

35 Proposals for a Return to Earth



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Introduction: Change must come now

The COVID-19 pandemic, or more precisely the ways in which many countries attempt to respond to it, allows us to weigh the stakes each of us face today. The matter is a genuine turning point in civilization with a mutually shared foundation from which new hardships to our democracy — the game of majority and opposition — can unfold and take shape in new ways. What is the shared foundation?

The pandemic: A result of our relationship to nature

What everyone thought to be impossible — a partial halt to economic activity — has been imposed upon nearly every

nation on Earth. In the face of a pandemic that leads to a horrible death by suffocation, with no mass testing, treatment, vaccine, or certainty on all possible modes of transmission, there is no other way to prevent the spread of the virus than a near universal quarantine. Even the most obstinate individuals, who follow the rhetoric of Trump and Johnson, have had to accept one. Nature got the better of our economies and absurd ways of consumption.

Reference to nature here is not just a rule of thumb. Coronavirus has terribly reminded us of our vulnerability, namely our animality, bringing us all back to our biological human condition. It's back to nature because this crisis is of environmental origin. Coronavirus is one of those zoonotic diseases that has been multiplying for decades as we've destroyed our ecosystems, hence the habitat of certain species coming into closer contact with our own habitats, and just as we eliminate wild biodiversity as much as the genetic diversity of domesticated species, we destabilize the equilibrium between populations and facilitate the circulation of pathogens. Additionally, we've largely ignored the importance of "biological succession" that takes place and connects us to the biological successions of other life forms, that of animals and plants (like commensal bacteria, ascarids, parasites and symbiosis).

The effects of climate change privilege the expansion of infectious diseases that jump species, like the Chikungunya or Zika viruses. A species of wild rodent, spared from any pathological effects itself, was the original host of COVID-19. The virus was destined to reach us and wreak havoc, likely by way of pangolin, an intermediary species coveted in Chinese medicine for its scales (and thus gravely endangered). Thus, it is Nature, and specifically our destructive actions toward it, that have forced a situation upon us whose radical nature also determines the degree of radicality with which we must respond.

Climate change: A result of our relationship to nature

Now we face an analogous situation and are since confronted with the effects of an ensemble of degrading ecosystems, climate change being the principal force. These degradations have achieved an unprecedented rate, and nothing has signalled a decrease. Numerous countries have even designated at their head leaders who share a common denial of environmental crises, from Trump to Bolsonaro, not forgetting Modi, Xi Jinping, Putin, and others. On the plan of action, denial is almost universal. Extinction events, plastic pollution, land degradation, the grave effects of climate change starting to unfold — the common refrains are well known. Though climate change could be the one to set the pace of our global response.

The average temperature of Earth's surface is 1.1°C, higher than the average during the latter half of the 19th century, and according to one of the most recognized calculations, from the Pierre Simon Laplace Institute, the temperature is likely to reach 2°C by 2040 due to emissions just from our essential needs. That's serious.

Remember that with just 1°C of warming, we'll witness a near systematic apparition of Category 5 hurricanes, extraordinary flooding, massive wildfires, high temperatures never before seen,^[2] and massive droughts. Rice and sorghum summer harvests in southern Australia have diminished by 66%. At more than 2°C warming, certain regions near the equator will see multiple days per year where intense heat and humidity will saturate the body's thermoregulation to the point where it will be impossible, without refuge in a cooler place after 7 to 8 minutes, to maintain a body temperature of 37°C and stay alive. At a temperature elevation of 3.5 to 4°C, such heat waves will last weeks and extend beyond the tropics. The issue at hand is nothing short of maintaining the habitability of Earth for the human species and other forms of life.

Beyond the brutal halt, we need to slow-down

At the mercy of a situation like COVID-19, the stakes have been raised that call for a change nothing short of *radical*: namely a sharp decline over the next ten years, effective immediately, of our destructive practices as well as our carbon emissions, that should be reduced by at least half to achieve, at the very least, carbon neutrality by mid-century.^[3]

In other words, instead of racing back to economic growth, it would be better to slam on the breaks — for the long run — by reducing our energy consumption, and over time, our consumption overall. The pandemic showed us that an abrupt slowdown was possible worldwide, but the effort of slowing down that is to follow will be much more difficult than a momentary halt to activity. It must be a structural halt, too.

Thus, the reason for which it would be better to establish a rate of economic growth that is compatible with the rhythm of the biosphere, which means a global consumption that is lesser to that of one planet.^[4] Why less? To allow a margin of regeneration of ecosystems and agroecosystems that we will have destroyed. It's a significant declaration that will oblige us to live definitively without global economic growth. This calls for a turning point in our civilization.

Thus, well beyond what the global economic shutdown during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, we will have other opportunities to profoundly change our ways of life, which naturally implies a total restructuring of the modes of production.

A total restructuring, a turning point for civilization

We will need to transform the ways of life of the richest countries, such as ours, simply because the causes of the destruction of our ecosystems are nothing other than our levels of consumption of energy resources, minerals, fishing, soil, water, biomass, etc. And get this: the richest 10% of the world's population emit half of all greenhouse gases, while the poorest half of the world's population are responsible for just 10% of these emissions.^[5]

Thus, it's a collaboration of new ways and approaches to living, likely those that are low-tech, toward which it would be best to orient ourselves. A profound transformation of the modes of production would take place, aimed mostly at infrastructures (and less at virtual ones), with fewer material goods that could be shared, repaired and recycled, ensuring that repair stations are easily accessible to anyone. High-tech commodities that require excessive material and energy will be avoided.

Our urban spaces must also be re-fitted to make cities liveable in the hot weather^[6] that will consume our summers, with the creation of vegetated sidewalks and paved walkways — just to cite one example.

With modernity, we've looked to ascend from old-world poverty. We've always aimed to produce more. Against the wishes of John Stuart Mill in the 19th century, we haven't been able to reach a sort of equilibrium. To the point of absurdity, we sought after material wealth that has been the source of an explosion of inequality over the last forty years with regards to wealth distribution globally and within each country; despite the middle class in countries rising out of poverty. We've since been threatened with a return to the *old world*, in the form of a scorching desert.

Modern consensus was built on the vital production of wealth and the necessity to distribute it. We tore each other apart for the most optimal means of production and clashed over the redistribution criteria of wealth.

