Proposals
for a Fair and Democratic
Architecture of Power

contribution to the Peoples' Summit

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years have passed since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The world has continued to change, profoundly and rapidly. This period was initially marked by a number of significant events: the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, Nelson Mandela's liberation in 1990 after 27 years in prison and his election as the president of South Africa in 1994, the advent of internet-based communication and its widespread adoption since the late 1990s, are among the milestones pointing to the dawn of a new era of history. Other events left traces that have reversed the advances made. Everyone can identify the historical events that have marked the last twenty years according to their different geographical roots and world visions. These visions are multi-dimensional, which is a positive thing. However, a common horizon is emerging. The world has entered into a protracted transitional phase wherein successive crises combine and merge. During this turbulent period characterizing the early years of the 21st century, we have the opportunity to open up the doors and windows to new civilizations—plural and united civilizations. The future is of course unpredictable, and will no doubt be different from how we imagine it. Nevertheless, another world is visible on the horizon. If we want to get through the current turbulence, we need to have solid foundations to launch us on our journey forwards. And this is why we wish to put this proposal paper for a fair and democratic architecture of power in your hands.

I.

Proposals for a new fair and democratic governance

Building new governance is not only an institutional or theoretical question confined to the political or sociological spheres. All governance proposals and plans depend on the action and mobilisation of a huge majority of people, actors, movements and populations. This is a critical issue. And ideas and proposals play a crucial role in such action and mobilisation. This is why we need to remodel governance architecture by incorporating it into the perspective of biocivilisation for the sustainability of life and the planet. Architecture for a citizen, solidarity-based and fair governance must be rooted in solid ethical and philosophical foundations. It must also both support and enable a new economy centred on social and environmental justice. What is needed is to work together to devise responses to today's challenges, rooted in the contexts relevant to each person and each population. This involves recognizing the different forms of knowledge that exist in all continents, among all peoples, without trying to impose one of them as the unquestionable reference. The key conditions for a new governance must be formulated within a critical and democratic approach. In addition to the other proposals for furthering the process of historical transition that are underway, it is therefore important to:

- give concrete form to deep-reaching changes in education, aiming for an education that teaches a new democracy and new relationship of society with nature;
- promote education on rights and responsibilities;
- promote a care culture and economy in order to rethink policies, combat patriarchal domination and encourage gender equality, a fair division and distribution of socially useful work and a new economy centred on common goods;
- take responsibility for regulating sciences and technologies and enable them to be democratized and subject to popular and citizen control as a common good;
- refocus on, promote and raise the visibility of initiatives that are proposing alternatives and are already underway in local territories, both urban and rural, with the aim of creating the conditions for them to increase

in number and scope;
- foster the democratization of information and communication as a basic condition for radicalizing democracy;
- reinforce the capacity for participation by combining information, consultation and decision-making power so that participation spaces can became mechanisms for changing the state and representations. Movements seeking to transform political systems, such as the Spanish "Los indignados" (The Indignant) movement, social movements in Tunisia and Egypt and students movement in Chile have a critical and mobilizing component that includes and goes beyond traditional actors, such as unions, parties and so on: the central actor is the individual, who seeks to take action as a mobilized and critical person linking up with thousands of other people. The goal is to promote a form of governance that does not reduce citizens to the role of a client or consumer of policies, but an active subject of such governance;
- create a link between personal transformation and collective transformation. Democratization is only possible if it takes root in each individual's way of thinking, feeling and acting. In the same way, changes to processes and institutions can consolidate personal changes. There is thus also a dialectical link between personal and collective transformation.

In addition to the changes that are needed in the social, cultural and technological spheres, on both the personal and collective levels, it is worth noting a number of proposals seeking to effect transformations of the political system. They represent the Gordian knot of social contradictions, a knot we need to untie, taking into account that we are faced with a diversity of historical contexts within a variety of political regimes, democratic as well as authoritarian. Among such changes, the challenge posed by the democratization of China seems to be key to moving forward on the path towards a biocivilization for the sustainability of life and the planet. However, the challenge represented by the de-

mocratization of China's political system should not hide the equally historical challenges involved in the democratization of democracy in those regimes, mainly in dominant countries, that are based on occasional elections and not only uphold an unfair economic and social model, but are also responsible for the grave problems affecting life and the planet.

A number of proposals can be put forward.

