

# **Foundations for Biocivilization**

Contribution to the Peoples' Summit

Rio+20

June 2012

This document has been written by Cândido Grzybowski, Sociologist, Director of IBASE. It is based on presentations and discussions that focused on the ethical and philosophical foundations for biocivilization during the seminar organized by Ibase, the Forum for a new World Governance (FnWG) and Euralat in Rio de Janeiro from 10 to 12 August 2011. It also served as discussion paper for the group on Ethics at the Thematic Social Forum in Porto Alegre, January 24-29, 2012.

*Introduction*

*Foundations for Biocivilization*

**1 – Society and Nature**

**2 – The Ethics of Caring, of Coexisting and of Sharing**

**3 – Common Goods**

**4 – Requalifying the fight for justice**

**5 – Human Rights and Responsibilities**

**6 – Equality, Diversity and Individuality**

**7 – Peace and Democracy**

*A possible transition agenda*

## ***Introduction***

The crisis that we are immersed in, at the beginning of this 21st century, is a historical experience of everyday life, one that is more lived and felt than thought about. To set off a reflection about it is to follow an uncertain path, a path that is still to be laid, but which, nonetheless, points out as an urgent and necessary task. Humanity is facing the challenge of making essential choices. These options can either lead towards irreversible destruction of life and of the planet or effectively rebuild the basis and the relations between human beings, and of those with the biosphere, in the sense of nurturing a virtuous, and still achievable, process of social, environmental and ecological sustainability.

The diagnoses are various and alarming. Each day, indications of a lifestyle that is in collapse appear on the radio, on television, online, in newspapers and in magazines. We see violence and wars of all kinds, among and between people, as an intrinsic element of the way human societies live and organize themselves these days. Environmental destruction has also taken over our routines. Maybe in the past we did not have the means to experience the contemporary aspects of this destruction which is provided to us, today, by information and communication technologies. The thing is, we are invaded by daily news concerning the environment and we can feel the weather and nature giving signs of deregulation, with extreme floods and droughts, active volcanoes, devastating tsunamis. To speak of inequality and social exclusion is not a taboo anymore, but we actually do little or none to revert such situation, we simply go on living with it.

We also do not usually feel shocked with so many absurdly rich people around us; we take them as “normal abnormality”, so to speak. Here and there we react, but the financial takeover of life is so intense that the only thing we are able to do is moan for not being able to fight the modern dragons, the managers of the global casino that the world was transformed into, a machine that extorts and concentrates money, following the neoliberal globalization of the last decades. We possess many things in the midst of many deficiencies. The abundance of all sorts of material goods, restricted to 20% of world population, cannot efface the legion of people who go to bed every night feeling hungry. The destructive productivism and consumerism –creators of more luxury and more misery- have taken over our lifestyles. We have accumulated individual goods, collective poverty and human unhappiness.

The previous scenario is spiced up with a crisis of values and of utopias, a crisis of mobilizing beliefs. There is certain cynicism that spreads as cultural cancer, destroying the capacity of rising against fundamentalist individualism, and consecrating the absolute rule of winning at all cost, by being the smartest and the most competent, no matter how. The social tissue of coexisting and of sharing, by recognizing oneself as being responsible for guaranteeing equal rights for all, is severely threatened. There are, certainly, many forms of resistance all around, but they still have not formed a new historical wave of hope and transformation. Changes are, in fact, occurring; however they must articulate and grow stronger, giving birth to irresistible movements which are able to function as agenda setters and as creators of a new global historical horizon.

Among minority protestants and social movements – the alterworldists or activists of embryonic planetary citizenship, as I would rather define-, groups that still have little visibility in the public spaces, we adopt the expression *civilization crisis* to define the combination and the simultaneity of many crises. The *civilization crisis* characterizes, for us, the dominant system’s loss of capacity to answer planetary challenges, regarding both the preservation of the integrity of the planet and of life for future generations, and the correction of social and environmental injustice inter and intra people. The foundation, the legitimacy and the future of the Eurocentric western view -extensively of the North Atlantic, a couple of centuries old,

Inspiration for conquests, for slavery and for colonialism, for capitalism and socialism (its Siamese brother) - are melting, and may lead social and ecological destruction to irreversible levels. But to speak of a *crisis of civilization* can be a substitute analysis for an empty concept, responsible for hiding reality, more than for revealing it. We are in the urgent need for analytical synthesis that demonstrate and that lay ground for this concept, especially because such engagement is a basic condition to enable the growth and the spread of alternative proposals.

Thinking the basis of a new civilization and becoming part of the long process of social dismantlement and of reconstruction of culture, of economy and of power which this remodeling implies is an imperative for humanity. The idea of biocivilization moves towards the search for a new civilization paradigm. This movement is still incipient, and drifts amongst others that also constitute of legitimate forms of seeking for an answer. *Biocivilization* may point a direction, however it is still a concept that also ought to be built, in a longer process of dialogue- with reality, with historical processes, with the struggles and with the resistance and emancipation practices that are in course. We are speaking about a theorization that has to be elaborated. On the contrary, it may be the shortest path to substitute the analytical effort for the empty concept it covers.