Today, it's about reaching an accord on how best to reduce and redistribute production, to close the wealth gap. Under these circumstances, there still will be room for democratic debate; for instance, we can argue upon the degree to

which income inequalities must be limited, or upon the level of production decrease or which type of production should be kept and which ones dropped. .

Let's remember that in the long run, under these circumstances, there is no conflict of interest: we can all agree that to continue on the current trajectory would result in an uninhabitable planet for the entirety of living species.

The lethal danger behind a “Back to normal”

At present, the variety of ways in which *the after* is envisioned are hardly reassuring and are reminiscent of the fallout from the economic crisis of 2008-2009. Thus, is the temptation strong to “return to normal,” just worse. Hospitals are “restructured” with the intention of “optimizing of public health services” — as hundreds of jobs and beds are cut — in the Grand Est^[7], but even in north of Paris, where hospitals are already underserved. Traditional economists are already making their cries for an “economic restart” and “all bets on growth,” prioritizing the economy over the environment. On the legislative end, one can already hear the calls for “structural reform” and an intensification of “austerity measures” as more necessary than ever to “soak up the debt.”

It is often these very approaches from a board of experts in press conferences, news channels “sound the alarm” to warn against the harmful effects of a certain “punitive environmentalism,” or punitive restrictions on resource use.

These self-proclaimed “realists,” who see “reality” as an abstraction never before seen in human history, made of meters, spreadsheets, nanoseconds and pure speculations (not by philosophers, but traders), must be reminded of the few well-established facts in which everyone during this public health crisis has been able to experience, sometimes painfully.

For the same reasons that it took two summers worth of gruelling heat waves for the general population to see the impacts of climate change for themselves, we have seen and felt the disastrous effects of the irrational General Public Policy Review (RGPP) and other devices of neoliberal public management that invests everything into the “stream” at the detriment of the “stocks.” And because there were never any stocks of tests, masks, or hand sanitizer, the whole country had to be placed under quarantine. As we looked to save millions of euros in a stable economy, by betting on things going well and debilitating the welfare state, we've burned through hundreds of billions of euros; because the world is full of surprises and the logistics of Just-in-Time production that manages the stocks doesn't allow for the slightest mishap.

To those who, in the face of stringent measures taken to “flatten the curve” (and now, the climate curve) are tempted to cry “punitive environmentalism,” remember that the punishment is already here: mass death from contamination, worldwide quarantine, a brutal economic halt, and millions of euros gone to waste, topped with a general deprivation of basic liberties and fundamental rights. Who, in these conditions, can still speak of punitive environmentalism without sounding ridiculous?

Remember that the necessary sacrifices to reduce the effects of global climate change were deemed unacceptable. We were told that to reduce our excessive consumption, to cut down on extravagant expenses, to cease production of useless objects and give up our gleaming, powerful SUVs and air travel was unacceptable. We were told that growth was non-negotiable. What a mistake that was.

When one sees the sacrifices and the renunciations that (almost) everyone takes on during quarantine, we realize that

everything was already possible. Do we need to remember the 48,000 individuals that die each year in France from air pollution, the 15,000 fatalities from the effects of unemployment, and the heatwave in 2003 that had a death toll of 19,000?

To return to normal and “jumpstart” the economy to the way it was before would mean that we have not only failed to learn from the catastrophes, but above all else that we *decided to leave these people to die*. And that’s what’s unacceptable.

The following propositions are meant to contribute to structural changes in our democratic and economic institutions.

A vision and an agenda

The objective is to adopt, with general consensus, a new course for our civilization; whose key features include:

- **ECONOMY** – produce fewer goods (sobriety) more efficiently (productivity), so that our economies fall within the limits of our planet’s capacity and function regeneratively rather than destructively; tighten the wealth gap
- **STATE** – reorganize representation to enhance the democratic process, protect public interests and common goods; give public service a new meaning

There are naturally other versions of these objectives with specific measures that can help achieve them. In the spirit of changing hands of power, anyone is free to propose other versions of these objectives and the measures to put in place.

We’ve decided to propose these measures that center around the State. Of course, this is compatible with the approach of a participatory government (and all the corresponding initiatives of civil society) that we also encourage. But we assume that these “grassroots” democratic processes must lean on state support. With the following measures, we provide ourselves with powerful instruments to genuinely change the way things are.

Some of the reforms that we propose could be, as far as possible, immediate, while others will require time, like the reorganization of international trade and de-globalization, and others yet call for a dynamic and progressive implementation, like a ceiling on consumption and the reduction of inequality.

Toward a “realistic” economy that services the common good (18 measures)

The degradation of our ecosystems is the result of the exploitation of energy and materials upon which our current lifestyles are founded, that propel the invasion of the farthest corners of the planet. The following propositions aim to collectively reduce the destructive potential of our activities and ways of life. They equally aim to reconcile this objective with a qualitative amelioration of wellness and social justice that is based on the recognition of the equal dignity of all human beings. Awareness of these matters obliges us to transform our ways of life by incorporating tools that allow one to measure the degree to which our lifestyles are destructive and to consequently place limitations, such as an ecological footprint and quotas on individual consumption.

Measure n°1 – In order to do this, we’ll need **robust indicators** based on the

ecological and energy consequences of our levels of production and their negative

impacts on human well-being.^[8] In Europe, a small emergence of this discourse can be observed, even within the conservative right-wing.

Measure n°2 – **Expand the return to local economies through coordinated and**

cooperative protectionism at the international level. This relocalization will allow for a more effective monitoring of the flow of energy and material goods at the regional scale; and a more effective evaluation of their impacts on ecosystems. The objective here is to succeed at obtaining an ecological footprint inferior to one planet (the preliminary objective being 1.5 planets within ten years), as it is necessary to stimulate the regenerative capacity of our ecosystems. Internationally. There exists a dual indicator that combines the Ecological Footprint with the Planet's Boundaries, that could be adopted at the regional level.^[9] First and foremost, what's important is to engage in a dynamic that progressively reduces our ecological footprint.

Among the first that must be relocalized are sectors that are essential to survival, such as the food supply, goods relevant to the medical and public health sectors, energy, electricity, and the internet (necessarily at the European scale) and naturally defense.

