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CoVid 19 – 10 proposals for more resilient people & territories

The CoVid-19 pandemic that is hitting the world today is an upheaval and a challenge to us all. And rightly so, since in order to avoid the recurrence of similar situations in the future, we will have to drastically change the way our societies function. Our ways of living must shift, as must our relationship with living things – both human and non-human – for we are all linked by a community of destinies on the planet.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, episodes of avian and swine flu or coronavirus infections (SARS in 2003, MERS in 2012, and now SARS-CoV-2 in 2019-2020) have multiplied, each time with increasingly severe consequences for humanity and for the functioning of civilisation. Our lifestyles, and the current organisation of our societies, have rendered us particularly vulnerable to these threats:

- We have multiplied the industrialised breeding of livestock, often from a very limited number of genetic strains; they are kept in over-concentrated numbers; we regularly treat them with the same preventive and curative antibiotics which are used for humans; after assimilation, the antibiotics are dispersed in nature without it being possible to anticipate the effects of this practise.
- Although our water supply and purification systems have become efficient with respect to the physico-chemical parameters of water quality, they are nonetheless relatively ineffective with regard to microbial life.
- Our Western vision and administration of public health has focussed on normative and sanitary health issues, and on curative medicine, leaving aside whole areas of the systemic dimension of human and environmental health, whether it be anticipation, prevention, early detection and response to ecosystem imbalances and damage.
- Deforestation, soil degradation, as well as human control over wetlands have all undermined the natural barriers between wild fauna and flora and human habitats, but also greatly disturbed the balance of primary environments, generating flagrant imbalances through their pollution and degradation.

This vision, which has prevailed in governance bodies and in the structuring of public policies over the last fifty years, is not universal. In North and South America, Africa, Oceania and Asia, traditional knowledge, often associated with indigenous peoples, is structured around this holistic approach to human and ecosystem health. This has made it possible to develop a vision more strongly focussed on anticipation than on reparation, which is sorely lacking today. And this at a time when the combined efforts of medicine and the human development of our societies have made it possible to achieve – from the 19th to the 21st centuries – such progress in quality of life that we likely would not have dared to hope for 150 years ago.



The urgency is now to remedy the situation. And we express all our solidarity with the authorities, health care personnel, researchers, and all those who participate generously and selflessly in the collective effort.

The time has also come, now and in the coming weeks, to shape the first building-blocks with which to reconstruct more resilient societies, to avoid wasting essential energy trying to rebuild unstable or vulnerable systems, and to put in place, with the right degree of effort, the basic elements for a more peaceful world.

The current situation, both in France and in the rest of the world, has highlighted numerous vulnerabilities, which we still need to clarify, formalise and resolve:

The emergency response is not sufficiently prepared, both in terms of locating strategic know-how and anticipating the challenges, requiring a real investment in territorial foresight, oriented towards resilience and action.

Our relationship with living things, whether it be animal husbandry for human consumption or the degradation of soils, is – far beyond ethical and global sustainability concerns – a key vulnerability for the human species, including for the current generation, which means that we must urgently commit ourselves to major structural change.

Pollution of all environments, particularly water, air and soil, are all factors in the spread or exacerbation of pandemics.

Our attitudes towards human health in Europe have focussed on curative medicine, and even on the administration thereof, yet Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union insists on promoting the well-being of people – and their access to food and land – so as to make our peoples and territories safe and secure as regards these essential issues.

Until now, all these vulnerabilities were known and identified, specified by scientific sources, communicated by whistle-blowers, disseminated by the conscientious... but often not taken seriously, and not consolidated in a systemic vision which highlights risks, interdependencies, and the potential consequences of disruptions in cascade. However, we now see – including when taking an approach of continued activity, enduring systemic risks, and post-disaster remediation planning – the importance of considering these vulnerabilities in a transversal and integrated way, and the resulting disruptions, which are neither coincidental, nor theoretical.

In various countries, including in France, the occurrence of this pandemic coincided with local elections. This implies the programming and effective implementation of resilience strategies, adaptation and mitigation plans, and other mechanisms for building more resilient urban and local territories at the local level. The challenge being, quite simply, for the human species to live more serenely on this planet, during this generation, and to pass on a habitable planet to future generations.