Yet, this is only one part of the contradictions and of challenges presented by the imperative of creating exits for the *crisis of civilization* that we are undergoing. Values, ideas, mindsets, comprehensions and proposals are a necessary, but insufficient, condition. Every change needs carriers, collective subjects who see in this assemblage of values and of ideas the expression of the meaning of their own existence and political commitment, the expression of the utopic horizon to be reached and of the possibility of transforming conditions, relations and live structures. It is all about coherence between what is thought of and what is lived, and about how much analysis and proposals mobilize and move social struggles ahead, strengthening those collective subjects that are able to truly change *status quo*.

There is no historical change without social subjects, responsible for promoting disputes with other social subjects who do not desire any modifications. In other words, our search for systemic alternatives, and for alternatives to the *crisis of civilization*, proposing a new paradigm, is only viable if, on one side, it becomes the expression of diverse collective subjects' dreams and desires, considering the plurality of people and of territories around the world. On the other side, the viability of this proposal is dependant on alliances and on movements with enough strength and enough power to perform change, in their internal relations and in dominant culture, in their relations on a global level and state levels, in their internal relations and in dominant culture, in the relations between these factors worldwide, in the State and in the economy that sustain them, in the relations between humans and nature. The alternatives will, effectively, become alternatives if they are carried on by those who mobilize and by those who fight, starting from contradictory concrete situations in which they live and build themselves as subjects with identities and projects, as an expression of active citizenship. This is a possible task- human history is replete of examples-; however, it consists of hard work and can take, sometimes, more than one generation to be accomplished.

The present Proposal Booklet intends to be a contribution towards facing the questions explained beforehand. It is an open call to reflection aiming at transforming political action, "paving the way as it advances", as the poet Antonio Machado would say. It is more than a plan that has already been drawn. It is about building (not necessarily exhaustive) steps, ones clearer than others, always concerned about being consistency and coherence. These steps must be steps that motivate and can serve as work plots and systematics of analysis and reflection. At the same time, we propose steps that are adjacent to political action, that nurture, endow and fortify collective subjects and their fights for the transformation of live reality.

The booklet is organized in two parts. The first one is more inclined to political philosophy, to systematizing and to reflecting about the foundations of a new paradigm. It is important to remind ourselves that discussions about this new paradigm are already heating up struggles in the historic horizon of our lives, and that these struggles, if articulated, can point to possible transformation projects. The second part of this publication is about action, urgency and political tasks that, maybe, we should prioritize along with collective subjects who desire a different world, to enable the transition to a new paradigm of civilization that is built based on what we have, here and now.

### ***Foundations for Biocivilization***

The building of biocivilization is a monumental challenge, of philosophical and political order, since it is defined by the dismantling of philosophical and practical suppositions which have been established as common sense, and, for this reason, become pillars of the industrial, production-driven and consumerist civilization, based on sexist and racist relations, that invades our lives, shapes our minds and organizes economy and power in human society. We happen to see the destruction and inequality that the development model on which our society is based generates; nonetheless we are, in spite of all, driven to think that it is due to a lack of development, and to underdevelopment, that such hazards persist. The dominant dream and the dominant ideology from North to South and from East to West on Planet Earth is development, understood as making GDPs grow and having and consuming more material goods, no matter what it takes.

Only now, with the ghost of climate change hovering over us, a shadow of doubt arises and the ideological and cultural edifice, and reveals that the values and the ethics of this production-driven and consumerist society are shattered. The present moment is critical for raising causes, but nothing is going to happen on account of mere determinism. Transforming praxis must be reinvented. The herculean task of modifying unequal structures cannot be intimidated by the overwhelming capacity that dominant society has of reproducing itself without changing its basis. For biocivilization, it is not enough to put green make up on what we have and keep growing, with continuous social exclusion and destruction of common natural resources. We must recompose and rebuild the foundations of human civilization so that it stops acting as a threat to common sustainability, to life and planet integrity, no exceptions allowed.

It is important to clarify that we are talking about principles and ethical values whose axis are the relations of humanity with nature and with its rich biodiversity and the relations of humanity with its own social and cultural diversity. Principles and values are the infrastructure both of social ideals and social imaginary and of the practices in all spheres of life, of power and of the economies of everyday life, of group life and of family life. The attention here is to the principles and values that are already present, subordinately, in the interior of the civilization undergoing profound crisis; principles and values that can be enhanced as emerging forces of a new paradigm of thought and of action, a new benchmark that points to the historic possibility of biocivilization. It is not about obviousness, as some may think, but about the quest for establishing good sense in common sense, as the great intellectual architect of possible historical change, Gramsci, has taught us.