Measure n°3 – **Corporate governance reform: their social purpose must include**

a contribution to the common good. Companies would be subjected to a reduction of their ecological footprint and their accounting would take into account the global dynamics of the ecological footprint and ecosystems. In order to do this, companies would adopt an accounting system of three capital resources: classic assets, social capital and natural capital, neither of the three being fungible (no compensation nor offsets would be possible).^[10] This process, associated with the necessary corporate governance reform (to make it more democratic), will make the "Social and Solidarity Economy for an ecological transformation"^[11] principles the standard for all companies of all sectors of production (internalizing negative externalities, participation and autonomy)^[12]

Industry regulations also need to change with regards to shareholder transparency, so that it's publicly known who is financing what. Pierre Samuel already proposed this in 1970.

Measure n°4 – **Energy-Resource Accounting and the establishment of**

energy-resource quotas per individual (that varies based on geographic situation and required fixed expenses). It's about progressively setting a democratic ceiling on energy-resource consumption (notably the consumption of fossil fuels, CO₂ emitters). Such ceilings could be put into place not only for direct energy purchases, but for all products (each product would be labeled with the energy-resource "price"^[13] and each purchase would be recorded on personal account). The quota would be calculated by bioregion according to the following formula: ecological footprint = 1/number of inhabitants of the bioregion. These ceilings would accompany a realignment in which French citizens would be guaranteed equitable living conditions: underserved regions could receive "quota transfers" from more privileged regions, respecting a global ecological footprint inferior or equal to 1 planet over time. Without such strict, absolute and non-negotiable ceilings, it would be impossible to reduce emissions in any given territory, other than to leave the market determine the price of consumption "beyond the quota" (it's the principle of the "quota market," for example the carbon quota, developed by the British before the economic crash of 2008, where the rich could buy quotas off the poor), which would only succeed at marginalizing a large part of the population and foster further social inequality.

There is only one way in which such quotas can be traditionally administered, which is that of the commons, paired with strict rules of usage, as shown by Elinor Ostrom. Keep in mind that we're already in a situation of climatic and biological *overgrazing*.

Measure n°5 – **Energy-resource quotas, applied to all consumption, to shift**

away from a monetary economy and the domineering “price signal”. The price signal is no longer the point of reference in an economy that aims toward a generalized ceiling in which the ceilings progressively decrease to achieve the democratically determined targets: the consumption of rare goods is no longer regulated by their price, rather it's limited *a priori* and follows a principle of equity (the quotas are determined while keeping in mind the “constrained consumption” of each individual). The disparities in consumption (between the rich and poor) expand when it comes to “pure” services (the ones that rely upon labour force, and do not require any other energy or raw material) and assets. Although “pure” services are also becoming more rare (their productivity is not progressing, or at the most very little: the quantities are determined by demographic dynamics, which are constant in the short term). One could fear that these services would become more costly due to their relative rarity and that they're not available to the rich. But one must remember that disparities in revenue and assets would have a democratic boundary, and disparities in levels of consumption would be limited as well.

Measure n°6 – **Public debt: We propose that the French government cease**

paying interest on public debt accrued since 1974, the year that the Bank of

France lost its privilege to print money. The majority (70%) of French debt would be simply and entirely forgiven. The independence of the central bank and the recourse to the bond market to refinance the State was meant to prohibit the latter from exercising their right to issue currency. Rather, it was decided to delegate this role to independent entities. In hindsight, this decision appeared to be so unjustified that the central independent banks (the European Central Bank or the Federal Reserve System, for example) have recently adopted (or aimed to do so) an unorthodox monetary policy (Quantitative Easing or “Helicopter Money for People”), exact equivalents to the “money machine” that conventional economists reproached the states for operating when faced with any spending difficulty.

We're not ignoring that such a measure could penalize those who have been saving federal bonds, but we believe that it's in the interest of the greater population; currently obliged to pay taxes to ensure the payment of interest on illegitimate public debt.

Measure n°7 – We propose to **restore the financial and monetary controls back to**

the State, which is indispensable to redirecting the flow of investment and a relocalization of production and consumption. First and foremost, **an end must be put to the independence of central banks**. This measure will return the control over public money and financial services back to the state. It will be accompanied by a total or partial nationalization of the banking sector (this sector was in fact nationalized after the economic crisis of 2008 to the extent that the state acted as a guarantor as a last resort without setting a limit on the amount, not only for savings that were at risk of being lost, but even for any money self-generated by the banking sector and inverted into financial trade ventures).

Measure n°8 – We're not ignoring the resistance of certain European governments to such ideas. France will enter

negotiations with its financial partners to convince them of the urgent necessity of such a policy. Supposing that the French government didn't get their way, **it could decide to recover its monetary sovereignty, defending the conversation of the Euro in the form of a common (not "sole") currency following the proposition formerly suggested by Greece.**^[14] In this case, France would adopt a monetary policy based on monetary pluralism and an acceptance of local and complementary currencies (melting currency, dedicated currency, currency vectors, etc.) that meet the objective of social and ecological viability of production and consumption (an ecological footprint that is inferior or equal to 1 planet as well as introducing a limitation on the extent of income and property inequalities).

Measure n°9 - **Establishment of an Ecological Transition Income (ETI).**^[15] The ETI

is allocated to any natural person in exchange for activities based on ecology and social connection; compensation for these activities (such as agroecology, permaculture, artisans, low-tech) by the market is often far below their real value. The ETI takes into account the monetary and support aspects: it goes along with the establishment of a cooperative for an ecological transition (CET). A CET has three principle functions: financial by providing a conditional income, tools to assist in the development and support of projects to move through the steps of transition, mutualization of costs, practices and knowledge within any established group. Already active or emergent individuals and initiatives in the transition will also gain visibility and serve as a lever to scale up and revitalize the lands. The major interest of an ETI is to rely on people, networks, and pre-existing structures that will constitute as a cornerstone throughout the implementation of an ETI. This could take different judicial forms: a collective society of collective interest (CSCI), integrating democratic and diverse structures, such as cooperatives for labour and employment (CLE) and local businesses and communities. The first CTE was created in 2019 in the municipality of Grande-Synthe with the intention to directly contribute to the policies of regional transitions (agricultural and alimentary; the energy transition, mobility, circular economy, etc.). The next CTE is on its way to implementation in the region of Aude. The trial regions form their own network. The ETI is destined to construct new economic, social, and environmental models using a bottom-up procedure.

