know how to become part of globalization, they function. Thanks to communities, non-Western societies are extraordinarily resilient; they are stronger than States. They do not disintegrate despite violence and are able to endure wars, epidemics, waves of migration and other catastrophes as no Western society can. Just one example: Lebanon today has six million inhabitants, including two million refugees made up of Syrians, and a few Palestinians and Iraqis. What European country would survive a comparable situation, when it is torn apart for tens of thousands of migrants?

The individuation of societies is a Western characteristic, born at the same time as capitalism between the 16th and the 18th century, to liberate capitalist entrepreneurship and to provide it with a hired labor force free from all ties. It is the societal side of economic liberalism. In France, individuation was symbolized by the Le Chapelier Law of June 14, 1791, which banned professional corporations and workers' associations. More generally, the birth of the citizen free and guided by Reason during the Enlightenment was unnecessarily accompanied in Europe by the decline of extended families, village communities and professional associations. Industrialization and urbanization accentuated this process until the arrival of the nuclear family which did not include three generations, or even two or three people. The 20th century will move from individuation to individualism with the help of consumerism which transforms the stunted family into the main outlet for the commodities of capitalism. Far from promoting personal development, Western individualism leads on the contrary to massification. Social individuation, this profound transformation of Europe, reaches North America and spreads to Asia, leaving gaping holes in social organization and weakening it terribly. It is accompanied by a growing deficit in proximity and trust, which are the resources of dynamic, resilient and peaceful societies.

Inherited communities

In the developing world, communities and the reciprocity within them are inherited from the history of society. These communities were not chosen by their members, they are not based on the principle of free membership, but on criteria such as place of birth, family lines, ethnicity or religion. They carry within them a double closure, for their members, for whom it is difficult to join another community, and for possible external candidates. On the other hand, they are welcoming to travelers and the hospitality is deeply rooted in reciprocity. The inherited communities are often very

hierarchical and governed by the elders. Naturally imbued with the values and culture of their societies, they contain an ambivalence. On the one hand, they are the privileged place for the exercise of productive mutual aid, solidarity and assistance to the weakest. On the other hand, they carry the values of their societies which can be discriminatory and backward, especially regarding equal rights, women's rights and individual freedoms and often, they convey the most traditional religious values.

The strength of these inherited communities is to use reciprocity as a mechanism of the community economy that nourished the beginnings of humanity, as hunter-gatherers, then as settled farmers. Reciprocity has organized fishing and peasant villages for thousands of years. This organization of production and life remains today that of the largest number of inhabitants in the developing world, in certain forms, admittedly. It remains in the heart of most peasant villages around the world, even today. The rule of reciprocity has become almost natural and deeply embedded in practice, without the need to transcribe it in writing. It has above all a function of social structuring, it is this which gives this extraordinary cohesion, this strength to the communities. The economy of reciprocity has a function of subsistence or survival for populations, but it is not on its own, in its current State, capable of ensuring economic development. It is found in places where the market economy very often fails to develop, while economic development requires the articulation of reciprocity with the market. In these postcolonial and post-communist societies, it is necessary to re-enchant communities by opening them up and adapting their values to the world of the 21st century. This is an extremely delicate transition process because destroying the sociability it brings would be detrimental in all respects. In addition, we have a lot to learn from the exercise of reciprocity in these communities, however inherited. The Western world must abandon its sense of superiority and accept that these peoples can teach it lessons of mutual aid and solidarity.

Built communities

A new phenomenon appeared in the 18th century, it is the voluntary construction of communities of agricultural-industrial lives inspired by the English and French Revolutions and the first associationists. The whole of the 19th century will be marked by community experiences of reciprocity until the beginning of the 20th century. Fourier and Owen inspired the first communities built at the beginning of the 19th century. They have most often taken the form of either settlement “colonies”, or of cooperative community enterprises, and in both cases have been financed by sponsor capitalists. These built communities have had a certain fragility because, resulting from an experimental process, they are new forms. Most often, they were built in a hostile environment. In return, they were based on a free choice and a formal commitment of its members, motivated by common values.

In the 1960s the last wave of community experiments began, which added anti-consumerist values, resource savings and protecting the environment. Today in Western countries there are thousands of social innovation communities, whose degree of formalization is more or less high, and which set more limited objectives than that of forming a system and building reciprocity. Here are the main areas of social innovation of these built communities.

- The societal vision of these communities favors a collective approach to common problems, mutual aid, solidarity and sociability, and can go as far as providing assistance to members in precariousness. With a human dimension,

being open and places of socialization, communities provide their members with autonomy that is both protective and emancipatory.

- These communities are part of humanity's n°1 issue, which is zero carbon emission and the protection of climate, biodiversity, natural environments and non-reproducible resources.
- These communities have a vision of the economy based on the rejection of the grip of capitalism, which can sometimes go as far as the attempt to do without money. They are situated in the tradition of the solidarity and social economy, and aim at productions based on real needs and not on profit, at work oriented towards the pleasure of doing and not towards alienation and exploitation, at economic activities guided by cooperation and not by competition.
- They seek to put into practice an anti-capitalist vision of consumption which will result in a rejection of individualism and consumerism, overexploitation of resources, a search for a circular economy, an economy of sharing and functionality.
- The registration of these communities in the territory goes through short circuits that reject trade and capitalist relocations, promote local peasant agriculture and the quality of food, and develop a local productive ecosystem.
- These communities are constitutive of citizenship which is formed in the direct daily democracy of management and conduct of the community.

These built communities driven by anti-capitalist social innovation are distinguished by their advances in the implementation of new behaviors in consumption, production, politics and relationships between people. On the other hand, they have rarely shown a desire for a substantial break with the market and monetary exchange. They heal the wounds that the dominant economy causes, but they fail to establish a new system of which they would be the main players.

In the former USSR and especially in Russia, there is another type of built communities, these are functional communities. They are based on cooperation between people united in a common interest where trust and reputation are the cement. These functional communities have their roots in the communist system where society was organized around people with access to material resources or influence. They grew stronger during the transition in the face of uncertain laws and powers. They persist today because isolated individuals are destitute in the face of the inexistence of the exercise of law, of individual freedoms and of the arbitrariness of power. These functional communities are active in the economy, they are very hierarchical and are based on extraordinarily strong informal personal ties.

Today, thanks to the globalization of information and citizen networks, the world of inherited communities on the one hand, and that of individuals and built communities on the other, are discovering and dialoguing. What gives so much resilience to non-Western societies is the existence of communities based on the fundamental values of mutual aid in production, solidarity and assistance in society, and the unity of living, without distinction between Human and Nature. These values are also present in the West, but they are not the foundation of societies, they are not deeply rooted in culture. Moreover, what makes the West attractive are certain values of Modernity such as individual freedoms, equal rights for all people, and absolute respect for the rule of law equal to all. From Hong Kong to Tehran, from Santiago to Khartoum, from Algiers to Caracas and from Rio to Beirut, the peoples of the world are today manifesting their

aspirations for these values. Today there is a common base of universal values to be built, supported by communities and by Modernity⁸. We probably should not expect total convergence between the two worlds. The same values are understood and applied in different ways. But sharing the same universal values allows dialogue, mutual understanding, solidarity and common action. The unity of the world is being built.