1. Reform and democratize political parties. Political parties have been a significant innovation, serving to express the diverse viewpoints and choices of citizens in democratic regimes. Which is why they should not be rejected outright. It is also true that political parties, with a few rare exceptions, have turned into instruments that reproduce patriarchal and hierarchical domination-based models, not to mention the corrupt or anti-democratic practices of many of their leaders. Reforming and democratizing the party system is feasible. A number of initiatives could be put in place, including regularly changing the leadership, prioritizing young people and women for responsible positions, providing regular information to sympathizers and the public in general, and consulting citizens by means of local assemblies.

2. Provide a space in the media—television, radio and the written press –for citizens and their organizations. Various initiatives already exist that are beginning to open up the media so that citizens can be heard, using telephone technology and internet fora. These spaces could be more credible and educational if citizens voices could not only be more widely heard, but also be channelled, using mechanisms that keep a trace of opinions and link them together, in order to give form to well structured and solid ideas and proposals generated by open dialogue.

3. Reinforce equality. Governments, institutions and organizations where women are greatly represented and equality is respected prove to be fruitful experiences. It is important to guarantee that equality is respected not only in candidatures, but also in responsible posts, starting with government leaders, courts of justices, parliamentary presidents and so on.

4. Public funding. It is vital that the funding of political parties and any organization wishing to take on a responsible public position should come from public funds that are managed transparently. In other words, corruption corrodes the political body and distorts the exercise of power. It is essential to totally separate private interests from public positions of responsibility, and leaders' salaries should be modest to provide an example of disinterested service.

5. Bring parliament and citizens closer together. The act of legislating should not be confined to deputies and senators. While they are the ones to vote on laws, formal channels should also be established for jointly formulating legislative decisions with the social actors directly concerned. We need to invent a new form of parliament for the 21st century. For example, the education budget and regulations should be discussed with organizations of students, teachers, parents, representatives, and so on. The same applies to areas including health, housing and infrastructure. We need to invent new mechanisms for creating dialogue between members of parliament and society in order to prevent parliaments becoming an enclosed or elitist space, far removed from citizens' demands.

6. Organize plebiscites, referendums and consensus conferences, thus encouraging participation by the majority of citizens. However, it is important to avoid abuses of these consultation mechanisms, since they can lead to tensions and generate resentments that are difficult to overcome and forget. Consultation mechanisms must be regulated and prepared in such a way as to ensure, as far as possible, that decisions are informed and well thought out.

7. Promote assemblies and conferences on the territorial, communal, national and regional level right up to the global level. We are seeing a growing trend, varying from one country or region to the next, for promoting real citizen and popular participation in specific and general decisions relating to social, economic, political and cultural life. Local, national and continental conferences on important themes relating to areas such as education, health, leisure activities and housing and that foster the organized participation of a broad range of people are mechanisms that have proved to be effective. In the same way, various countries are seeing the emergence of initiatives where diverse social and professional sectors converge within citizens' assemblies at every level, working collectively to elaborate proposals and assess development plans in a range of areas. These assemblies are still in the early stages, but are being called on to play an increasingly important role, since they are more solid and long-lasting in nature than demonstrations that, as legitimate and necessary as they are, remain ephemeral. The fact is that any changes to political systems that can lay the foundations of a new architecture of power from the local to the global level must necessarily be long-lasting and sustainable. These tasks may well appear utopian, but they are already emerging as the seeds of a biocivilisation for the sustainability of life and the planet.

II.

Rethinking the architecture of power, rethinking democracy

In these first years of the 21st century, humanity has entered into a period of major change in the architecture of power. The seeds of this change were already being sown at the end of the 20th century. It is rooted in two simultaneous and partially interconnected events. The first is globalization. Globalization is obviously not a new phenomenon, but in the late 20th century it reached a critical threshold when the various phenomena went far beyond states' powers to control them, especially since these states continue to operate according to the national interest principle. The second phenomenon initially, and dramatically, emerged in the 1950s with the threat of nuclear catastrophe, then was given fresh impetus in the 1970s by the first indicators of rapid and worrying environmental damage. The phenomenon is a growing awareness that the production and consumption habits of the last two centuries, and all the accompanying excesses, have led to a critical stage in history when humans are not only likely to self-destruct as a species, but also to destroy the planet.

Rethinking the architecture of power, rethinking world governance

In this context, it is clear that governance mechanisms are out of step with the urgency and complexity of current problems. Globalization and awareness of the dangers to life and the planet have given birth to the conviction that, on the one hand, we are facing entirely new, extremely complex and urgent problems—including migrations, financial crises and ecological damage—and that, on the other hand, we do not have adequate governance mechanisms in place to solve these problems.