Measure n°10 - Naturally, as a consequence of the previous measure,

limitations on income gaps (like salaries and unearned income) will be established whose range and extent will be defined in a democratic manner by way of referendum. In the same way that the Ecological Transition Income fills the gap between a revenue deemed "minimal" and actual market compensation, the maximum income is the product of a democratic decision that forbids "over-compensation" from the market as soon as income gaps are deemed to be harmful by society. This very logic prevails in either case: the minimum and maximum incomes are democratically determined, without losing sight of each individual's value; as society makes available a wide range of tools to recognize the just value of work (honours and public responsibilities of all sorts are a just, non-monetary recognition of these very virtues and values).

Measure n°11 - **Environmental and social tax system** (exoneration of the

value-added tax and income-taxation set to a sliding scale based on energy-resource consumption). This tax system aims to encourage consumers to adopt more "virtuous" consumption patterns and will accompany the establishment of a quota system mentioned in measures 3 and 4. If an elevated quota is set first, taxation on a sliding scale based on energy-resource consumption could bring about greater consumer restraint. This solution is worthwhile as long as the

ceiling is high enough to encourage consumers to reduce their “non-virtuous” consumption, whose definition will be adjusted based on the “target ceiling” that is progressively lowered over time.

Measure n°12 – **Agriculture: Toward a decarbonized agroecology (without fossil**

fuels). There is an urgent need for the implementation of an agricultural system that is highly productive per unit of surface area and does not rely on fossil fuels. Hence, such a system will require great amounts of manpower. Such an agricultural system will require a mobilization of 15 to 30 percent of the Economically Active Population over time, in order to achieve a near-entire abandonment of fossil fuel reliance and facilitate a widespread return to muscle power (from animals or humans). This also implies the need to phase-out the use of synthetic pesticides that are harmful to biodiversity and the use of synthetic fertilizer, a staple of dependence on fossil fuel-based agriculture.

Departure from this old model is also a way to look into new ideas to transform agriculture into the first economic sector that fixes carbon, as called for by the scenarios envisioned by the IPCC, which each country accepted in France’s cherished Paris Climate Agreement. This model also includes a re-integration of trees into our agricultural practices, whether as a forest garden, agroforestry systems, or agro-pastoralism (namely this means an end to land consolidation, or “open fields” of intensive monocropping agriculture). Additionally, to avoid social stratification between individuals whose line of work consists of varied rates of hourly productivity, we suggest that this mobilization involve the ENTIRE Economically Active Population in the form of part-time agricultural labour, especially during periods where the need for a larger workforce is elevated (such as harvesting, soil preparation, weeding, etc.). The future labour system will thus be an “intermittent multi-occupation,” a system in which each individual alternates devoting their labour to phases of environmental maintenance (to which agriculture is an essential form) in addition to other forms of labour or services. This alternation will be based on democratic virtues (placing all farmers, full-time or seasonal, on an equal and cooperative footing), and cultural virtues, since it will allow for the re-establishment of a connection between all of the nation’s inhabitants and the “other society” of living species that inhabit the same lands.

Measure n°13 – **Agriculture: For a seed liberation and genetic biodiversity.** The

liberation of seeds to the public domain will make up a major element of food autonomy and security. Thanks to the work of various institutions at the national and European scale, there are, at this current moment, important advancements being made toward the rehabilitation and re-appropriation of native genetic resources (such as ancestral varieties of farmer seeds, etc.). It’s time to put an end to the current system of the seed marketplace. Farmer’s seeds will also be freed from any intellectual property rights, patents, or Proprietary Variety Certificate (PVC). It’s important to note that the current work underway (National Institute for Agricultural Research and the International Center for Agronomical Research and Development in Montpellier) tend to show that farmer seeds, unlike industrial seeds, are rich in endophytes (which are ecosystems of symbiotic microbes) that make vital contributions to plant and soil health.

No law prohibits one to re-plant seeds from their field or garden, especially if they’re public property and thus free from any intellectual property rights. However, industry privilege (to place patents on seeds) served as a springboard for them to take over unpatented farmer’s seeds and prohibit their unrestricted use. The National Inter-Branch group for Seeds and Propagating Material (GNIS) is an example of an ambiguous, two-faced authority, representing the private interests of its founding companies (Bayer, Monsanto, Dupont, Pioneers Syngenta, Limagrain, etc.) in addition

to being enlisted by the French government to regulate the official seed sector and represent France on all official operations regarding the regulation of seeds. This situation is inadmissible from an ethical standpoint and dangerous to biodiversity and undermines the future of our agriculture. We propose that an end be put to seed patents.

Measure n°14 – **Agriculture: “Reform” the Earth.** The preservation and repartition

of agricultural lands, which are disappearing at a rate in France of 1 French department every six years, is a serious matter for the sustainability of our society. Arable lands that act as guarantors of the future of our food are degrading in the face of total indifference. Land grabbing is even worse in the Global South, whose magnitude constitutes a global threat to humanity, with irreversible consequences in the short term. The appropriation and concentration of lands through monopolies have led to the destruction of small farms, the exclusion of millions of local producers from the access to land, the destruction of ecosystems, water resources, and the acceleration of climate change. Millions of small farmers have fallen victim to the evolution of agrarian structures that violate community rights and literally pillage lands by creating widespread insecurity and food shortages. And yet small farmers are ten to one-hundred times more productive per unit of land than industrial agriculture. This is true to the point that to this day small farmers feed 75% of the population with only 25% of the agricultural land and very little animal protein. In order to put an end to this downward spiral in France, rural development and land improvement companies will witness a redefinition of their operations and increased legal rights; that will include the maintenance and development of family farms (that practice agroecological polyculture), support of new farmers that wish to participate in a program of “farmland recovery,” and investigative powers that halt any operations that bypass land laws.

Measure n°15 – **An end to metropolization.** The alternating agricultural workforce

described in measure 11 will require agricultural spaces near residential areas, in order to reduce the energy required to transport people and produce (local food systems). The policies for land reconfiguration will aim to create urban spaces with an average of 300,000 inhabitants. Commute times will be reduced to the point that they are within walking or biking distance; the shorter the commute distances are, the cheaper the cost of public transportation will be for the community. The redistribution of the population throughout the land could be incentivized through an adapted environmental and social tax system (for example, property taxes could be reduced in zones that make large social and environmental contributions, and any revenue loss for the local government system — which currently collects these very property taxes — will be covered by the State). Such changes will take place over the course of decades.