Tomorrow: the creation of citizen communities

All over the world, communities are transforming and seeking an identity, in community societies as well as in individual societies, in inherited communities as well as in built communities. The stake of this immense dynamic of transformation is the construction of citizen communities to which one will choose to belong because they are carriers of universal values.

The transformations of community societies

In societies of inherited communities, this dynamic is already underway because the forces of change are numerous. The challenge is to preserve reciprocity while responding to peoples' demand for freedom, equality and law, and without falling into Western individualism. It is about rebuilding a reciprocity that would be based on a contract, in revisited communities. The destruction of communities in these societies would be catastrophic on all levels. Beyond the democratic civic aspirations of the populations, other powerful factors are pushing the communities to transform. This is for example the push of the younger generations who aspire to an internal organization that is less hierarchical and authoritarian, and more attentive to them. It is also the pressure of women who challenge an overly patriarchal order in the community and demand more respect and true equality.

Often, it is economic forces that drive inherited communities to transform. The rural exodus and internal migrations lead part of the community to reside in towns, constituting kinds of ethnic enclaves, where the criteria for belonging to the community may become less restrictive. Thus, in sub-Saharan Africa, we find in the big cities-built communities centered on individual protection outside the scope of the inherited community. People choose to join a community built to protect themselves or to access spiritual power, financial power, or network assurance. Membership of built communities is done by co-option, that is, people who are already members stand surety for the incoming. In the communities of the NGO Navdanya in India, where the Green Revolution drove male farmers to suicide or to exile in the city, women from rural villages came together in agroecological communities, choosing their seeds, to survive and save farms. The functioning of these communities of women has moved away from communities inherited from India, lineages and castes, it has become close to that of citizen communities on contract.

The decisive stake of inherited communities will be their capacity, beyond their social function, to be sufficiently progressive to engage countries in economic development from below. One of the key links is the existence of the market economy, stifled by bureaucratic States, extractivist and industrial oligarchies, and sometimes by the communities themselves through the community tax⁹ which weighs on

⁸ Cf. Homo Sociabilis : 2/ La Réciprocité, une vieille idée moderne (forthcoming)

⁹ Informal practice where the community can take money from the profits of micro-entrepreneurs to finance priority social spending.

entrepreneurship¹⁰. Unlike Europe from the 16th to the 19th century, the economies of Africa, India or Russia hardly have to wait for States to establish a dynamic market economy. The community economy needs to be linked to the market economy. Whether firms are formal or informal is not decisive, the main thing is that they lead to the production of added value. It is therefore up to the communities to fulfill this historic mission from the point of view of economic development and diversification, to build from below the space and the rules of the market economy. They began to do so, driven by economic necessities and the initiatives of their entrepreneurs, and transforming the old inherited communities. To give just one example, in Lagos, Nigeria, the Yorubas, originally from Côte d'Ivoire, have built a community of Yoruba traders even though they do not come from the same village, and do not belong to the same community. territorial. The Yoruba in Ivory Coast keep the community spirit alive and facilitate the arrival of goods from Nigeria. Likewise, the Yorubas of Nigeria are activating their network to facilitate the passage of Ivorian products through customs. There are already many configurations where the inherited communities are building market spaces by expanding into cities, by associating through linguistic affinities or by networking¹¹. In doing so, they significantly reduce certain rigidities in inherited communities and outline a new model of economic development, both community and market based.

The transformations of individual societies

After barely more than two centuries of existence, it is clear that individualism and capitalism have proved not only incapable of fully realizing the exercise of human rights, but also, they have achieved the feat to endanger all of humanity through global warming and damage to biodiversity. Community building appears to be the only solution capable of giving back to a disoriented Western society the capacity to react to threats. It is based on the values of Modernity and on free citizen choice but turns its back on individualism as the supreme value. This requires a new, more refocused and fairer economic model, organized through rediscovered solidarity and social ties. It is about re-enchanting Modernity¹². The economy of reciprocity is at the same time the heart of the building of communities and that of the exit from capitalism. It is the best medicine to revive societies, to boost their energies and their immune defenses, to build a capacity for resistance and action.

How to build reciprocity, how to set up communities of contract? This process includes two stages: to stimulate a community dynamic, then to build the system of reciprocity. How to launch the community dynamics? In fact, this first step corresponds to the establishment of anti-capitalist social innovation communities. The observation of these communities in Europe and North America shows the diversity of the starting situations. The general pattern is that of the snowball, with at the beginning a limited and concrete goal and then a desire to change life more broadly. It is possible to start tomorrow. Here are a few examples of how the dynamics have started: a citizens' list that wins a municipal election¹³; an AMAP-type associative initiative to introduce organic food in canteens, then for the entire population¹⁴; preventing the installation of a

¹⁰ Cf. Homo Sociabilis : 4/ Réenchanter les communautés (forthcoming).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cf. Homo Sociabilis : 5/ Réenchanter la Modernité (forthcoming).

¹³ <https://gresse-en-vercors-municipale2020.fr/home/>

¹⁴ <https://at06.eu/la-regie-agricole-de-mouans-sartoux-pour-alimenter-en-bio-les-cantines-scolaires/>

supermarket and the creation of a solidarity grocery store¹⁵; the creation of a complementary local currency¹⁶ ¹⁷ or even citizen solar farms¹⁸.. When does this dynamic become part of a community? A community brings together within a territory, district or village, families - made up of one or more people - who decide to jointly and sustainably manage aspects of their daily life. Membership in the community results from a voluntary choice which is a personal commitment and not just a criterion of residence or others. More concretely, between two neighbors, the one can belong to the community, and the other not. There are also virtual communities. As we can see, there is no single method for building a community. The most important thing is to get 50 to 100 families together with the motivation and the information needed to start the process. The community then manages its growth according to its objectives and stages. A reciprocity community requires several hundred to a few thousand families so as to have an economic activity sufficiently varied for the reciprocity to cover most of its needs. However, it should keep a human dimension. It may organize within itself smaller and more convivial groups for family or citizen-type activities.

The second step involves defining and implementing a reciprocity contract to profoundly change the economic system. If they remain organized on the basis of the market, production and consumption must follow market prices imposed from outside. The community then has no choice of its economic model. For example, it cannot establish a rule of social equality between activities; or it cannot guarantee to the farmers of the community practicing short circuits that they will become able to live from their work. Only reciprocity really makes it possible to change the economic model. Each built community will have to develop its own design of the reciprocity to be implemented.