## 1 – Society and Nature

A central issue, discussed by all cosmologies, is our place as conscious, natural beings. It is not pertinent to analyze the referred philosophical and theological traditions here. What matters to us is the recognition of the assumption of the separation between humans and the biosphere as a perspective that leads to the centrality and to the domain of humans over all other forms of life, and over the natural basis that is fundamental to life itself. Such a philosophical concept- anthropocentrism- is one of the pillars of dominant Western civilization. The scientific and technological expansion is fed by such view and is the motor of industrialization.

Doubtlessly, to place human beings as sovereigns and, in themselves, to point out reason as the basis of objectivity, as opposed and superior to subjectivity (ethics, emotions, affinity, enjoyment and fear), throughout centuries, has produced extraordinary scientific and technical development against nature. This was certainly a great human accomplishment; even so, this process caused scientific and technique to become supreme values. Worst, the same basis –rationality- ended up justifying new forms of domain, of slavery and of exploitation. Hence, in the final analysis, the separation between humans and nature elected rationality as momentum and legitimating ideology for the constitution of industrial society, with its wealth and its poverty, its violence and its domain, its power to destroy nature and the power of people and social groups who oppose to it. This conception has not ended subjectivity, but it has subjugated the ethics of subjectivity to rationality.

In the crisis of dominant civilization, one question that emerges as a condition *sine qua non* is the need of recomposing and reconstituting our relation with nature. After all, we are, firstly, part of biosphere, as forms of natural life. Our lives do not stand above natural life, or parallel to it, but are inside it. To acknowledge that, we need to rebalance ourselves as human beings, owners of reason and sensibility, dependent on each other, multiple and diverse, able to create meanings and directions to life, but, as part of the totality of nature, responsible for knowing how to treat it, share it and regenerate it. Future generations are entitled the right to have the same natural conditions as we do. Plus, the integrity of the planet is a value itself and it is our right to preserve it. Living is, by definition, interacting and exchanging with nature. From the perspective of biocivilization, the definition of sustainability of human and natural life is the adaptation to nature's conditions and rhythms, following the lead of its changes and enriching its transformations by facilitating reintegration and regeneration.

The relation with nature, as a condition of life itself, is of exchange and dependency. The expressions of this relation are as diverse as biosphere and natural conditions are. The many *territories* –places where we live and organize ourselves as societies in relation with their environment, in urban or rural areas- express natural diversity and the interdependence of nature with biodiversity, as well as its symbiosis with the diversity of humans itself. Science and technique can be extremely useful, if their use is subordinated to an ethics of respect to the integrity of biosphere, of nature and of its physical and biodynamic processes, in the existing plurality of territories. To start seeing ourselves again as part of *territories*, with their possibilities and limits, may be the track to rebuild and reestablish the relations between society and nature, based on mutual respect and reciprocal giving and receiving, a cycle of reproduction and regeneration without destruction. It is all about going down a mental and practical path of *relocating ourselves and rediscovering* the bonds that connect us to the natural world, and reinforcing communitarian bonds in an interdependent planet, from locality to globality. We all know today that natural phenomena are interdependent on a planetary scale,

even if they are differently and specifically manifested on each *territory*.

This is the teaching that springs from the voices of those who, in the midst of the crisis we are in, do not conceive themselves as independent of their territories, such as the native peoples –especially Indians and tribal groups–, the *quilombola* communities, the fruit collectors of the forest and the rural communities around the world. Given the symbiosis between their lifestyles and natural life, they believe humanity must assure the preservation of what is left of biodiversity. In these groups, we are also able to rediscover a culture of coexistence and respect with nature that does not compromise the integrity of the various life forms, for it considers that all forms of knowledge, all feelings and all communication arise from nature.

The native people of the Andes, in particular, bring us the idea of *well being*, whose essence is recognizing oneself as part of nature and seeing in nature a subject that you must respect and relate with, *mother Earth*. Actually, their vision and their culture combine concepts and practices which are distinctive of a society that interacts with all natural components (air, Sun, Moon, water, rain, mountains, animals, plants...) considering them as subjects, just like us, humans. This complexity is difficult to be understood and to be translated into our Eurocentric cultural standards, incapable of understanding the radicalism of its own way of life. The truth is that the philosophy of the native Andean people can inspire us in the ethical and practical reconstruction of humanity, biocivilization.

However, we shall not be illuded: the path is not set, and there are many challenges to be faced. What is *well being* like in a slum, in an urban dumpster, in a refugee camp, in a community of threatened landless people? How can one rediscover *well being* when surrounded by endless eucalyptus or sugar cane fields? How to dream again of *well being* in our cities, designed for individual transportation, or in refrigerated buildings and fortified condos, where the rule is the most radical separation between us and the “outer” world? Which sense of community is there left to be rescued in what has become of humans inside this industrial and consumption-driven civilization? How to quit a lifestyle based on always having more, producing more garbage and destruction, and give place to being more - happier, more solidary, more conscientious of our collective and individual responsibility for regenerating, for reproducing and for preserving the integrity of natural basis -, sharing our natural elements with all those alive today and with our future generations?