Measure n°16 – **Over time, integral or mutualized public transport policy**

scaled to small collectives (passengers and luggage). Individual transport will be progressively reduced by a carbon/transport quota, which will be lowered as other public transport alternatives are made available.

Measure n°17 – **Immediate halt to fossil fuel subsidies.** This measure needs no

introduction, as neither economic rationale nor public interest can justify these subsidies, whose existence can only be traced back to intersecting interests between the state and extractive industries. Their overall profitability leads to a genuine dependence of the state on energy from fossil fuels and fosters foreign policy and overseas operations that only seek to reinforce such procurement of oil supplies.

Measure n°18 – **End tax havens.** In order to completely eradicate companies’ use

of fiscal paradises, the law must ensure penal sanctions to which company executives and shareholders may be subjected. Fiscal repatriation of company and private assets would provide the state with resources that could then be allocated to the ecological conversion (fiscal loss is currently estimated to be at 5 billion euros per year, the net assets of French nationals stored in fiscal paradises are estimated to be more than 300 billion euros).

For a state that ensures public welfare and shared resources (7 measures)

Our general goal here is to establish a democratic dynamic that will lead to a progressive transformation of institutions. We currently find ourselves at a tipping point in which it is impossible to predict how our institutions will take shape in the future. We face a responsibility to take the steps necessary to this long-term transformation.

Measure n°1 - Constitutional reform in which the first amendment pronounces

the “State as the steward to safeguard the Ecological footprint and the planet’s carrying capacity.” This amendment will be accomplished by an institutional law that will specify the levels to be maintained. As discussed previously, it is best to remain within the threshold of one planet to allow the time necessary for our ecosystems to regenerate; after reducing the current level of environmental destruction to attain an ecological footprint of 1 planet (with the interim objective of an ecological footprint of 1.5 planets within the next ten years, in alignment with the effort to reduce carbon emissions by half in that same time frame). A no-relapse rule with regards to rights of the environment will equally be integrated into the amendment. Thus, the tenet of “ecological viability” will outline the “corpus of the constitution.” An expansion of rights (non-plenary, of course) of ecosystems or their features (rivers or glaciers, for example) will also be constitutionally recognized.^[16]

Measure n°2 - Reform of legislative power that increases representation and provides means to legislate over time and complexity.

Creation of a “Chamber of the Future” that represents the concept of time

and complexity which would be introduced into the constitutional systems of the National Assembly and the Senate.^[17] This Chamber won’t be composed of elected officials but will in part draw from the Environmental Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in part from a co-optation of qualified figures (reputed for their work that favours sustainability^[18]), and in part by random draw; it will serve as a complement to the two pre-existing chambers and submit the following legal guidelines without ever having decision-making power:

1. Follow up on the work of the Law Commission with the possibility to

sound an alert if the review of a project or a proposed law is found to

contradict Article 1 of the reformed constitution (see previous measure)

1. Suspensive veto that will require the Chambers to re-discuss draft legislation.

iii. Referral to the Constitutional Court.

1. Monitor the achievements of exemplary regions in terms of ecological footprints and lifestyles in order to bring these achievements to the attention of Parliament and consider

draft legislation to allow such achievements to be realized at a greater scale.

This chamber, following the example of the other chambers with legislative power, will draw from the insights of two independent assemblies to support

its operations. First and foremost, an assembly for the future (that reunites scientists and experts in sustainability regarding climate, biodiversity, industry and society) whose role will be to evaluate and produce reports on the development of knowledge in sustainability matters. Secondly, an assembly of participation, which will be an independent agency, acting as both a procedural body and an organizational authority, whose purpose is to monitor the organization of national public debates (this branch will be a development of the current National Commission of Public Debate [CNDP]). Organizing debates on the long-term impacts of public policies, this assembly could draw from expertise provided by the assembly for the future.

The implementation of Swiss-like referendums and mandatory citizen's initiatives: their organization will depend on formal approval from the Constitutional Court that they meet constitutional prerequisites, so as to avoid that these tools are misused by political entrepreneurs wishing to exploit emotional circumstances. Furthermore, nothing prevents overruling the majority rule in certain cases (in which a decision is reached with more than 50 percent of the vote). This is what one would call a "majority judgement" or "majority appraisal", where an option isn't selected by virtue of eliminating others but by evaluating different options in order to select the most well-ranked. It's a useful procedure in that it better reflects the plurality of society and the way in which it takes into account the diversity of possible ways forward.

We could also take lesson from Brexit. If the youth vote had been allotted more weight, never would Brexit have passed. Of course, such a weight classification entirely goes against the tenet of absolute equality of the vote. But one could imagine the application of this option (through a mechanism that affords a superior weight to the votes of those with a longer life expectancy) relative to any given vote, without necessarily leading to any legal consequences. This perspective, though, would force elected officials to take into consideration what a vote really means...

Transform the Senate into an "Assembly of Bio-regions" in which each bioregion is provided autonomy to adapt to the realities of each territory's economy.

Modification of the way in which representatives are assigned seats in the fully-performing two chambers (National Assembly and the Senate) by introducing in part designation by random draw to fill up to a third of the seats. Furthermore, so that the recruitment pool for possible candidates is diversified to universal suffrage, the "elected representative statute" will be subjected to an Assembly Vote. This statute will ensure that every national politician is offered a position in public service at the end of their term. This reform avoids the possibility that staff become dissuaded from participating in an election out of fear that they won't be able to find a new job at the end of their term.

Measure n°3 - **A civil service protected from privatization and misappropriation of public funds.** Through restoring legitimacy to the work of State's civil servants in the eyes of the general population and re-associating their work with the future of the country, we propose an extension to the duration of a term to 15 years instead of 10, to prohibit private businesses or entities from purchasing components of the public sector, and to prohibit any reintegration of civil servants who decide to leave back into the public service — at the very least to positions that

hold executive powers and responsibilities. Last, we propose to abolish management that is guided by target figures and finances.