Communities are self-governing bodies and they continuously decide their policy and strategy, except in situations where they receive earmarked funding. The thousands of social innovation communities currently existing may decide to change their course in favor of reciprocity. Nothing prevents a community whose initial ambitions are modest from gradually achieving a deeper and deeper rupture until it achieves a system of reciprocity.

Based on voluntary choices and of universal values, whether in the societies of inherited communities or in the societies of individuals, citizen communities can achieve a high degree of cohesion and capacity for action. Today's result of the transformations of societies, they can become the main driver of change around the world.

3 - BUILD A RESILIENT SOCIETY THROUGH CITIZEN COMMUNITIES

What is a resilient society?

Our research collective Homo Sociabilis came to the idea that it is necessary to regenerate societies and make them resilient thanks to communities built by free citizens. In a way, they would bring together the best of the values of the emerging

¹⁵ <https://reporterre.net/A-Saillans-les-habitants-reinventent-la-democratie>

¹⁶ <https://reporterre.net/L-eusko-basque-premiere-monnaie-locale-europeenne>

¹⁷ <https://www.sol-violette.fr/>

¹⁸ https://www.liberation.fr/france/2019/12/14/energies-renouvelables-les-projets-citoyens-dopent-l-economie-locale_1769020

world and those of the West¹⁹. In non-Western societies, the precious asset of the community and its reciprocity will be preserved, but it must be transformed. The citizen dimension needs to be strengthened, to boost resilience, block dictators and corrupt predators and initiate new models of endogenous economic development. This change has already started. In the Western world, citizen communities will be built to strengthen resilience and to change society. The growing need to change the economic model and to change society is a powerful incentive to leave individualism and embark on community building. A complementary path is that of engaging towards exiting the market anti-capitalist communities already created around the search for social innovations.

The Covid-19 pandemic and other global risks of the 21st century add additional motivation and urgency to the need to change models: it is the need to build a capacity to cope with these risks. Resilience is stability, resistance and transformation. Stability is the ability to face a shock unaffected, either by absorbing it or by escaping it. Resistance is a positive and dynamic action to counteract the components of this shock or to compensate for its effects. Transformation is a structural action that will eliminate or reduce vulnerability in the future. In the example of the pandemic, resilience has been nurtured by confinement and social distancing that provide stability; the practice of tests and hospital care that helps resist; and the discovery of a treatment and a vaccine that will transform vulnerability in the long term. Leaving capitalism and the market makes it possible to escape some of these risks or to mitigate them: it is the dimension of stability and transformation that is at work. The most unprecedented initiative will consist in changing society by building citizen communities where, until now, only the action of States and NGOs was considered. This may decisively energize the three components of resilience.

Building resilience in both types of societies

Building resilience first means taking stock of the Covid-19 pandemic. In community societies, the assessment of public policies, the role of NGOs and other forms of collective action is being taken. In the long term, the first resilience policy is economic and social development because it is a lasting and irreversible process which must translate into improved well-being. But it is also in terms of resilience capacities that we must now consider the different development paths. Given the weakness of health infrastructure, it is first towards containment and social distancing that actions against the pandemic have been directed, sometimes very early on. State resilience policies have often gone little further by force of circumstance. Another immediate effect is the economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic, which makes States even more impoverished. Societies of communities have been analyzed as societies where communities are stronger than States. Most of the burden of resilience in the face of the crisis now rests on their shoulders. Research today looks at the inventory and assessment of inherited communities in the face of these challenges. This will make it possible to measure the effectiveness of the transformations underway in these communities towards citizen communities, and to draw the most successful trajectories of change.

In rich and economically powerful countries, most of the resilience to the pandemic is provided by the State, which also ensures the mitigation of the economic crisis. The society has discovered an aptitude for and a taste for solidarity actions,

¹⁹ Cf. Homo Sociabilis : 2/ La réciprocité, une vieille idée moderne (forthcoming).

which it would gladly like to consolidate. This makes the community perspective credible, if necessary. Many ideas are popping up: de-globalization, teleworking, new green deal, cancellation of public debts; the boundaries of the possible are receding, we find ourselves dreaming. But the examination of the proposals for disruption is disappointing. What emerges is first of all the return to the welfare State, to a re-legitimized State as protector of the common good. It is the dream of a capitalism that returned in 1990 or 1973, but less globalized, less unequal. People already forgot that the welfare State is running out of steam, both too expensive and less and less effective. People forgot that the tax pressure has been rejected as unbearable by the populations, that our country is still cut in two by a social divide. People already forget that, whatever the reforming will at the top of the State, it ultimately ends up on technocracy, bureaucracy, lobbies, party routines, the rigidities of certain social partners, European constraints, etc.²⁰ The slowness of the response to the climate emergency is the most tragic example.

Society and the State in resilience in the West

We must face the facts: do not wait for changes from above, they will not come. It is up to society to act. In the 21st century, people are sufficiently educated and informed to no longer remain passive and expect everything from the State. The community option we advocate for rebuilding a vibrant, creative and resilient society is not directed against the welfare State. In the current pandemic crisis in France, the efficiency of the public hospital, the competence and the commitment of the health workers impress the whole country, which expresses its gratitude. Community building is not intended to replace the State, but to redefine its role, to redistribute tasks between administration and society. What should remain in the hands of the State? What will be advantageously provided by society, as long as it is organized? Building citizen communities is a solution to the dead end of the State crisis by refocusing its tasks and transferring to society what would be done better and at lower cost. The community option is above all a lever for change.

There are millions of us today who no longer wait for things to change from above, who want to deal with the urgent problems of our societies where the State is failing, starting with the climate, but also education, food, suburbs, poverty and others. These are all opportunities to create communities that will open social change. An example: there are a million school dropouts, very numerous in certain disadvantaged cities where despair and absenteeism reign from 13-14 years old. Only citizens' initiatives bringing together teachers, social workers, big brothers and families, elected officials and retirees in a sustainable manner will be able to rebuild hope and gradually eradicate the scourge of school failure in primary and secondary schools. It is the same for the other citizen projects which will be able to converge towards the positive approach of building a real alternative system. The communities carrying these citizen actions will provide everyone with an immense potential for initiative and inventiveness. In return, State administrations will have to be relieved of part of their activities. The fiscal pressure of States on active communities will have to be alleviated accordingly. When the time comes, it will be legitimate for the communities to become a new pillar of the institutions of the Republic in a renewed democratic system.

²⁰ Overcome the economic and social Impact of COVID-19 in Africa, Webinar among Young African Leaders Initiative 2019, 30 May 2020, YouTube podcast.