The idea of biocivilization raises the centrality of the relation between biosphere and territories. Moreover, in order to return to a sustainable pattern, human civilization must resign anthropocentrism and radically change its vision and its relation with nature. Would this necessarily imply the adoption of a “biocentric” perspective? (see Gudinas, E. “La senda Biocéntrica: Valores intrínsecos, derechos de la naturaleza y justicia ecológica”. *Tabula Rasa*. Bogotá, (13): 45-71, jul./dic. 2010). Life, in all its forms, has the fundamental right to exist; this must be the founding principle, condition and limit of human civilization. For this to be possible, the “machine” for accumulating material and financial wealth must be deactivated. This machine is the engine of development. It combines the unlimited rule of market-based relations –attaching prices to all things, including natural goods– with industrialization in the search for more productivity, consumption and accumulation (see Spratt, S. et alii. [The Great Transition](#). London, The New Economics Foundation, 2010). Even though it is oriented to economic growth and regulated by the market, the industrialization machine produces more garbage than useful goods and services. It is essentially a system that works the logic of businesses designed to become obsolete in duration and functionality, to be able to sell more and to generate more profits. (Tasso Azevedo. “Feito para não durar”. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 20/07/2011, p.7)

## **2 – The Ethics of Caring, of Coexisting and of Sharing**

Here we are, facing the principles and the values that shall organize the human infrastructure of economy and of power towards biocivilization. In the productivist industrial and consumerist society, organized by trade value, those ethical principles are excluded or minimized, and are judged only by how much they contribute or not to market value. In the face of such exclusion, the human activities that they imply, although vital, are left out. Even so, those principles refer to the essential aspects of an economy that is directed to life (“*the core economy*”, as defined Spratt et alii. op.cit), as it is upon them that real life stands. For the same reason, power, to make sense, must create a social, cultural and institutional environment for those values to become reference to society as a whole.

Caring for the environment must be considered the basic principle to be followed, regardless of its interdependence with sharing and coexistence. Life cannot exist without caring. Caring is immanent in natural life, both of animals and of humans. There is no better example than mothers’ defense of newborns. And nothing is more horrifying than abandonment. Like a continuous line, that continues across generations, life reproduces itself, parallel to the death of living creatures, in a contradictory process in which life existence is preserved in the birth and death of those who enjoy it. All living beings on the planet carry this marvelous fate, and it operates based on the principle of caring.

Caring is an essential daily activity. The feminist movements have reminded us that, without caring, there would not be babies and children, and life would not carry on its course. Moreover, without caring and without love, what would human life be made of? Without caring, supervising, cooking and serving food, washing, in sum, without domestic economy, human life itself would not exist. It is in this space, considered private, that the essential human aspects are cultivated. Our elders, parents and grandparents, the sick people and those who have special needs would be condemned if it weren’t for domestic, daily, family care. This essential work is performed mostly by women, who carry the burden of double work shifts and suffer sexist domination.

We are, in reality, facing a terrible inversion, in which the most fundamental – caring – is considered as belonging to a private and valueless sphere, in the eyes of our dominant economy, to which the market occupies the central position. Even worst, when our society disqualifies, exploits and dominates women, it ends up privatizing family relations and legitimating gender-based domination. What does “home management”, in its traditional connotation, mean, if the sense of “home” itself is narrowed down to private life, where gender domination and gender violence encounter no limits?

It would be limited, and, at its own way, an acceptance of the submission to market principles, to say that what we see here is non-paid work, exclusively. Indeed, we are facing the most utter and evident denial of the fundamental equality of human beings, men and women, and the declination of the ethical principle of caring, which is the basis of human sustainable economy. It is indispensable to recognize and to fight the domestic exploitation and the private exploitation implicit in the essentially feminine activity of caring, for the sake of the survival of our species, and to drive away from the system of vicious accumulation which sustains the industrial capitalistic civilization and, I regret to say, subaltern socialism. Subjugated domestic feminine work is critical for the reproduction of the dominant system. But even capitalism cannot dispense or eliminate caring.

We have the duty to recover caring, as the only way to retrieve family from the privatization process is being submitted to and to break down the rules of gender domination inside family structures – since it is inside family structures that humanity’s most valuable asset is nurtured, the daughters and sons who will guarantee its continuity. Simultaneously, we must elect “caring” as the most important principle of our new economy, of our new household



management – the symbiosis of human and natural life, the indispensable community life in which everything is a result of coexistence and of sharing, and so are the economy and the power that result from this organization, and in which territories are organized to live according to the potentials and to the limits of the *locus* we occupy, on local and global levels.