For three years now, this message has been tirelessly repeated by the IPCC reports, during climate strikes, and in repeated speeches by the Secretary General of the United Nations... This is not a philosophical, forward-looking policy for future generations, but relates instead to a need for an action plan over the next 2-10 years, which responds to a current emergency, and must therefore be supported by facts, and prescribe a specific change of direction.

This leads us to provide the following recommendations.

1. Resilience is a highly territorialised notion, which must be discussed and implemented at the territorial level, through a strategy, a blueprint and an implementation plan known to all and applied by each and every one of us.
2. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form a structuring framework around which to build this territorial resilience programme. As such, they must serve as a basis for the construction of any public policy, from the territorial to the supranational level, and be complemented by a structured approach to the management of systemic and sovereign risks, possibly networked within a UN institution for better collective foresight.
3. Human health, like that of ecosystems, is essential to humanity's survival. It must be the focus of a cross-cutting, forward-looking and operational mobilisation, associating traditional knowledge, science, medicine, innovation and big data, enabling us to anticipate the issues at stake and provide an appropriate early response, beyond the strict curative measures. This must be done in a coordinated manner, from the territorial to the supranational level (Europe in particular) .
4. Food must be reviewed and territorialised, in a logic of increased resilience. This can be done via market gardening, field crops, seaweed farming, and aquaculture, as well as fishing and livestock farming. The goal must be to feed the population while preserving the natural environment, and ecosystem balance. In particular, an emergency plan for animal husbandry is required in order to increase the diversity of species and genetic strains. A major change in husbandry practices, limiting overcrowding and the use of antibiotics is also necessary, as is the generalisation of agro-ecological principles, notably through multispecies polyculture and a drastic reduction in inputs.
5. The preservation of the environment, in terms of quantity, quality and ecological continuity, is becoming a priority, particularly as regards air, water and soil, in order to avoid the spread of viruses due to natural barriers that have already been exceeded. The WHO criteria are a good starting point for this, considering that exceeding them is not an inevitable consequence of our way of life, but rather a serious alteration that needs to be remedied immediately.
6. Urban and territorial structuring is becoming an essential part of resilience, especially for medium-sized cities. The structuring of the urban ecosystem must render the development of solidarity and synergies possible, but also to build multi-specific cooperation capable of developing a collective dynamic that is more robust than each individual dynamic. In metropolises as different as Wuhan, Paris and New York, we are

seeing amplification phenomena linked to excessive over-concentration and the absence of "resilience sluices", even though concepts such as the "quarter-hour city" make rebuilding these resilience sluices feasible.

7. The energy future must be accelerated, by making concentrated energy production schemes obsolete, in order to accelerate, via energy efficiency, the generalisation of 4D energies (Deconcentrated, Diversified, Decarbonated, Democratic), which enables local resilience to be built through the development of energy/material and energy/waste loops, the development of the circular economy, and the capacity of each individual to become an actor in his or her own energy supply while making the most of existing infrastructures.
8. Taxation must evolve to be in line with the ecological transformation of our societies, leaving its basis on work to become an energy/material taxation, taxing the assault on the planet's resources or their alteration, and making it possible to maximise the triple performance (ecological, social and economic) created on the territory.
9. Finance must take up and amplify the momentum initiated by the Paris Accord in 2015 at COP 21 but too imperfectly followed. This should be done notably through the establishment of a regenerative economy, allowing for the recovery of ecosystems through economic performance; taxation on financial transactions, encouraging the territorialisation of investment; an immediate suppression of any investment or public funds given to fossil energies; and a differentiation of public aid opportunities according to the ecological or humanistic performance of the investment.
10. Such changes cannot take place without a far-reaching Legal Transition, which repositions humans within ecosystems; reaffirms the primacy of the continuity of the human species, and of the global commons, as well as of human issues over economic and short-term interests; accompanies the shift towards a model that develops the link between the local, national and supranational levels through synergies and operational cooperation; encourages serene cohabitation between humans and non-humans; and makes the health and integrity of all essential values of our societies. Various tools, such as the Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Mankind, make the acceleration of this transition possible.

In these particularly difficult and intense times, our thoughts go out to all those who are suffering, to those who are working to save lives, to heal the living, and to restore ecosystems.

We wish everyone to be able to swiftly find a more serene way of life, and encourage you to immediately implement at the territorial level, the reflections and action plans that will accelerate the ecological transformation from vulnerability to resilience, of which we all have an urgent, specific and existential need.

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