A question that needs asking at this point is: what exactly is world governance? Over and above the various definitions, some more complex than others, of what world governance might be and the technocratic viewpoints embodied by the concept, we prefer to think of world governance simply as *the collective management of the planet*. This viewpoint may well suffer from being overly broad. However, it is also useful for exploring all the dimensions of what could and should be fair and democratic governance. Furthermore, we need to keep in mind that such governance needs to reach beyond the restrictive framework of international relations in the form they have taken so far, i.e. the only prism through which relations that transcend the narrow field of the dominant political entity, the nation-state, are perceived.

The only conclusion we can draw from the last 20 years is that, given the current state of affairs, we do not have the structures needed to tackle and solve all the currently converging problems. States, starting with the major powers and emerging powers, evidently need to be closely involved in coming up with new solutions. However, they are also a source of inertia that unquestionably has to be overcome. The way that the world has changed over recent decades makes the practice of international relations based on national interests and the balance of power obsolete; the UN system has of course improved this form of international relations, but without managing to alter its underlying principles.

This incontrovertible interdependency between states in various areas—such as the economy, the environment and security issues—and the supremacy of the principle of collective general interest demand not only a deeper-reaching cooperation within the international

system, but also recognition of the fundamental role of international solidarity and its actors in the decision-making process.

As far as civil society is concerned, many years of campaigning against social inequalities, to control climate change and prevent the erosion of biodiversity, along with demands for a fairer distribution of wealth have resulted in real improvements. However, the situation our planet and most of the world's populations now find themselves in continues to be extremely unstable, marked by phenomena including lack of access to essential services, violation of human rights and devastation of ecosystems.

Populations who endure war, famine, forced migrations, floods and attacks illustrate this point. Added to that are Mafia drug- and people-trafficking networks, preying on the millions of children, women and men who move around in search of a place where the harsh conditions of daily life are a little easier to bear. Poor neighbourhoods of both small and large cities, on every continent, are home to real social wars, some more open than others, that are a permanent expression of exclusion and economic and social inequalities.

The wars and conflicts we are currently seeing have a variety of causes, including economic inequalities, social conflicts, religious sectarianism, territorial disputes and fighting over control of essential resources such as land and water. They all illustrate a deep-reaching crisis affecting world governance. And even though the number of traditional conflicts between states has dropped over the last few years, current conflicts continue to be violent and affect, with increasing frequency, very vulnerable civilian populations and regions, particularity in Africa and the Middle East.

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, Nelson Mandela's 1994 triumph and Pinochet's arrest in London in 1998 are among the events that allowed us to believe, for just a moment, that the world governance system within the UN framework would lead to the multi-lateral resolution of conflicts and exercise of justice at an international level. At the same time, however, the Balkans war, 1994 genocide in Rwanda and growing tensions in the Middle East were the warning signs of a worsening of conflicts.

The events of 11 September 2001, Afghanistan and Iraq wars, recent war in Libya and growing tensions in the Arab world reveal, among other things, that conflicts can become deadly not only for the warring parties di-

rectly involved, but for the whole world. The warmongering leaders of certain major powers, with the largest of them, the USA, to the fore, have used and continue to use war as a means of tackling conflicts.

In addition to wars, other dangers pose a threat to peace and solidarity. The rise in populism, fundamentalism and nationalism has become an increasingly widespread reality in large democratic societies, not only in Western and Eastern Europe but also in Asia and America. Certain African countries are trying to pull themselves out of their crises, but vast regions continue to be stuck in a deep rut of permanent crises and held back by authoritarian and corrupt regimes, resulting in entire swathes of the population living in poverty.

In this context, in many states emerging from colonial rule whose institutions have mostly been imposed on society, the population sees the exercise of power as illegitimate. Representative democracy, as practised in many countries, is seen by the majority as a system whereby a minority appropriates all the power and all the wealth.

Confrontations are multiplying and recurring, and economic, political and military multi-lateralism is being hampered by belligerent tensions and excluding ideologies. The current situation therefore means that it continues to be difficult to lay down the real foundations of new institutions suitable for all levels of governance, from local to global.