Caring is imperative inside human lives and in our relation with biosphere. The atmosphere has been carelessly colonized by the carbon emissions provoked by transnational economic corporation, companies owned by the richest and the most powerful, and by consumerism. Humanity is nowadays threatened, as a living species, as well as all other forms of life are. Without caring, the colonial quest for native peoples and for their territories was unleashed, and, today, the dispute for the planet's natural resources continues. Aiming for careless gain in productivity, we are creating genetically modified seeds and destroying the existing biodiversity. With our lack of caring, we are polluting water, destroying oceans, deforesting and creating deserts. The fact is that it is impossible to consider sustainability without the principle and the ethical value of caring.

Caring has its grounding in the principles of coexistence and of sharing. Caring arises from community life and from friendship. Those kinds of relationships extend caring outside of the family nucleus in social terms. The cultural aspects, the imagination, the dreams and the beliefs that will convey meaning to living –love- all stem from caring; it is based on caring that cooperation is developed and that common interest arises. Coexistence and sharing are indispensable for communication, for language, for learning. Knowledge, in its turn, would not exist if it were not for sharing.

Nothing is more aggressive to such principles than the dominant lifestyle in our cities, which were designed for individual cars, who drive side by side in our streets filled with astonishing human distance, with locks and security schemes that block and distance each other, and buildings surrounded by gates and surveilled twenty four hours a day by private guards. Fortunately, also in this scenario, it is possible to observe some resistance grounds, in rural and urban areas, where caring, coexisting and sharing are fostered and create other possibilities of well living.

Is there anything more against humanity than intellectual property? Is it, after all, possible to imagine knowledge as individual creation, independent of anonymous contributions made by a chain of human beings, from this and from past generations, who divide their mistakes and their achievements?

The principles and the ethical values of caring, coexistence and sharing ought to be in the center of the reconstruction of our relation with nature, being nature the indispensable basis of human life and of all forms of life. Yet, they must also be in the center of the new economy and the new power. Sustainable economy is only possible when founded on caring, which leads to respecting the integrity of natural life and to using natural resources in a way that doesn't create garbage or destroy, but renews and regenerates. To care is to extend the validity of material goods, fixing and conserving them. To care is to exchange with nature, respecting it, without exceeding the ecological footprint that will assure nature's integrity to present and future generations. To preserve natural living species (seeds and animals) – biodiversity – is about caring, and also about establishing conditions of sharing and of coexistence. To coexist and to share, as defined here, imply the radical questioning of the principle of individual land ownership, of owning a piece of the crust of the Earth. Private property excludes the non-owners of having access and interacting with the piece of nature that was considered belonging to someone. Extensively, the territorial domination of one group or one people above others, defined as the sovereign right over certain people or certain territory, is the denial of the principles hereby defined as the basis for biocivilization. Not to mention we all need natural resources in order to survive. How is it possible to invoke the principle of sovereignty to avoid sharing?

We have clear inspirations to feed a live philosophy, in the sense of modifying the civilization pattern we live in. One vital task is to promote dialogue intra and inter movements, which operates new syntheses combining all that is understood in the concept of *well being* defined by native peoples, with the *caring* in feminist theorization and the shared knowledge on *free software - copyleft* platforms, agroecology and solidary economies. Not to mention the know-how that comes from *profound ecology* and ecological ethics. An arduous and contradictory task, still without considerable milestones and remarkable initiatives. In the plurality of resistance forms lies the emancipatory good sense, builder of new worlds. It is not about reaching reductionist syntheses; to build a philosophy dedicated to biocivilization is to take a step further, to anticipate paths and to set goals of principles and of actions to be achieved, creating new dynamics for collective subjects engaged in reaching a sustainable planet and sustainable ways of life.

### **3 – Common Goods**

A new civilization paradigm will only be reachable when we fight the logic of associating happiness to having more and more material goods aimed at individual consumption and to accumulating more wealth. Sustainability of life and of the planet, here and now, and for future generations, depends on imploding this mindset. The main cause of anguished competition for wealth and for natural resources, on a global scale, is such destructive logic, which affects the integrity of nature and bears extreme forms of inequality and social exclusion. The existing civilization is ecologically and socially unsustainable.

The diagnoses of the hazards of our civilization are many, all of them alarming. It is not, though, within the scope of this booklet to do a critical study of these diagnoses. What matters here are the conditions of transformation of the currently dominant system and the constitution of a new paradigm. It is within this framework that the question of common goods acquires strategic relevance. By organizing ourselves around common goods, we will be able to create a new existence and a new lifestyle, not only in relation to our subjectivities, but also in relation with nature. We will face the possibility of raising biocentric models of social, economic, political and cultural organization, alternative to the development patterns we nowadays observe.

But, after all, what are common goods? Being common is not defined *a priori*; it is more of a result. Goods are not common by definition, they are socially made common. Commonness is not an inherent quality of the resource, but a characteristic of the social relation which defines it. Generating common goods is a special way of organizing social life (Silke).