Measure n°4 – **From a welfare state to a resilience state.** A resilience state will provide a guarantee of solidarity that is proportionate to individual incomes, and protects individuals from any risks, including environmental risks. It's about changing what's on the horizon of civilization to "security," in a world on the verge of collapse, threatened by climate change and unprecedented environmental devastation. In such a world, social security becomes a fundamental value, as is the guarantee for a stable life. This value is a substitute to those which had characterized capitalist social fantasy: the hunger for "growth" and social prestige that draws from material wealth and capital accumulation:

Abolition of the French National Goal of Health Insurance Spending

(ONDAM). Shifting to a public health care that is evaluated and guided by quality rather than by cost.

Remove ceilings on health insurance compulsory payments^[19]

Pension plan reform: Return to a pay-as-you-go pension plan with fixed

benefits and contribution from all economic agents (labour AND capital) to guarantee a balanced system.

Employment guarantee: Labour (and not just employment) is an essential dimension of social life. The resilience state must guarantee everyone the opportunity to undertake an occupation: income from the "social and ecological transition" is provided under the condition that the occupation conforms to the social and ecological transition strategies (see measure 8).

Measure n°5 – **Guidelines to executive actions based on the constitutional**

objectives of strong sustainability that will underline the constitutional corpus.

These guidelines will be subject to routine evaluation on the outcomes by citizens (of an independent commission) and state officials (see French simplified joint stock company law).

Measure n°6 – **The preceding measure necessitates the re-establishment of an**

outcome-based general management (not just a "plan" but at the very least a long-term plan). Desired outcomes would be, ideally, internationally coordinated (as detailed in the following): the State will monitor the achievement of goals but give the actors of civil society full license on how they will be reached. The prime minister must be able to refer to a "National Steering Platform for the Social and Ecological Transition" made up of citizens, civil society, and companies belonging to the Ecological, Social and Solidarity Economic sector (see above measure 3 of section A), bioregions, and public civil servants.

Measure n°7 – **Research and education reform**, placing emphasis on teamwork

and creativity in education and emphasis on participatory, citizen-based research (of

course, without undermining the need for fundamental, high level public research — such reforms are needed more

than ever before). Each individual will take part in monitoring the ecosystems of their residence and observe any changes: it's about entrusting each volunteer to use proven methods to consistently conduct "nature surveys" to better evaluate the response of ecosystems to changes in economic activity. No mechanized tool can provide an idea of the "global productivity" or "global thermodynamic output" of an ecosystem. It's one of the constraints of procedures that evaluate ecological impact and economic activity (energy-resource streams). Humans must take part in the daily surveillance of the thermodynamics between the environment and the economy. This process will be of cultural value as it will result in volunteers (and potentially all citizens) observing (watching, listening, feeling) the developments in the natural society take place around them.

International Propositions (10 measures)

The propositions we've put forth at the scale of France will realize their full potential if they contribute to a coordinated **revision of the international order, in which the environment serves as both a basis and a horizon.**

First and foremost, a collective effort must be coordinated to face the health crisis and save as many human lives as possible from the devastations caused by the pandemic. This coordination can serve as an introduction to other forms of international organization that we can already outline (Phase 2), as it is equally possible to outline the central points from which a long-term "environmental convergence strategy" can be formed (Phase 3).

Phase 1: An international response to the environmental and public health crises

Measure n°1 - **A special assembly of the United Nations** to coordinate a public

health policy to respond to the crisis. This special assembly must take place with

utmost urgency that requires a strategy that goes beyond the tools and policies suggested by the World Health Organization. Immigration, economic, health, and environmental policies will all be deliberated in order to confront the multitude of crises provoked by the pandemic.

Measure n°2 - The drafting of an **international declaration**, championed by the

special assembly of the United Nations or a group of volunteer states, that takes on a "Nature" policy framework, among which coordinated trade barriers, aimed at protecting ecosystems and viable livelihoods, form the basis. This "nature policy" framework will define the rights of humans and other living species and determine the obligations that human societies must meet in order to align with these rights. These obligations will allow for essential needs to be distinguished from others, and set limitations to the ways in which human society can satisfy supplementary needs at a detriment to Earth's ecosystems.

Measure n°3 - This declaration will be available as an **international "convergence**

program" in which all member countries will achieve an ecological footprint inferior

or equal to one planet, all while satisfying the needs featured in the declaration.

Certain countries will need to set an example and form a sort of consortium (with strong solidarity between participating countries).

Phase 2: Structural transformation of the international order that allows for the coordination of a public environmental policy.

Measure n°4 – **Public Debt Jubilee.** “Immoral” public debt (contracted by corrupt regimes), public debt of low-income countries, public debt contracted

following the economic crash of 2008 to bail out the banks, as well as debt contracted from central banks to brave the pandemic, will be, plain and simple, forgiven. Here we’re contesting the morality of these debts, given that their very origin renders them immoral and illegitimate.^[20] The future use of public debt will be strictly regulated in such a way that liquidity does not depend on speculative financial assets. Notably, it will be from then on impossible to refinance banks without monitoring how bank speculation makes use of public money (banking separation, prohibition on trading for their own gain, etc.). A public debt jubilee is not a fantasy but a historical reality. It suffices to remember the debt jubilee of poor countries that took place in 2000 following an international campaign.

Measure n°5 – An end to the independence of central banks by **reclaiming control**

over monetary policy. Public control over money and financial services: nationalization of the bank system and the establishment of pluralist currency through recognition of local and supplementary currencies (melting, dedicated, etc.) that could then be converted into “national currency.”