Rethinking democracy

The state executive, legislative and judicial systems inherited from the past are incapable of providing a response to the complexity of contemporary societies, and corruption often becomes deeply rooted in the management of private businesses and public spheres. The gulf separating civil society from public institutions has widened to a dangerous extent in most countries. This has resulted in the existing institutional system and the notion of democracy itself coming under question. Political parties are proving to be incapable of deliberating on citizenship, an ever-more complex notion. Democracy requires strong movements, but current social movements and civil society organizations are not solving the central issues of the legitimacy of power within society.

The democratic systems we are faced with are themselves highly diverse and complex. In various countries and regions, they take the form of parliamentary or

presidential regimes, in others, they are based on the predominance of ethnically-based groups, and in yet others, they are openly linked to religious leanings.

This type of situation brings with it an obvious political risk. Recent history shows that a participative institutional system is not just fairer, it is also more effective than an authoritarian regime. But how can the current trend to discredit democracy be reversed, within both the social imaginary and political practices?

Some progress has nevertheless been made. Promising economic, social, technological and cultural innovations can be identified in various places. We could choose to think that they will not succeed in reversing the movement towards the intensification of conflicts and deterioration of the relationship between humanity and nature. Or we could choose, quite feasibly, to think that we are seeing the dawn of a new stage in history. Thousands of citizens are demonstrating in different countries and regions, expressing their indignation and awareness of the unfair character of prevailing economic and political governance.

How can we tackle these world governance issues? How can we preserve what needs preserving? Change what needs changing? Can the architecture of world power be reformed or do we need to lay down new foundations for a new architecture of power?

Even though the establishment of international organizations facilitated the adoption of agreements and the capacity to foster cooperation, we are still seeing a huge gap between these organizations and the challenges facing humanity. There is no platform for international negotiation. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) cannot manage to play its role as coordinator of UN development-related activities. Similarly, the Commission on Sustainable Development is failing to build any cohesion between the various economic, social and political dimensions of sustainable development.

What sort of world society do we want?

Before proposing any sort of institutional reform, a key question has to be asked: what sort of world society do we want?

The ethical dimension is crucial. By exploring and valuing the ethical underpinnings of different civilizations we will learn to overcome our differences. The ethical underpinnings of a biocivilization for the sustainability

of life and the planet will allow us to answer the major question that must stay to the fore as we undertake the construction of a new architecture of power: how can we rebuild the universal using civilisations as our building blocks? We will only be able to move forwards if we address these difficult but essential issues without any preconceptions. These new principles of governance need to transcend national borders by encouraging states, businesses and citizens, according to their different capacities, to take responsibility for their individual and collective obligations towards the general interest and the interests of the planet and its inhabitants. These principles raise new issues in terms of the legitimacy of collective action, authority, the exercise of citizenship that respects human rights, and the resolution of tensions between the local, national and global levels.

The goal of tackling current challenges requires everyone to take action. Plural communities are springing up from the neighbourhood to the global level. Cultural diversity is key to the world community, just as the union of our diverse political, religious and associative communities is key to building a new, fair and democratic governance system.

Exploring new paths for a change of governance

If we want to rethink the existing architecture of world governance and propose alternatives for a new, fair and democratic world governance, we need to identify the actors and spaces that are already at work in this domain.

It is important to remember that we are dealing with processes and not only institutions. All political spaces where power, participation and representation are at play are necessarily characterized by struggle and tense relations. This applies both to existing spaces and to those that need to be created, since they too will be spaces in conflict.

We also need to examine the concepts and even the words that are used, such as architecture and governance, since they can give the impression that we are talking about static and balanced universes. Governance architecture, however, is a complex, dynamic and conflictual series of spaces, institutions and ideas wherein multiple actors dispute the balance of power within constantly changing relations. Within these disputes, social actors' ideas (words) and forms of participation interact and build on each other, together playing an important role in driving the process of change.

We also need to keep in mind that all governance ar-

rangements have two levels: the institutional level, and the level where other factors and balances of power operate above and beyond institutions, which are only one element of power, an element that varies according to the context. Which is not to say that institutions are not "real" agents of power: it is a role that they play, as a function of each situation. However, even though they only represent one aspect of real power, they are also spaces in conflict.

The new political architecture is being built simultaneously on two main levels: locally (states also correspond to this local level, even though it may be in highly diverse forms), and globally, a level that not only corresponds to the inter-state context but also, and especially, to new transnational and global spaces.