4 - COMMUNITIES ARE NECESSARY TO ADDRESS THE RISKS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The multiplication of citizen communities is an essential condition for successfully facing the risks of the 21st century. We are talking here about planetary risks, which threaten all of humanity. These are recent phenomena. Black plague in the 14th century, cholera in the 19th century, influenza and HIV in the 20th century, some epidemics have already reached the planet, as have the two world wars. Things are accelerating today, and eight planetary risks threaten the 21st century, which succeed, without making them disappear, the 20th century's risks stemming from blocs, the arms race and nuclear weapons. Let us review these eight plagues of the 21st century.

Climate risks linked to the anthropocene

The climatic risks is linked to the nearby and already present Anthropocene²¹ associated with warming and climatic disorders, stemming from the production and capitalist productivist and extractivist model of production and consumption, generator of CO₂ emissions and other greenhouse gases. This is the first of the planetary limits, the most serious of the three limits have already been exceeded in 2000. According to climatologists, the equivalent of the drop in CO₂ emissions due to the Covid-19 pandemic will have to be repeated every year until 2030 to meet the 1.5° C or 2° C Paris Agreement target. It is therefore a huge challenge that must be met to escape a profoundly crisis. Almost all economic sectors are responsible for excessive emissions of CO₂ gas. In 2015 worldwide, 81% of primary energy came from fossil fuels, which emit large amounts of CO₂: 32% for oil, 28% for coal and 22% for natural gas. The only low-carbon sources: renewable energies 14% and nuclear 5%. 39% of GHG emissions are due to the production of electricity, 24% to transport and 19% to industry²². The digital sector itself with advertisements and Internet messages, data centers, 5G etc. is becoming a big consumer of energy. Mankind has become addicted to energy; its consumption has doubled in 40 years from 1973 to 2015. This addiction is very unequal: emissions per capita in 2016 were 15.5 t CO₂ per year in the USA, 11.5 in Russia, 9.8 in Japan, 7.6 in China and 6.7 in the EU. On the other hand, in India the level is 1.9 and in Sub-Saharan Africa 0.7 t CO₂. For these latter developing countries, where many rural areas are not even electrified, it is more a question of modifying the energy mix than of drastically reducing it. The main challenges will be to replace the production of fossil fuels (coal, petroleum) with renewable energies produced massively in the communities; to transform the transport system saturated with heat engines, sometimes as second hand from the West, and the heat strainer housings saturated with air conditioners; and to invent a low-carbon development model that does not reproduce the Western one, especially with regard to meat eating and overconsumption.

In the EU in 2016, 27.9% of GHG emissions came from energy production, 21.7% from transport, 11.1% from industry, 13.4% from residential and tertiary sector, 21.9% from agriculture and 4% others²³. In 2019, Germany alone emits 22.5% of the EU's GHGs; the UK, Italy and France together emit 31.5%²⁴. The profile of France in 2019 is a little different with only 10% of GHG emissions, thanks to nuclear power;

²¹ The anthropocene is the era in earth's history when human activities have a significant global impact on the earth's ecosystem.

²² Chiffres clés du climat, Datalab, SDES, Paris 2019.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Eurostat 2019.

otherwise: transport 29.7%, industry and services 25.8%, agriculture 18.9%, residential 11.7%, energy 10.9% and waste 3%²⁵. The carbon footprint of a French person is the equivalent of 11.2 t CO₂, it must be 2 t per year to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The transformations induced by the climate issue are therefore immense. It is necessary to simultaneously modify the production of energy, the way of producing, the way of moving, of cultivating, of eating and of housing. The task rests as much on households as it does on businesses. States have to invest in renewable energies, rail and water for transport, and in incentives for households and businesses.

It is becoming more evident every day that the profound changes in the relationship with nature and in consumption patterns necessary to achieve these objectives will not be carried out under the sole impetus of States. It is up to society to take its future in hand. An organization into living and tight-knit communities will be infinitely more powerful and effective than resorting to NGOs alone. Consider three examples. It is long and expensive for States to switch mainly to renewable energies, and to make it accepted. Communities, alone or in groups, have ideal dimensions and modes of governance for agreeing, and then establishing wind turbines, solar farms and other decentralized renewable energy sources. In France, 15.7% of GHG emissions come from private cars, it is more than half of the entire transport sector. Inventing and generalizing the “green” car will be long and insufficient, it is individual possession that must be replaced. We can extend the idea of Ostrom and make the automobile a “common good” for individual use but owned by the community and which its members will respect for use. Similarly, livestock, mainly cattle, alone represent half of agricultural GHGs. Switching massively from livestock farming to horticultural crops and pulses without threatening the income of farmers and accompanying the change of diet of the inhabitants is a difficult and complex process. Bringing together farmers and consumers in civic communities will be an amazingly effective tool to accelerate and succeed in this great transformation. More than information campaigns and demonstrations, it is a daily transformative action that is needed to build a local economy with decentralized energy, disrupt mobility and consumption patterns, transform habitats and habits of entire populations.

Threats to biodiversity and natural environments

Besides the fight against climate change, the preservation of biodiversity is the other way to protect the conditions of life on Earth. Yet it was this planetary limit that was first exceeded. There is therefore urgency. Science has so far described 2 million living species, or about 20% of the total. Of 116,177 species that have been assessed in detail, 31,030 or 27% are threatened with extinction. We know that since 1990, an average of a quarter of insects have disappeared. Animal, plant or other, each living species is essential and participates in the balance of a natural environment, in CO₂ or nitrogen cycles, in drinking water resources, in the protection and reproduction of the thin and fertile soil layer that nourishes flora and humanity or even in marine environments that make up the climate. Biodiversity is the key to the chain of life; it is the expression of the unity of the world. Some species have a special role for humans. Thus, the earthworm is a component of soil fertility, but 40% of its species are endangered. Natural pollination is crucial or important for three quarters of the world's agriculture, but pollinator species are in decline everywhere. Of the 20,000 species of bees, 40% are in danger of extinction. In France, 30% of bees disappear each year.

²⁵ GHG emissions (CO₂ equivalents), source: CITEPA/format SECTEN April 2019.

Threats to biodiversity are manifold, from the excessive use of pesticides to the pollution of rivers, from the urbanization of soils to global warming. They all come from human action and its capitalist economic model. The main threat to species concerns their habitat which is destroyed, shrunk or disturbed. Emblematic of this destruction is deforestation caused by overexploitation of timber or by the expansion of cultivable land. We have been losing 5 million hectares of forest per year for twenty years, mainly in Africa and Latin America. Fires also destroy forests, either “spontaneously” caused by heat and maintenance deficit, or intentional to expand agriculture, or criminal in favor of town planning. Particularly disastrous is the Siberian “system” where fires, permafrost melting, and global warming are self-sustaining. A case in point of disturbed environments is that of marine ecosystems. The oceans and the ecosystems they support are endangered natural environments. Human activities such as overfishing threaten the survival of these ecosystems. The activity of these ecosystems contributes to capture 93% of the excess heat of the climate system and to store 30% of CO₂, it is achieved by the reduction of biodiversity: thus the disappearance of phytoplankton depletes the CO₂ capture reservoir that constitutes the oceans, as well as their degree of oxygenation. At the same time, massive deforestation of the continents reduces the CO₂ storage capacity of natural ecosystems. The artificialization of soils caused by urban civilization is another source of shrinking habitats for living species. It also damages wetlands, vital for the water cycle. After habitats, pollution is the second threat to biodiversity: pesticides, sulfur dioxide, plastics, masks, industrial and mining discharges, water and waste treatment, toxic products such as nuclear waste or bee-killing neonicotinoids. Add to this overconsumption which encourages mining and deforestation, the agricultural system with its monocultures, GMOs, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and banned peasant seeds, global trade in animals and plant pests, which attack our rivers and coasts, our bees and our forests etc.