Measure n°6 – **Call for the implementation of an international exchange and**

currency reserve, directed by a council made up of representatives from countries participating in the international exchange, whose rates will be politically fixed to encourage certain virtuous ecological and social exchanges and discourage others.^[21]

Measure n°7 – **Reestablishment of control over streams of capital.** All of the

discussed measures up until this point could lead to an exodus of capital streams from France. Those who possess capital will seek to hold shares in profitable assets in countries where industrial rights and fiscal regulations are at their advantage. The only way to stop this trend is to prevent short term speculative movements, which consists of re-establishing control over the stream of capital (as ongoing purchases and sales of currency enters and leaves national territory). France could advocate on the international stage on behalf of all countries for such a regulation. This would put an end to a system of fluctuating changes that results in a severely unstable global economy and would make speculations on the rate of change impossible. Within the European Union, France would defend the status of the euro as a “communal currency” instead of “single currency”. In the former case, competitive devaluation between countries belonging to the euro zone is allowed in order to correct, at least in part, gaps in productivity between them. In the case that France is not able to convince its associate countries of such a measure, France could leave the eurozone and revert to the franc. Lastly, the control of the capital stream could accompany a tax system aimed at discouraging short term capital flows, because of their consequences on the overall stability of the economic system: a tax on financial transactions, if the rate is properly calculated, would discourage short-term speculative movements, just like a regulation that requires a minimum duration of asset retention. One could object to all of this by saying that financial markets would have less “liquidity” and will thus underperform, to which we reply: that is precisely the point. The desired performance is not financial but ecological and social: from such a perspective, longer asset retention means

greater maturity and lower rates for loans, which is only advantageous, as demonstrated by the outcomes of solidarity-based financing (which has proven to be remarkably robust, even in times of crisis).

Phase 3: An international strategy for ecological convergence

The environmental goals are global by default. There can be no environmental policy without participation at the international level. However, France can set an example by building on the goals outlined by various literature and international organizations: an ambitious environmental policy at the scale of France must not be perceived as isolationist, rather as France calling for the creation of a new international order whose tools and procedures France would accept to adopt first.

Measure n°8 – A deglobalization oriented around solidarity and degrowth, based on

maximizing local economic systems and “Russian doll” systems of coordination (a

global institution whose general components would support for self-sufficiency and social and ecological viability).

Measure n°9 – A coordination policy based on bilateral partnerships of “social and

ecological transformation.”^[22]

Measure n°10 – These partnerships will give birth to new institutional forms,

organizations or alliances whose purpose is built on autonomy and viability. These organizations or alliances must be building blocks to the international order.

Conclusion: Changing our relationship to the world

Reality has insisted on a severe reduction in our consumption of energy and resources. At least it’s the recommendation of the IPCC, whose measurements of greenhouse gas emissions and their role in climate change are unencumbered and reliable. Which isn’t the case for nature and biodiversity in general: it is not possible for us to measure the pace with objective data. On the other hand, the current global health crisis has shed light on the exorbitant costs of inaction.

This severe reduction was possible and will be even more so coordinated at the global scale. Such policies don’t depend on France, but our country, along with others, could become its champion. A world that achieves an ecological conversion through solidarity will be one less ridden with conflict and danger as long as current and future conflicts originate from an overconsumption of resources. While waiting on the international consensus it called for, France could embark on a radical transformation to become a model of prosperity. To be an example of a successful transformation, both socially just and environmentally sustainable, is a powerful attractor that will form the basis of new relations with our traditional partners and could possibly take the form of “ecological transformation partnerships” that will guarantee each party to meet their own basic needs while creating convergence objectives for the long-term.

The future will arrive at our doorstep by passing through a profound modification of our means of production, that will phase out production of high-tech gadgets for the individual consumer to favour public or mutualized use — which we deem to be necessary to the transformation of our communities to face rising temperatures and diminishing resources.

More sustainable production of fewer goods mostly made up of revamped low-tech apparatuses that are both ergonomically and aesthetically sleek and as much shared as they will be sophisticated and resource-rich. This world will be characterized by a diminished wealth gap that is in greater harmony with non-humans or other-than humans. It must be a pacifist and harmonious world that is much more favourable to our health and well-being than a competitive race which, as everyone now realizes, has led us to such destruction.

The measures that we propose, as technical as they seem, aim to steer us toward such a world. They aim to reduce destructive streams of production, pacify societies and put an end to real or symbolic death of the most vulnerable (to whom mainstream competition affords no chance at survival), cease the war on nature (phytosanitary, extractive, by human overpopulation, etc.) and to lastly re-establish a relationship to nature as the foundation of a civilization worthy of its *civil* name. In a word: we propose that we don't turn planet Earth into Mars.

* * *

The pandemic has shed new light on matters we've submerged into obscurity. In experiencing the illness, quarantine, and the difficulties it's placed on all of us, we've become conscious of the fact that nothing is more precious than life and nothing more comforting than solidarity. The joys and the sorrows that we experience are a result of nothing else but the following:

- The propagation of the virus is proportionate to the devastations that we've inflicted upon our ecosystems.
- Medical and treatment victories are made possible by collective solidarity (research and public hospitals) and continue to be made possible by respect of quarantine protocols, and the mutual aid and support that we've provided each other.

In this time of "rupture," all that is essential has revealed itself. What's the point of being powerful in an uninhabitable world, where "power" means nothing? What's the point of money without production? What's the value of our currencies in the absence of trust, if no one in the world buys into these currencies because the countries where they circulate no longer produce anything of value? Material goods are important. But which ones? What value do our planes and automobiles have if the destinations are destroyed and the land to transverse transformed into desert?

The pandemic has reminded us of our vulnerable human condition, for which life and fertility are essential. Because there is no life without relationships — relationship to living species, relationship to ecosystems that provide shelter to and are made up of these living species, relationship to "others" (human and non-human) that allow for ecosystems to be places of any possible future prosperity.

We've always built our world in our image. Ecologists define this process as "anthropocentrism." Productivism has pushed this process to its breaking point, reducing the world to a simple "exploitable resource," placing no limit on the destruction and exploitation of all kinds. Corona reminds us that this process goes both ways: a world too uniform and impoverished, the antithesis of life itself, becomes a world practically built to harbor viral or bacterial pandemics.

The general quarantine order gave us access to a new universe: As soon as the sky regained its transparency and the streets of our big cities turned to silence, the essential became audible, like the songs of birds or the pattering of raindrops. What's essential are the life forms trying not to get wiped out, the land that is no longer crushed by tractors, flesh and bone relationships that are the fabric of our humanity, transformation and transportation (the well-

named “real economy”), the efforts of men and women who take care of the living and organize cooperation: the flows of nature in its entirety. Whatever may be its magnitude and that of the forces that control it, these flows intermingle in such a way that the most essential meaning is revealed: the regeneration of life, a singularity unique to our Earth for which no other equivalent has been found in the universe until now.