There are two dimensions driving the process of constructing governance. The local dimension is where people's daily lives are played out, and the global dimension is where policies affecting these daily lives are increasingly decided. The scale of phenomena such as migrations, pandemics, climate crises and financial crises keeps escalating. In this context, local territory and local democracy provide the keystone for building a new governance architecture. Nevertheless, in an era characterized by increasingly accelerated globalization, financial and trade flows and the circulation of people and information, the global dimension conditions daily life at the local level. We therefore also need to propose and introduce changes to governance at both the local and global level. There is a dialectical relationship between these two key dimensions of governance.

There is also an intermediary dimension that lies between the local and global levels: the regional level. This space has gradually been taking shape, and continental organizations play an important role in governance architecture. These regional bodies usually create regulatory systems that meet the interests of major states and corporations; however, they also constitute spaces in conflict. Among the innovations that need to be implemented, it is vital to support the emergence of this regional level, the intermediary between states and the global level. The example of the construction of Europe should not be devalued by fruitless tensions between states. Europe has been an historical construction process on a supranational scale, based on economic convergence and community law. It is therefore important to look to regional spaces to act as agents for strengthening the links between territories, organizations and social actors seeking to bolster their capacity to counter the power wielded by states and transnatio-

nal corporations. These spaces, lying between the local level—including country-states—and the global level, could provide a path of transition to a truly global future architecture.

III.

Actors: their relations, their contradictions

1. Transnational corporations (TNCs)

These are actors that operate primarily at the global level. Financial, industrial, trade, information and technology corporations shape not only production and consumption models but also the lifestyle and civilisation behind current crises.

TNCs cannot be tackled simply by proposing regulation. We need to put citizen and democratic control into practice. However, given the vast power they have accumulated, one actor alone cannot exercise this sort of control. It needs state control on a national level, UN control at the international scale and control by social actors at the local level. In addition, close ties exist between TNCs and states, particularly the major powers. For example, the Davos Forum provides a space that has been forging links between TNCs and governmental agents for several years.

The key to achieving effective control over TNCs lies in linking all these actors together. However, in this context, multi-stakeholder forums should not serve to legitimize TNCs' power. We need to devise and build structures that link together institutions and organizations from the local to global level, wherever TNCs' power may be effectively controlled. Legitimacy and credibility are central issues to any attempt to implement regulations. A fundamental problem remains in this area: the elaboration of international law with the power to ensure that it is obeyed, since existing international law lacks such power.

2. The state

The state as the regulator and organiser of society, a role that reaches beyond its boundaries, is subject to attacks by the de facto transnational economic and political powers that seek to reduce it. However, people continue to see the state and protection of the state as a tool for regulating these powers and guaranteeing citizen rights. It would not therefore be appropriate to promote anti-state proposals. A state that respects its citizens' rights is a requirement of democratic institutionality.

However, we need to rethink the notion of the nation-state within a given territory. Today, the direct link between state and nation in many states no longer reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the people living there. The notion of the plurinational state is increasingly being used, a notion that has even been included in the constitutions of some countries. It is clear that flows such as migratory, trade and internet flows ignore states' territorial limits, and we need to explore the idea of deterritorializing the state's role, a difficult task given the historical weight of borders.

Today's state has an ambivalent role. It is necessary for regulating governance primarily at the national level—although even there it is moving away from the role of local democracy—and at the global level it is not the best means of meeting global challenges. States are also institutions in conflict and need to be guided towards democratic and efficient governance. Furthermore, looking at the medium and long term, the form of state that once played an important role in, for example, the decolonialization process, is being diminished. It is therefore vital to explore how to transform it.

- The question of participation and representation lies at the heart of **the dialectic between society and the state.** We know that representation systems do not correspond to the demand for active participation. The priority must be on promoting participation by implementing transparent information systems and open consultation mechanisms to ensure efficient decision-making.

But we need to take this process even further. It is important to radicalize democracy, both in terms of state

institutions and society as a whole.

The state and representation systems will thus gradually be transformed by devising new political institutions. This denotes an historical challenge, since we are experiencing a crisis of legitimacy towards elites. The current crisis of democracy is primarily rooted in a questioning of elites and how they have developed historically. Protests in various countries levelled at the political party system is above all an expression of this questioning of elites. But above and beyond these questions, we need to invent new systems for organizing political systems, with citizens as the main actors working to take democracy to a new level and to ensure that leaders are legitimate and institutions are transparent and efficient. This process goes far deeper than political engineering alone: it has to do with the ethical foundations capable of supporting the new lifestyles, within society and civilisations that support life and the sustainability of the planet, that are needed at the outset of the third millennium.