According to experts, the best way to respect biodiversity is to protect at least 30% of the planet by 2030. That would be a step before reaching 50%, which scientists advise. But we cannot expect States alone to achieve this goal, this is where communities come in. We need changes in individual behavior, corporate practices, within the agricultural sector... “To truly safeguard biodiversity, in addition to government policies, we all need to live in a more environmentally friendly way. (...) All of society must embrace the fight for biodiversity, just as it has embraced the fight for the climate” says an NGO²⁶. The characteristic of a community is to have a territory that it manages as its common good or shared with other communities. Far better than States, it is communities that know ecosystems, the species that form them and the threats they face. By monitoring economic activities and opposing the artificialization of soils, communities energize ecosystems and biodiversity and maintain this world heritage of humanity that is natural environments. Likewise, write the researchers, in the face of clearing, “forests must be managed with those who live there. (...) Landscapes cannot be decreed. They are the result of the sum of the individual choices and actions of the men and women who live there, every day. (...) Deforestation is a human affair and it is urgent to give full place to the real decision-makers who have the future of

²⁶ Brian O’Donnell, from US NGO Campaign for Nature

https://www.liberation.fr/terre/2020/02/28/toute-la-societe-doit-s-emparer-de-la-lutte-pour-la-biodiversite_1779847

forests in their hands”²⁷. Here again, communities are the natural framework for the decentralized management of issues involving an active population, a local economy and ecosystems. This concerns the right balance between environmental, climatic, economic issues and the impacts on biodiversity, such as bioenergy depleting the soil, solar farms carrying out artificialization or reservoirs over the water for the irrigation.

Threats to global food security

The important thing is to clearly identify the nature of this risk, because the threat of overpopulation is a myth. According to UN scenarios, the planet will probably have 10 billion inhabitants in 2050, up from 7.7 billion today. The average scenario for 2100 is 10.9 billion: the probable future is a demographic stabilization and not an uncontrolled explosion²⁸. There are, however, real risks to world food security, the main ones being: the generalization of the conventional farming system of pure (unassociated) crops, intensive in chemical fertilizers and pesticides which threatens fertile lands which are still fragile; the generalization of the Western model of meat food, when 2/3 of agricultural land in the world is already devoted to breeding or producing feed for livestock; according to the FAO, there is a real risk of global food shortage due to the decline in biodiversity, particularly that of insects, which is the basis of our food systems around the world; global warming reduces arable land and soil fertility.

The solutions go through the transformation of the agricultural and food model: it has been shown that organic farming and protecting the environment can feed humanity better than conventional farming²⁹ and that knowledge-intensive agroecology and permaculture have performance equal to or even better than the latter³⁰. A change in the food and agricultural model will feed the population in 2050 while respecting the environment, farmers and animal welfare³¹. These solutions go through an agriculture rooted in the territories, which covers its food and energy needs while respecting the ecosystem. It is the community that is the most favorable environment for carrying out this local peasant agriculture, where producers are in direct and daily contact with families, on the model of Japanese Teikei or French AMAPs. It must be said that one of the origins of reciprocity can be found in the millennial village farming community, where the work in the fields is carried out by the whole village on a rotating basis from one field to another. This model of mutual aid is far superior to the current practice of hiring seasonal outside workers. Irrigated agriculture is one of the origins of community agriculture, especially in Asia. The exercise of the property of communities, rural as

²⁷ https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/07/02/la-deforestation-est-une-affaire-humaine_1793032

²⁸ <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

²⁹ Badgley Catherine and al., *Organic agriculture and the global food supply, Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, Cambridge University Press, 2007 ; Jacques Caplat : *L’agriculture biologique peut nourrir le monde*, Actes Sud, 2014.

³⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291832974_Rapport_final_de_l'etude_Marai_chage_biologique_permaculture_et_performance_economique_-_Ferme_du_Bec_Hellouin_France ; <http://www.bioalaune.com/fr/actualitebio/11188/ouilagriculturebiologiquepeutnourrirmonde> ;

³¹ <http://www.reporterre.net/LagriculturededemainselonAfterresbiologiqueprosperelocaleentotalement>

urban, on cultivable land is the best solution to increase the number of citizen gardens, to rebuild ecosystems and to modify our diet. Another argument is the discovery of agroecology, in particular permaculture, which must be at the center of the agricultural model. This model can be qualified as knowledge-intensive agriculture insofar as pesticides and chemical fertilizers, which are capital-intensive, are replaced by natural agents each time specific, adapted to the soils and their environment. This “green” agriculture is only effective with communities that rebuild the social bond allowing the immense flow of knowledge necessary for the new agricultural model.

The risk posed by the global financial cartel

At the top of world capitalism is a cartel of some 30 banks that govern the world economy, the foreign exchange market, the movement of interest rates and the movement of capital³². This oligopoly, created between 1980 and 2005, has won over experts from the Treasury and Banks, and ultimately States, to the idea of achieving financial deregulation and globalization³³. It holds part of the debt securities of the States and is enriched considerably by the growth of the public debt. These banks are called “systemic” because they are so big that the failure of any one of them would be enough to collapse the world economy. This cartel today dictates the economic policy of States as well as the management of large companies which are financialized, which seek short-term monetary profit to pay large dividends to the investment funds that control them. The result of this cartel is an unparalleled global financial double bubble in stocks and bonds which creates a permanent risk of a global financial crisis, greater than that of 2007-2009. Like a black hole, this cartel feeds on financial crises: after that of 2007, it was able to be bailed out by the States for hundreds of billions of dollars, at taxpayer expense. The experts themselves admit that no one, not States, neither the EU, nor the IMF can stop this cartel, and that only “society” can perhaps do it. To sum up, the risk is twofold: permanent financial instability and repeated economic crises; a loss of sovereignty on the part of States and capitalist companies which cannot pursue autonomous strategies.