Which social processes lead to common recognition and common management, condition for the definition of common goods? The need that is felt, lived, desired and approached collectively produces common resources. At the same time, the hectic seeking of individual capitalistic accumulation has been the most violent form of enclosure and destruction of common goods. Rescuing and regenerating common goods is more than simple resistance, it is the creation of a different way of living.

Humanity has always developed along resources that were considered common. Some - such as water, rivers and oceans – are identified with life itself, and, therefore, considered essential. Others, as they have always been treated as common by custom, for instance: mountains, forests and their products, roads, gathering places such as public parks, and sacred places, for example cemeteries and places designated to prayer. Other resources are, moreover, considered common since they are essential elements for defining group, tribal and collective identities: some examples include language, music, dancing, singing and religion. To all above, we must add knowledge, in its most varied and rich

comprehensions, forms of communication and applications to the organization of life and in the interaction with nature. Those are goods of different types: some are collectively produced and used, some are natural gifts. The collective aspect of such resources was constituted throughout time, along with their collective managing. To be part of a group or of a community is also to have the right to share collective resources.

In view of this, it would be enormously limited to consider collective resources as a form of property which is opposed to private property. Doubtlessly, if they are defined as collective resources, they cannot be object to private property; plus, their common definition overreaches the matter of property itself. It is of full importance to highlight this distinction, in order not to insulate common resources in a public or state-own property regime, since these resources are the anchorage of social life.

The real history, and, especially, the historical process which has created the conditions for the emergency and for the development of the industrial capitalistic society we know, is that of heist of collective resources through enclosure and private domain. This has led to the extreme commodification of common goods, one of the cornerstones of the expansion of capital and one of its most evident paradoxes. Even worst is the sale and purchase of life forms. The radicalism of this threat to life and to common goods, together with the social resistance it yields, has to do with the unsustainability of this process. It consists of serious risk to the planet and to human life as we know it.

The reversion of the commoditization of common goods one of the unavoidable conditions for the overcoming of the civilization crisis, and for moving towards sustainable alternatives for life and for the planet. It is through social fight that common resources are rescued, concrete and symbolically, enlarging the scope of collectivity itself. One of the most evident fights, maybe because it is grounded in different realities, is against the privatization of water. All around the planet, there are registers of fights for collective access to water in accordance with the principles that were described beforehand. Although more diffuse, the struggles for a clean atmosphere and for preserving world climate from the impacts of carbon emissions are starting to gain volume and intensity. New concepts, such as the colonization of the atmosphere, of oceans and of biodiversity, by corporations and by the richest countries, are growing denser, and, hence, are impelling these resources towards the concept of collective goods. Social demands such as the claim for *free softwares* are leading the fight against the privatization of knowledge and for the notion of knowledge as a fundamentally collective resource. In this context, the fight against all forms of intellectual property rises as a precondition for the flourishing of common goods and for the constitution of biocivilization. The wholeness of the native Andeans' view of well being resides in the way nature and common resources are conceived and dealt with.

To bring common goods to the center of the debate is, in reality, to throw light upon all conceptions of life. The question is, how can we convert our lifestyles, prioritizing common goods? Thinking of our cities, are they common resources? Does our management of urban areas – as human-made structures, organized for all – bring us close to treating them as collective resources? Can the privatizing, excluding and individualistic cancer that rules the cities, prioritizing what is individual (cars, property, security, etc) instead of citizenship be removed in order to accentuate common interests? Regarding agriculture, can are forests be submitted to the logic of agribusiness, or should they be retrieved as common goods? Isn't it an attempt against common goods to sell forests which haven't been cut off in exchange for carbon credits, in order to guarantee a "green" economy? Biofuels do not attend the growing demand for caring and conserving seeds and biodiversity; are they the newest trend in business or a natural collective inheritance to be cared for, exchanged and shared by all humans? How can we break the logic of business and privatizing? Are the conflicts generated by extractivism around the world (for instance, oil and minerals) motivated by the distribution of the fantastic pay off they bring, or because of strategic territories for extractivism, where people who are intimately related

to the management of natural resources survive?

To rescue, to enlarge and to create new common goods is one of the basis of biocivilization, and the essence of the structuring a new paradigm of civilization in opposition to the one we see in crisis. Common goods do not necessarily deny industrialization, but subordinate it to the logic of common interests. Biocivilization is not against the benefits and the utility that are offered by regular goods, they simply reinforce the principles of caring and sharing. To strengthen their aspect of common resources is to reinforce the social, community spirit, the collective dimension of life, and the notion of life as an experience that is only achieved in relation with other individuals, with other live beings and with nature in its contradictory and fantastic wholesomeness.