The UN's role

There are three possible views of the UN:
- the first believes that we need to work with what we have, i.e. the existing UN, that it should no longer be criticized and that the most fitting action would be to reform it so that it could reclaim the role it played in the past, for example, during decolonialization after the 20th century's Second World War;
- the second asserts that the UN cannot meet contemporary challenges, that it is not worth trying to reform it and that we will get nowhere by sticking with the UN;
- a third view contends that, although the UN is not managing to successfully tackle current problems, it would not be right to abandon it; we need to support reforming efforts to make it more democratic, without attempting a fast transformation of inter-state institutions. In this context, everything that aims to increase civil society's place in the UN system, by strengthening or creating new mechanisms for NGO participation and increasing its role in decision-making beyond simple consultation, and everything that could help reform the Security Council, such as abolishing the veto system, would be positive.

In any event, the UN, just like states—and precisely because it is an inter-state structure—is part and parcel of an ageing system. We need to create new institutions that renew the world governance architecture. In this context, the UN is also a space in conflict.

The major organizations that currently seek to regulate world governance are divided into two main groups of actors:
- geopolitical groups: G8, G20, OECD and BRICS attribute authority to themselves and are the most powerful actors, although they do not all adopt the same policies for tackling current crises;
- the UN and inter-governmental conferences.

These geopolitical groups, mainly the G8, supported by the IMF and NATO depending on the context, delegitimize the UN's role and impose their policies at the global level. Nevertheless, the deep-reaching and recurrent nature of the crises points to these actors' incapacity to deal with them. This is why spaces and opportunities to build a new architecture for world governance remain important, provided that citizens and peoples, their organizations, movements and networks prove capable of questioning them and putting them to good use. This is certainly one of the most testing challenges in today's world.

In the run-up to Rio+20, various proposals are being put forward for innovative changes to the United Nations system. A number of countries and NGOs are proposing a World Environment Organization that would answer directly to the UN Secretariat, consolidate and reinforce the roles played by UNEP and UNDP and help create a link between the various UN agencies, major NGOs and big businesses linked to the UN. Others feel that what is needed is a World Environment Council with a similar status to the Security Council. Yet others want to broaden and democratize existing bodies by systematically incorporating other actors into the UN system, such as NGOs, businesses and governments, and giving them wider-reaching rights.

All reforms to the current system seeking to adapt it to imminent challenges are to be welcomed. However, it is not enough to hope that a reform of the current UN system, however consensual and effective it may be—something that is not guaranteed, to say the least—proves capable of tackling the gravity of the challenges. It is likely that in 10 or 20 years' time, when it comes to assessing he state of the planet, we will once again see the gap separating words and actions.

Even though hope in these reforms is being expressed in certain government and major NGO circles, the requirements of radicalizing democracy demand changes that reach further than reforms to the UN's institutional systems. The invention of political systems for the new forms of democracy that are emerging is becoming an historical necessity. This challenge calls for imagination and serious deliberation so that the citizens and peoples of the early 21st century can follow in the steps of the periods of historical change that have marked every civilization and invent the new social and political instruments that will release the energy needed to

solve the deep-reaching problems of our times.

China

When discussing major global actors, China deserves a special mention. Architecture of a new world governance has to be rethought taking into account current events in China and China's place on the world stage. We are facing a vast power that is generating a new expansionist dynamic as well as being based on a highly unjust economic and political system. A number of workers, mainly migrants, live in conditions of extreme exploitation. Changes in this country are happening very fast, and some Chinese people feel ambivalent about being powerless to tackle them or guide them towards an alternative system, different from that based on exploitation and oppression of China's own people as well as other peoples and the resources of other countries.

The Chinese are aware of the destructive effects produced by the authoritarian capitalist growth-based model they are immersed in and its impact on other parts of the world. They are therefore making efforts to reduce pollution and the greenhouse effect by introducing mechanisms such as the circular ecology or industrial ecology into their economic policies. On the other hand, China feels that it does not have total freedom to take decisions, since it is obliged to take into account other governments. For example, when it wanted to reduce production of carbon pollution, European and North American countries demanded that it maintain the quotas they required from China, at the risk of exacerbating energy and environmental problems. This is a responsibility to be assumed by all those who expect and require China to adopt a specific economic and financial approach. At any rate, China's stability and growth not only represent an economic issue, they are also vital to the stability of the continent-country's system.