Communities seem to be an appropriate response to these risks. On the one hand, by developing non-monetary local production and exchange systems through reciprocity, or non-capitalist monetary exchanges, they succeed in exfiltrating the community economy from the grip of finance. If we succeed in ensuring by the community economy most of the basic needs based on a principle of equity, the communities will emerge from the bottom of capitalism and its inequalities and escape the associated risks. to the global financial cartel. The added value created in the communities will not increase the investment funds of the cartel. On the other hand, it appears that only a global movement of communities can lead many States to dismantle the global financial cartel, and in particular the States where these banks have their headquarters. Moreover, the exit from capitalism of thousands of communities will have weakened it beforehand: its multinational firms will lose the important market made up of community families and will see their global value chains dried up.

³² François Morin : L’hydre mondiale, l’oligopole bancaire ; Ed. Lux, 2015. Their resources represented in 2012 50,000 billion USDs, that is to say more than the debt of the 200 States of the world; the currency created by commercial banks is ten times larger than that of central banks.

³³ Benjamin Lemoine : L’ordre de la dette ; Ed. La Découverte, 2016.

The threat of global digital totalitarianism

The digital revolution has not finished disrupting our ways of working, our lifestyles, our ways of relating and of forming society. It provides exceptional service and increases the performance of human activity. It facilitates production, training and our daily lives thanks to the personal computer, the Internet, access to knowledge, robots, artificial intelligence, smartphones and even social networks. But this digital revolution also carries serious threats, which are sometimes difficult to spot. Several technological revolutions have marked capitalism: loom, steam engine, electricity, automobile, petrochemicals. Two peculiarities distinguish the digital revolution: the degree of concentration of global digital capitalism and the unparalleled depth of its penetration into household life. Three developments raise fears of global digital totalitarianism.

First, is the extreme concentration of digital power. This is the inverted pyramid effect: in the digital world, almost all of humanity relies on a few firms. Apple, Alphabet / Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Berkshire, Alibaba, Tencent, Facebook, Exxon, Johnson are the ten largest multinationals in the world, together they are worth 5,000 billion USD in market capitalization in 2017, the equivalent of the production in Japan, the world's third largest economy. This "top ten" includes 8 American and 2 Chinese companies. Seven of these firms are in the Internet economy, each with hundreds of millions of customers worldwide. This oligopoly is called GAFAM: Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft; we can add Samsung, Huawei and a few others. Never have private companies had such financial and commercial power, far greater than that of most States. They distribute their production over the entire planet, ignore borders and laws, practice large-scale tax evasion, making the world market a liquid space where nothing can stop them. They control innovation and standards in the world by systematically buying start-ups and compatible patents, the others have almost no chance of breaking through. Champions of accelerated renewal, they impose their products on us and largely define our needs. The "Tech", the digital economy, dominates global capitalism today.

The second threat is that of controlling individuals who have become captive clients. Digital power is imposing on us its computers, televisions, mobile phones, operating systems, browsers, search engines, software, clouds, data centers, social and telephone networks with the issues on the 5G, and its content with media platforms like Netflix or Amazon Prime. The oligopoly strategy is clear: Google is launching its phone, Facebook has bought Instagram, Microsoft is preparing to buy Tik Tok. Apple and Google have acquired the European anti-Coronavirus software market. Facebook is trying to create its own digital currency, Libra, which would compete with the euro and the dollar. Never have a few private interests been so important in the lives of billions of people. This accelerating and unopposed monopolization of digital power allows it to earn billions in market capitalizations at the expense of its captive clients and carries the seeds of totalitarianism.

Finally, it is the intrusive dimension of Tech that threatens us. Here we enter a set of "gray" practices, bordering on legality, to completely illegal actions. Any connected digital product represents access to the private sphere of individuals and families, which will be even more easily intrusive as it is standardized. Also, any monopoly of access to connected objects, cookies and other personal data is already a risk of intrusion. The fact that private exchanges are managed in messaging and social networks by private interests that no one controls is already a problem. The Post was a public service. The installation in smartphones of chat applications, video conferencing like Zoom and social networks like Facebook or Tik Tok gives them access to all the

images, information and data contained in these phones. Legality is violated by the frequent practices of the digital power of reselling customers' personal data. In social networks, the GAFAMs each arbitrarily practice their own ethics in matters of censorship, imposing their own "rights" on clients, which ignores any democratic vision of law. Facial recognition, another innovation with serious consequences, is a completely intrusive practice that allows access to personal data from photos of faces. The peak is reached with the installation in millions of homes of "voice assistants" who listen and sometimes record private conversations of families.

The preceding observations allow us to underline the totalitarian violence represented by the exercise, without checks and balances, of the digital power of a few over billions of customers. The digital intrusion capacity is a boon for totalitarian States, cyber terrorists, acts of espionage and war, racketeering, blackmail, media lynching and other private criminal activity. The risk is that, through extraordinary technological objects and services, a small number of private interests and certain States will be able to shape our desires, organize our overconsumption, monitor our activities and our opinions, threaten our freedoms. The private sphere is more than threatened, which is the foundation for the formation of opinions and the exercise of reason, citizenship and democracy.

This threat may increase with the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is a technology based on mimicking the human brain with artificial neural networks connected to each other. This helps replenish the brain's cognitive faculties such as "reading", learning and even creating. Of course, AI does not reproduce all the capabilities of the human brain: consciousness, free will, emotions, ethics, meanings, psychology, opinions, socio-psychoanalysis and uniqueness of individuals are essentially beyond the reach of AI. But its capabilities are infinitely superior to digital: AI can find and read its data itself, and with basic data a million times less, it can solve problems a million times more complex than digital, because it will manufacture its solution algorithms itself. The AI revolution reduces the computer to the level of the abacus. Even more than the digital revolution, the 21st century is the century of the AI revolution. It will transform the daily life of humans much more profoundly than the microprocessor and the personal computer did. Robots and learning tools, prevention of natural hazards, medical diagnosis and treatment, soil analysis and agriculture, autonomous car, water management, spatial conquest, erasure of languages, etc. AI will do more wonders than the computer has ever done. But the threat of technological totalitarianism is also multiplied. The uses of AI will develop in the laboratories of GAFAM and large multinational companies, in powerful and energy-rich economies. The power of Tech will redouble to impose on us its generations of products to be replaced every two years, to shape our needs and our lifestyles. Cross-checking of files, tracking and generalized facial recognition, deep fake, in-depth filing and mobility control in the name of marketing, threats to individual freedoms, intrusions and the risks of the erasure of the private sphere will continue and multiply. Totalitarian States will be able to consolidate themselves, and authoritarian and manipulative temptations will grow among others. Will AI and Tech give credit to the Philosopher Raymond Aron, who wondered whether democracy would have been nothing but an enchanting parenthesis?

Yet the digital future is not written, the worst-case scenario is not fatal. It is possible to escape submission to Tech. The control and regulation of digital technology can gain momentum under pressure from society and States. The overconsumption of digital objects can give way to reasoned use. Linux is not dead and technological variety can flourish again thanks to the inventiveness of decentralized engineers and creators.