#### **4 – Requalifying the fight for justice**

Social justice, founded upon the recognition of the principle of equality in the condition of human beings, is part of the most different philosophical and religious traditions. Given the inequality of social reality intra and inter peoples throughout history, the fight for justice and equality has been the “engine of history”. Never has humanity been as unequal as in the present moment, of excluding abundance and scandalous richness/unbearable poverty, and never has the true fight for justice and equality been so evident. Also, never has humanity been so largely conscious of the imperative of equity and of the threat presented by social exclusion, poverty and all other forms of inequality and social injustice as in the situation hereby defined as the crisis of civilization.

But what does “fight for social justice” mean? With the dismantlement of real socialism and the hegemony of globalized capitalism, the matter of inequality and social justice has become even more urgent. The growth of inequality inside and between countries has intensified, though not fragmented, the fight for equality. The libertarian and emancipatory utopias have lost their enchantment with the crises in the transformation theories which are based on the inevitable protagonism, not very close to real historical processes, of certain social classes over other subaltern groups. Plus, real socialism presented itself as an alternative way of maximizing industrialized productivism (“productive forces”). Effectively, socialist revolutions have accelerated and deepened the destruction of nature. In the void that was left, we observed the growth of religious and political forms of fundamentalism, with their own patterns of violence and of exclusion. Anyhow, the fight against inequality of all kinds is still a potential unifying motto, as the World Social Forum’s recent processes reveal. This fight is intimately associated with the ascent of different collective identities and subjects, in a new way of doing politics, in this dynamic mosaic of multiple possibilities of uprising planetary citizenship.

The problem of inequality is that of a relation between forces, of power relations. Its complexity cannot be reduced to the size of monetary income, no matter how appalling the *per capita* income statistics are. The forms of inequality, as forms of social domination, are an intrinsic characteristic of the production-driven, consumerist industrial society, of the society of “having” and “accumulating”. This kind of society necessarily creates excluded and dominated groups, so that “having” and “accumulating” in the hands of few is able to come true. This “machine” privatizes and commoditizes / steals common resources, depriving huge contingents from the access to autonomous lives and organizations, not leaving them a choice rather than submitting to capitalistic exploitation. The ideology of “having” and “consuming”, as an expression of human happiness, has penetrated minds and hearts. In the process of producing and accumulating, this form of organization and this wealth development model produce, at the same time, social and environmental inequality, imposing, however, its consumption ideology to society as whole, turning it into a perpetual

hostage of business growth.

One dimension that must be incorporated into the requalifying of social inequality is, exactly, environmental destruction. As a society, we already consume more resources – our ecological footprint – than the planet can take. We are practicing, today, injustice throughout generations, for we are not leaving a natural environment that is able to regenerate, as we found, to future inhabitants of Earth. Considering inequality and social injustice, environmental destruction, which jeopardizes future generations, must be seen as a fundamental aspect of current social inequality. After all, the destruction of the environment is socially unequal, with some groups and societies being more responsible for this catastrophe than others.

Therefore, it is essential to match the fight against social inequality with the fight against environmental destruction. To think that, regretfully, it will be necessary to consume and to destroy a small extra piece of natural life in the name of social justice – to advance with the present development model and to promote economic growth in order to create jobs and distribute income – is a way of veiling reality and of continuing a predatory income production mode, totally unsustainable from a social and environmental viewpoint. The confrontation of social injustice depends on the uprising against unequal environmental destruction; it is not a matter of one or the other, both fights must occur simultaneously. This synchronicity requalifies the social fights of our times, bearing in mind the achievement of biocivilization.

Anyway, in spite of the importance of the importance of the considerations above, regarding the importance of a coalition between the contemporary fights for social and environmental justice, the integration of both political platforms is not enough for building a new paradigm. We are still living in an anthropocentric world, where there is clear injustice between humans of this and of future generations. How do nature and natural integrity stand? To what extent does this standing affect the fight for justice between us, humans?

We are part of nature, but we do not tend to see ourselves like that. The revision of the relation between society and nature has been considered, here, as the foundation of a biocentric civilization- biocivilization. In this sense, an ethical and philosophical reflection based on three dimensions - social, socioenvironmental and ecological- arises. Is it possible to affirm that the question of natural ethics, natural rights and natural justice exists *per se*? Isn't that what is concluded from the cosmic vision of well being and profound ecology, in which nature and its elements are the subject of rights? Could we be against the immanent right of seeds and animals to their maximum achievements as live beings, of life chain to be as it is, of the atmosphere and the climate not to be affected? How does all this requalify the fight for social justice? No matter how difficult these questions turn out to be, the search for answers to these profound enigmas puts us on the tracks of biocivilization, even if many generations have to lean upon them.

## **5 – Human Rights and Responsibilities**

In our political culture, the confrontation of injustice – generated, reproduced and deepened by what I hereby call dominant civilization, tend to be associated and confused with the idea of accessing and guaranteeing human rights. Regardless of the relevance of the legal definition of human rights, what matters here is to consider them as rights whose expression is legitimate in all cultures and realities. The political quest for rights is a social dispute, organized around the desire to be included in society and to be part of its totality, free from discrimination and inequalities. As part of this process, rights constantly qualify the society in which they are fought for.