Another fast-growing phenomenon, in other parts of the southern hemisphere as well as China and Asia, is the irresistible tide of rapid urban growth. This trend means that the planet's population will be mainly urban and most large cities will be in China and Asia. The challenge is thus to develop territorial policies not only for rural areas (which remain significant in China, India and various southern countries) but also for urban spaces. The aim is to build or rebuild sustainable cities with new transport systems, ecological housing, and easy links between work and home, and, most importantly, to encourage supportive relations between inhabitants and neighbours.

Within these macroeconomic and geopolitical processes, which appear to override efforts to create a fruitful dialogue between people and exchanges between the Chinese and citizens from other parts of the world, we are separated not by cultural identities but by the expansionist policies imposed by those in power. Fostering and organizing direct dialogue between Chinese citizens and citizens from elsewhere in the world is therefore a key proposal in devising and building a new social, political and inter-cultural governance that opens up spaces for new voices and new pillars of a governance architecture firmly rooted in solidarity.

3. People, communities, civil society and a new relationship with nature

A third actor in governance architecture corresponds to a complex group of diverse subjects. It is made up of people, communities, civil society organizations and nature, which is also now perceived as a subject. Relations within this group are not always harmonious, and sometimes even conflictual.

When we refer to governance actors, we usually think about the state-civil society-business triangle. We need to add a fourth element: the community, which is not the same thing as civil society. A community refers primarily to the notion of identity. Civil society, on the other hand, refers mainly to the notion of citizenship. We thus need to rethink the relationship between community and civil society in order to build alliances and identify areas of disagreement, such as between women's rights and community practices that do not necessarily correspond to these rights.

This transitional phase embodies a highly diverse range of social subjects. Grouping them in with generic notions such as civil society, social movements and ethic or territorial communities could well hide the great diversity that characterizes them. Feminist movements have been influencing struggles for social emancipation since they emerged in the 1950s. Various youth movements in different stages have produced waves of social and cultural reform. We are now seeing a new wave driven by young people who are breathing new life into the fight for a fairer world. Although Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Greece, the USA, Chile, Colombia and other countries offer a diverse palette of geopolitical contexts, young people are playing a leading role in all these places and many more besides. Similarly, the movements led by native and peasant peoples continue to play an important role in many South American, African and Asian countries. Migrants also constitute real social movements that move around within continents and between them trigger significant social and econo-

mic changes, despite the restrictions and violations of their rights they endure. Other social movements, especially cultural, religious and artistic movements, are having a steadily growing and powerful effect on ways of life; this effect is diffuse and is not crystallizing into specific institutions or organizations.

This diversity could be a source of strength. It could also be a flaw hampering the links needed to shape wider social and political forces. Devising and creating new social, political and cultural organizations capable of channelling these actors' and movements' energies, while strengthening the diversity they embody, is possibly one of the most important of present-day challenges. The historical transition humanity has entered into will only be able to move towards new forms of sustainable, united and peaceful life if a majority of actors and social movements manage to build new political, social and cultural institutions where citizens can exercise their individual and collective rights and responsibilities in truly democratic societies. The main social and political organizations of the last century, particularly political parties and trade unions, are serving, and will surely continue to serve, as important agents of democratic systems. However, the reform of these organizations and links and alliances between all actors and social movements are key to the deep-reaching changes that are needed.

4. Local territories

We are seeing the "revenge" of local territories, until recently overlooked and buried in the macroeconomic and macro-political workings of world power architecture. It is now clear that a revaluation of local territories is vital to a new governance architecture. However, their configuration remains unclear: where does a local territory lie? In a neighbourhood or a district? What is the scale of urban territories and rural areas? Is a country a territory regardless of its surface area? Are there continental territories, such as Europe, South America, the Indian subcontinent and so on? Is not the whole world a territory?

A number of appropriate solutions do exist. The key is to link together the scales and levels of governance, keeping in mind that this does not mean trying to force good relations by failing to recognize that they are not necessarily harmonious between the different levels. Tensions between levels often outweigh the links. Active subsidiarity is not an automatic principle. It is important to develop it using arbitration bodies and consensus-building.