Just as we have learned to eat better, as we are discovering low-carbon and peaceful mobility, we will invent non-capitalist, sober and convivial digital diversity. Communities are the effective instrument for society to regain the initiative over this oligopoly. Labfabs and startups will be able to prosper thanks to the reciprocity that favors exceedingly small businesses. Digital totalitarianism massifies in the extreme the citizens transformed into profiles and identifiers; the liquefied societies become simple databases. Building communities will allow societies to regain variety, consistency and capacity for action. Better still: AI offers opportunities for decentralization, for the return of skills and initiatives to society, to those below. Thinking and innovative units that communities can become are able to capture AI in equivalents of laptops and smartphones. They will thus be able to offer technological alternatives, escape the monopoly of Tech, develop not only competitive products, but also technical centers, research activities of international level, and even “outside” universities, training and diplomas. higher education. In this way, AI may help transferring skills and tasks to society that are now reserved for the State.

Political risks arising from the legitimacy crises of regimes after 1945

Added to the risk of digital totalitarianism is the erosion of post-war democratic regimes. This erosion is manifested by the withdrawal of around 50% of voters from the electoral game and by the rise of populist movements. The hardly renewed political supply from parties with ideological foundations and locked in partisan logic and apparatuses, as well as strong electoral absenteeism are eroding representative democracy as a republican model. The mechanisms of democracy allowing the expression of opinions and the representation of interests are increasingly working poorly. Its contamination by social networks adds totalitarianism to social relations when it manifests the primacy of beliefs over reason, a violent intolerance to different opinions and a culture of hatred and stigmatization. These attacks on democracy weaken the legitimacy of elected powers, whatever they may be, and therefore the capacity of States to deal with problems and risks. However, the climate emergency and the profound changes in society, present and future, make the regulatory political function even more necessary. The threat of digital totalitarianism adds to the urgency of the situation, to the populations' need to regain autonomy and openness to others. It increases the risk that societies will lose the know-how of together living and openly tear each other apart.

The creation of thousands of communities seems to be the answer that is needed to face the totalitarianism of digital and AI, and restore confidence in politics and democracy, to restore a full and active society, and a capacity to live together. Populations and families will be able to find a daily environment that is familiar to them, which does not add worry but, on the contrary, confidence and friendliness. The community economy with reciprocity protects the basic needs of its members from capitalism and its threats. The community of interest among members confers strong social cohesion that facilitates mastery of the largely unpredictable effects of the digital revolution and artificial intelligence, and their use as a social bond.

Based above all on direct contacts, the community reintroduces transparency. It makes it possible to rebuild true links, to escape rumors and beliefs and to rebuild a private sphere there, a condition of freedom and citizenship. The political function is regenerated around the management of the real common problems of daily life; it makes it possible to relearn to listen, to accept different opinions, to debate and to argue. The exercise of community conduct in a direct democracy capable of bringing out a common will and of having it applied is the best crucible of democracy. The political

crisis and the uncertainties associated with the digital revolution and AI put the role of steering in society at the forefront. It is about leading an unprecedented change in its depth and speed, to face multiple global risks, without losing social cohesion. This is exactly the description of the political function in society which can only be reconstructed by descending into the communities. The community helps to build and preserve an inclusive society. It is the condition for making society a thinking and acting force. This citizenship that is being rebuilt from the bottom-up will be consolidated through the expression of opinions and preferences on national issues managed by States and through the global dialogue of communities on global commons.

The challenges linked to demographic imbalances and migrations

A growing number of experts believe that the demographic shock that awaits the planet by 2050 will be even greater than the current digital shock. This shock has two dimensions: the overall demographic change and that in the age structure of the populations of each country³⁴. China, Japan and Russia would lose 38 million, 20 million and 15 million respectively, and Europe would stagnate at a minus 5 million. On the other hand, North America would gain 75 million inhabitants, India 334 million, and Africa 1,300 million, including 130 million for North Africa. Even if Africa is then making a real economic take-off, we can expect strong migratory pressure on Europe in terms of push, especially from neighboring North Africa. This is without counting possible waves of political refugees from the Levant or South Asia and future climate refugees. The declining countries, on the contrary, will face a very strong ageing of their populations. Europe will see its population over 65 grow by 50 million and will therefore face very important new needs. But above all, Europe will lose 50 million workers by 2050. This means that in order to keep its level of wealth, its standards of living, Europe should welcome tens of millions of people in working age: that is the migratory pressure in terms of pull.

This double challenge of the ageing of the population and the welcoming of outsiders is particularly critical for European societies, which are proving to be ill prepared. The organization of society in communities can respond effectively to this challenge, it is perhaps the only possible answer. If nothing changes in individualized Western society, these 50 million seniors will either cram into specialized establishments where non-variety creates considerable sociological problems and where epidemics are wreaking havoc, or else sink into isolation which is their main cause of death. Community societies around the world have part of the solution with extended families housing their elders: the first instinct of a child who marries and builds his house is to plan to house his elderly parents there. Urban apartment living does not always make these situations possible, but the principle of community assistance has led to the invention of many solutions for the socialization of seniors to prevent segregation or isolation. The community based on the economy of reciprocity is also the best instrument to allow societies to welcome the few hundred thousand to several million foreigners necessary to maintain productive activities and the standard of living and to preserve the right of asylum. The mechanism of reciprocity, by nature, means that the wealth of the community rests on the number and variety of know-how of its members. The community is the most inclusive form of social organization, the most open to new

³⁴ Europe 2050 : Suicide démographique, Question d'Europe n°462, Fondation Robert Schuman 2018, <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/fr/questions-d-europe/0462-europe-2050-suicide-demographique>

members. It also has the advantage of pedagogy, of making immediately visible what the community gains by welcoming new members, while populations may doubt it at the macroeconomic level.

The risks of global viral epidemics linked to zoonoses

Zoonoses are diseases grown in wild animals and transmitted to domestic animals and humans. There are approximately 5,400 species of mammals that naturally harbor 460,000 species of viruses, the majority of which are harmless to humans. These viruses sometimes leave their natural host called their “reservoir” - for example the bat for the Ebola virus in Liberia and the Covid-19 in China, or the rodent *Calomys* for the Chapare virus in Bolivia - to disperse between several species. Viruses are also spread in species that serve as a “dead end” where the virus is destroyed, or accepted but not transmitted, such as some snails for bilharzia. There is then a “dilution effect” of the pathogen. But sometimes these viruses arrive in “competent” species, which will transform the virus to adapt it to humans, for example the civet for SARS or the pangolin for Covid-19, or even monkeys, cattle and domestic animals: we then witness a zoonosis, a disease that affects humans, often hemorrhagic fever or respiratory syndrome.