A policy framework to regenerate the environment that we’ve damaged, a framework endowed with absolute sovereignty over all other human ambitions — this is what we are calling for. This policy framework will make us freer because it will restore what is essential, without which freedom is just an illusion. It’s called Environmentalism. It is revolutionary in that it supports the autonomy of each individual and puts an end to any form of social domination, as it constitutes human society, or ultimately, the *society of all living things*, to which humans have always been apart of and have until now subjected to their own worldly ambitions (in the sense that these ambitions belonged to their world and their world alone), without realizing the extent to which this approach condemns them, sooner or later, to an almost certain death.

^[1] Translated from French by Miranda Dotson, edited by Xavier Ricard-Lanata.

^[2] 46°C in one village of Hérault department, 43°C in Paris, 40.7°C on the northern seaboard of Holland, more than 50°C in Australia and India, etc.

^[3] UNEP, 2019: *Bridging the Gap – Enhancing Mitigation Ambition and Action at G20 Level and Globally*; IPCC, 2018: *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*.

^[4] We have destroyed soils, animal and plant species, and ecosystems so much that we will need to tread more lightly on nature for some time to allow it to regenerate.

^[5] In this same vein, the stream of materials (all of the resources that we extract) haven’t stopped increasing since the 2000s and are directly correlated to the standard of living. See Unep, *Global Material Flows and Resource Productivity*, 2016, http://unep.org/documents/irp/16-00169_LW_GlobalMaterialFlowsUNEReport_FINAL_160701.pdf

^[6] During periods of heat waves in cities, the temperatures between parks and heat islands could vary by at least 6°C.

^[7] Region in the east of France, known to be an economic gateway to the rest of Europe and the one that has experienced the greatest number of COVID cases in the whole country.

^[8] Regarding “well-being,” we refer to the work of Eloi Laurent, namely, *The New Environmental Economics: Sustainability and Justice*, Polity Press, 2019. Also see: Jean Gadrey, Florence Jany-Catrice: *The New Indicators of Wellbeing and Development*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006 and Dominique Méda, *Post-growth Economics and Society*, Routledge, 2013. Regarding ecological indicators, the measurement of carbon emissions is fundamental, but in no case should it be isolated from questions surrounding nature and biodiversity. The ecological footprint is a basic indicator of an aggregate of effects. One may add to this the carrying capacity of our planet, that from there can be translated into national objectives. See Hy Dao, et al. “National environmental limits and footprints based on the planetary boundaries framework: The case of Switzerland,” *Global Environmental Change* 52 (2018) 49-57. It is also possible to combine the ecological footprint with the planet’s carrying capacity (see the following footnote).

^[9] We refer here to Daniel W. O’Neill et al., “A good life for all within planetary boundaries,” *Nature Sustainability*, vol. 1, February 2018, 88-95. Once again, no indicator is perfect, and we must remain open to improvements in this area. A country like Costa Rica, for example, well-ranked in terms of well-being, is placed, among others, well short of 1 planet.

^[10] Cf. Jacques Richard, *Comptabilité et Développement Durable*, Paris, Economica, 2012

^[11] Cf. Xavier Ricard Lanata ““L’économie sociale et solidaire ; chrysalide de la métamorphose ? Une analyse tirée de l’expérience du CCFD-Terre Solidaire”, in David Hiez (et alia), *Ebauche d’une théorie générale de l’Economie Sociale et Solidaire*, Paris, éditions Larcier, 2012, p. 395-410.

^[12] Giraud Gaël et Renouard Cécile (dir), *Twenty Propositions to Reform Capitalism*, Paris, Flammarion 2009; Christian Arnsperger and Dominique Bourg, *Integral Ecology for a Permacircular Society*, Paris, PUF 2017.

^[13] We put parentheses around this term given our remarks on the “price signal” in an economy where there is an additional ceiling on consumption (see measure 5)

^[14] James Galbraith, Stuart Holland et Yanis Varoufakis, “A Modest Proposal for Resolving the Euro Crisis,” *Intereconomics*, 2012, no.4 vol. 47: 240-247.

^[15] Sophie Swaton, *Pour un revenu de transition écologique*, Paris, PUF, 2018 et *Revenu de transition écologique : mode d’emploi*, Puf, 2020.

^[16] Whose maxim can be summarized in the following manner, inspired by Aldo Leopold: “An action is justifiable when it preserves (or increases) biodiversity. It is unjustifiable when it accomplishes the opposite.” Catherine et Raphaël Larrère, *Du bon usage de la nature*, Paris, Flammarion, [1997] 2009, p. 281. [Free translation].

^[17] Dominique Bourg, et al., *Inventons la démocratie du 21^e siècle*, LLL, 2017.

^[18] This co-optation will be carried out by a list of names submitted by Environmental NGOs, from which the parliament will select members.

^[19] In France, compulsory payments to the social health-care system are proportionate to the annual income up to a certain ceiling. The wealthiest people thus contribute less, with regards to their income, than the poorest. We here propose to drop the ceiling limitation, so to improve the fairness of the whole system.

^[20] Certain monetary economists would object to the injection of cash into an economy whose growth is not proportionate to the volume increase of money and forcibly create inflation. To this we argue that this is exactly what happened namely in 2008, when the inflation in question occurred among some assets (such as real estate or other reserve assets like hydrocarbon fossil fuels) with little regard to public interest. A freeze on these debts won’t produce inflation since the cash flow was already there. One may also note that despite liquidity injected into the international economy since 2008 (in the sum of dozens of billions of dollars, or 15% of the global GDP, a number not insignificant) the inflationary effects beyond the speculative bubble were almost non-existent. The rate of inflation in the eurozone is close to 0: the sales performance of massive assets that were low due to economic agents’ downside expectations contradict the spontaneous inflation trends that result from an increase in money supply. Since the work of Keynes, this is what one would call a “liquidity trap,” which is characterized by a structural collapse in demand. The pandemic

and ecological catastrophe have submerged us into this sort of situation for the long-term. Even worse, this crisis is a product of a simultaneous collapse of goods and services: it's the reason why classic capitalist economic forces are not a solution.

^[21] See Gaël Giraud, "Quelle gouvernance mondiale", in *Projet*, numéro spécial "De Prométhée à Noé", Paris, CERAS, July 2010.

^[22] Xavier Ricard Lanata et Mathilde Dupré, "Pour un protectionnisme coopératif", in *Projet* (2019/2, n° 369).