It is worth at this point highlighting a fundamental pillar of the new architecture of world power: localizing and territorializing the economy and power as much as possible, since citizenship can only be fully achieved in a *citizen-based territory*. This is based on the interdependency of the local and global levels, wherein the principle of subsidiary is fundamental. For example, let us consider the climate question. It is clear that this is a worldwide question that requires world governance. However, such governance cannot work without citizens making real compromises in their local territories. The territory is thus an element specific to the relationship between society and nature, the building block for achieving a symbiosis where the planet's sustainability can find a social expression that reflects the complex diversity of nature.

The process of rethinking and revaluing the roles of territories and the people who live there requires defining the relationship between territories and the management of common goods. Peoples and communities have a legitimate right to demand sovereignty over the common goods belonging to the territories they inhabit. Certain things have been saved from the rapacious grasp of transnational corporations and other predatory businesses by protecting common goods such as the biodiversity of woods, seas, lakes and so on. This protection is thanks to the resistance and wisdom of ancestral peoples, who have made care of biodiversity one of the fundamental pillars of their ways of life and relationship to nature. It is important that this care does not get appropriated by means of private or property principles that mean giving other people and territories, near or far, exclusive rights to it.

This is a complex issue that calls for far-sighted reflection. It is obvious that forests, lakes, rivers, mountains and steppes must not be delimited by state frontiers or property rights conferred by virtue of living there. In the same way, underground resources and air evidently cannot and should not be contained by frontiers. The problem is that the notion of capitalist ownership has prevailed over the sovereignty of peoples over their territories. Moreover, sovereignty should not be understood as a privilege, but as a responsibility towards the sustainability of life and the planet. This is an issue of local and world governance that needs to be explored in order to respect populations' sovereignty over the territories they inhabit while guaranteeing that the resources present on those territories are managed as goods common to all humanity.

The process for building a new architecture clearly needs to focus on bottom-up mechanisms. Existing

regional groupings, such as Mercosur, Asean, the European Union, the African Union, Unasur and so on, mainly created by inter-state agreements, should not be seen to provide the definitive model for regulating regional trade and political agreements. Social forums and citizen assemblies, for example, provide a means of linking territories to local levels within countries, and to regional, sub-continental and even multi-regional or multi-continental levels. Nevertheless, the linking up of territories, civil societies, communities and people on a global scale remains a distant prospect, one that reaches far beyond the goals achieved over recent decades by citizen initiatives in various regions of the world. Plenty of tasks still need doing to reinforce the social construction of territories and democratize them.

5. Hidden powers

Efforts to build a new governance architecture must not overlook the hidden powers, namely, illegal and illegitimate powers, or those that operate far beyond their legality and legitimacy and encroach upon other spaces, such as organized crime and drug, weapons and people trafficking networks. Other hidden powers have vast influence over the balances of power, such as media organizations, often with links to transnational corporations and ideologically-driven institutions. Hidden powers also represent a complex universe with economic, social and military ramifications that govern the processes for building a sustainable and responsible governance architecture. When democratic regulation bodies are fragile, the influence held by these hidden powers grows. The task of identifying, neutralizing, regulating and abolishing these hidden powers must also be explicitly included in the priorities for building a responsible world governance rooted in solidarity. Otherwise, the construction process will be constantly undermined by these hidden powers' anti-democratic, corrupt and criminal practices.

The process for building a new governance must go hand in hand with a process leading to a demilitarized society. Militarism is specific to the patriarchal system and should not govern relations between states and their populations. However, in the face of escalating current crises and during periods of cultural change, wars and oppression are causing irreparable damage to life and the planet. It is therefore important, within the process of transition towards demilitarized societies, to implement mechanisms for reforming the armed and security forces of the people who are the first victims of conflicts.

Conclusion

What must we do?

It is easy, at times, to feel powerless when faced with the cruelty of war, the undermining of values rooted in solidarity caused by a modernity based on superfluous consumption, growing inequality, corruption, mafia groups and natural catastrophes. However, despite the obstacles, there is also a growing feeling that we have the power to contribute to building a new, fair and democratic architecture of power. We know that the future is uncertain and will probably look very different from how we imagine it, but we have taken on the task of helping to build a responsible, plural and united world community. The new system of world governance that we are proposing will be a key element in that community.

We now need to take a new step forward, by means of socially- and politically-viable proposals for moving past the current impasse. A new generation of proposals should serve not only to assess the viability of the elements we have identified and propose further elements, but also to identify the means for implementing them and the social, political and cultural alliances needed to build the fair and democratic governance the world so desperately needs.

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