These zoonoses have always existed all over the world but often retained a local dimension, washing up in a few tropical villages, or regional when the conditions for propagation are not met. But sometimes, depending on the environment and human behavior, near cities and metropolitan areas, the zoonosis becomes international or global: it is a pandemic³⁵. There have always been pandemics of microbes, viruses or parasites. But for fifty years the pandemics have multiplied: malaria, HIV, Ebola, dengue, Zika, chikungunya, Lassa fever, Sars, H5N1, H1N1, MERS, Lyme disease, avian influenza, Covid-19; this is called “the great acceleration”. What is going on? Behind every zoonosis, there is human action. Capitalist extractivism is all about making nature something that belongs to humans, when in fact they are part of nature. This extractivism manifests itself first in the destruction of natural environments and the deforestation for the benefit of intensive industrial monocultures in order to produce ever more cattle and soybeans to feed them. Instead of making viruses regress, the destruction of biodiversity increases the risk of epidemics by slowing down the dilution effects caused by the disappearance of the species that act as a barrier between viruses and humans. Likewise, when we deforest, carrier animals lose their habitat and get closer to domestic animals and cities. Poor development, industrial agriculture, intensive livestock farming, urbanization, mass tourism, the explosion of air transport, global hyper connection bring together species that would never have met naturally, and cause pandemics. We believed that antibiotics and vaccines had eliminated infectious

³⁵ Antoine de Ravignan : Biodiversité, Derrière l'épidémie, la crise écologique, Alternatives Economiques, 30 March 2020. <https://www.alternatives-economiques.fr/users/antoine-de-ravignan>

ANFIBIA : Coronavirus : La destruction des écosystèmes par l'humain favorise l'émergence d'épidémies, Buenos Aires, 28 March 2020

<https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/coronavirus-la-destruction-des-ecosystemes-par-lhumain-favorise-lemergence-depidemies>

Collective : La prochaine pandémie est possible, rompons avec le déni de la crise écologique, Libération, 8 April 2020 <https://www.liberation.fr/auteur/20696-un-collectif-d-ecologues>

diseases, we realize that humans do not control everything: it is nature's revenge. The real solution is the action of populations and communities to enrich biodiversity, protect and enrich natural environments in order to restore nature to its rightful place.

More pandemics will come, we must be prepared to live with this threat. We must therefore learn some lessons from Covid-19. Today, the momentum of solidarity in the face of the Coronavirus is fantastic, admirable. Never has the need for profound change been so shared and ideas are flowing. The generous heart asks only to beat again in daily actions. We dream of real, profound, lasting change. How can communities to be built meet these aspirations? On the one hand, they are entirely based on the values of solidarity and assistance, collective action and support for the most vulnerable. We find in the conduct of the community the same sensations as during confinement, the same pleasure of altruism. On the other hand, to last, the energy of generosity needs to transform into positive action, into a common project that is concrete and immediate, palpable. The construction of thousands of communities on a human scale, in neighborhoods and villages, meets this need. The celebrations of the courage of caregivers, the recognition of the indispensable role of the “invisibles”, cashiers, delivery workers, cleaners, nursing assistants etc. reveal among the population a demand for social justice and a revision of professional status. There is no more radical response than that of the reciprocity community where all efforts are equivalent, where all activities are useful and therefore receive the same remuneration.

The community also helps prevent long-term social risks. Indeed, the repetition of pandemics and the confinements of entire sections of humanity may lead to a future of extreme individualism where the capsule housing will become the only refuge, with many deaths outside, for humans who have become termites connected with other capsules³⁶. This tendency to withdraw, to exclude and to reject others has already manifested itself punctually during Covid 19. It threatens society, and ultimately humanity. Building communities is the best antidote to this poison by building strong open social nuclei, connected to each other and carrying strong social ties.

5 - THE CITIZEN COMMUNITY, MORE THAN AN OPTION: A NECESSITY

Climate disruption, ecosystems and biodiversity, food security, global financial cartel, digital totalitarianism, crisis of democracies, demographic risks, repeated pandemics: these eight major risks of the 21st century will not follow each other but overlap. The combination of a few acute crises can take humanity away. Faced with each of these risks, building communities appears to be an effective response. If we consider all these risks, communities are no longer an option, but a necessity.

Humans find themselves in the situation of the sorcerer's apprentice today. By claiming that the market economy can self-regulate if it is placed above society and out of its control, they have set in motion mechanisms that they cannot stop and that risk drowning them. This loss of control by humans is explained by the existence of global private capitalist firms stronger than States, and oligarchic States dominating almost powerless household-consumer markets. Conveying the myth of the necessary autonomy of the economy, firms rushed into open spaces in the name of the free market. At the end of the 20th century they even attempted to condemn by courts measures taken by States that presumably would harm their superior private interests, as in the

³⁶ Fanny Parise : <https://theconversation.com/le-confinement-une-transition-vers-de-nouveaux-modes-de-vie-134616> et https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/entry/scenario-coronavirus-nouveau-monde_fr_5e970fdac5b6ead14005c396

Multilateral Agreement on Investment attempt³⁷, or about the Ambassador Bridge!³⁸ What emerges today is a “deregulated” global space where these firms and these oligarchic States circulate to their advantage natural resources, food, digital products, technologies, manufactured products, the Internet, capital, medicines, fake news, populations, viruses and infectious agents. Silicon Valley's slogan is “one network, one world”³⁹.

The strength of the community is that it is both a creator of social bond and a pole of autonomous production that escapes capitalism and shrinks its living space. The community makes it possible to carpenter societies where individuals have been crushed by capitalism and States. Humans can become actors of their own destiny in strong societies cemented by mutual aid and assistance, by trust and friendliness. The social contract of the small society that is the community restores vitality to democracy and helps to build the large society by structuring it. It gives the States room for action, relieved of the prerogatives guaranteed by the communities.

Faced with capitalism, communities are again segmenting and diversifying consumption patterns and global deregulated spaces, allowing humans to gradually regain control of global risks, in the transparency of local havens protected from global immensities. Faced with the uniformity of a deregulated and liquid global space and the risks it entails, communities are reintroducing diversity which acts as a global stabilizer. They enable the central authorities to take into account the variety of situations, and to finalize with the communities the investments to be made or the adaptation of the policies.

Active communities are also more powerful in successfully conveying their preferences to States. They achieve globalization from below: their global network can exert increasing pressure on lobbies and States to reduce CO2 emissions, put an end to deforestation and extractivism, to meat farming, digital totalitarianism or financial oligopoly. In sufficient numbers, the reciprocity communities can de-bone multinational firms by proximity and dry up their standardized markets. They will engage directly in concerted actions to defend the global commons.

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³⁷<https://www.oecd.org/fr/investissement/accordssurlinvestissementinternational/accordmultilateralsurlinvestissement.htm>

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