Human rights are not a privilege. To be defined as human, rights must be equal to all. If they are only applied

to part of society or to specific groups, classes or people, what we have are expressions of privileges which are connected to power. For this reason, it is fundamental to consider human rights as a reflection of the quality of social relations in a given society. The fight for equal rights, even if those rights haven't yet been recognized, qualifies collective subjects, transforming society and its structures and practices of organization and internal administration.

It is based on such comprehension of rights – as common resources of a political culture in permanent construction and dispute, being equal rights a reference for all – which they become important to social reengineering aiming at sustainability. To be the trigger of social transformation, the fight for human rights shall not be attached to legally established privileges, defined by the powerful as “rights”, as part of a strategy to camouflage the character of their class domination. Also, common law, jurisprudence, treaties and agreements end up freezing unbalanced force relations, expressing them as rights, when, in fact, they are not necessarily so.

At this point, a fundamental question, still not so present in the contemporary political culture of human rights, but which must be incorporated to it, appears: there are no human rights without human responsibilities. The condition for one to be the subject of rights, of all rights, is to recognize the same status for all other humans. These are the two sides of the political relation of equality which human rights, as common resources, refer to. In other words, in order to have rights, one must, parallelly, be responsible for the rights of all others. This is a shared relationship, and, as such, one of co-responsibilities.

In response to the crisis of civilization, some projects have been released, in the sense of opposing the definition of a new Human Rights body (Declarations, Conventions and Treaties). This may serve as reference and basis for the construction of a new paradigm. The risk to be avoided is the insulation of the fight for human rights by present contradictions and by profoundly unequal relations. For capitalist, imperialist and industrial *status quo*, it will be easy to define responsibilities and to handle them over exactly to those who have had their rights denied by the system.

As a mindset and a political philosophy for biocivilization, aiming for the inclusion of all, with no distinctions, and at the sustainability of life and of the planet, the Charter of Human Responsibilities must be built in connection with the deepening of a Human Rights Charter, as defined in this text. In addition, according to the principles here exposed, it will be fundamental to review human rights and human responsibilities, integrating them to the matters of ecological justice, of the right to the integrity of biosphere and to the capacity of natural regeneration of the planet. In this sense, human rights and responsibilities are the pillars of a new paradigm. This is the direction followed by the Charter of the Peoples, which is already being democratically constructed. The Charter of the Peoples mobilizes and motivates diverse collective subjects all around the globe. It starts to be an expression of the diversity of cultures and of voices, territories of what we are as a human society. To transform it in a “Charter of the Peoples for Biocivilization” may be a way of connecting with live citizenship forces, and amplifying them, towards the huge task that comes ahead.

## **6 – Equality, Diversity and Individuality**

Here we are, facing principles and values which condense the product of humanity's cultural creations and political conquests. All this did not happen at the same time, nor did it include all peoples. Its achievement is the result of dispute. It is all about historical processes in which different groups and social classes, from different generations, have staged emancipating social fights, bearing in mind one or more of these principles and values, marking social structures and defining the conditions of life and of action for the future.

Today, it is impossible to think of alternatives for humanity itself and for human relation with the planet

without thinking of the paradoxical articulation of these principles and values. After all, we may not be anthropocentric in conception and in action, but we cannot deny that the change in patterns of destruction and unsustainability is fully dependant on us, just as the commitment to a new paradigm is. To ask oneself about biocivilization is to ask oneself about what we, humans, are willing to revise and to give up, making place for new priorities and for life in its totality.

Equality as a principle is forcing us to adopt a more holistic, planetary perspective, not only in human (inter and intra generational) terms, but also from a natural standpoint. How to guarantee that all living beings have the right to live, knowing that competition is the basic condition of life itself?

Diversity as a value and as a principle is a considerably recent affirmation. It has to do with identity, in other words, with being alike, and, at the same time, being different. It has brought to the center of human fights the multiple forms of identity creation, forms which cannot be submitted to opaque models of equality. In reality, equality, in order to be just, ought to respect diversity among individuals, cultures and societies. On the other hand, diversity cannot be used to justify inequality.

Diversity, from a natural standpoint, is the law of nature. It is in diversity that nature affirms itself. In other terms, diversity is part of social, environmental and ecological ethics. For the same reason, it is a fundamental element of biocivilization: equality in diversity; diversity as counterpart to standardization, whether it is social or environmental; diversity as a condition for sustainable life and for planet integrity; diversity as a form of achieving equality. This is valid when facing sexism, racism, homophobia and all other forms of discrimination.

It is never too much to remind us of the importance of conquering and building individuality as a condition of emancipation, throughout human history. Society, collectivity and interdependence are essential elements of human lives. Nonetheless, so that they do not become forms of domination, it is essential that they are consciously apprehended, that individuality does not disappear inside and because of them. Life is this transaction between individual options and desires and the options and desires of others. Individual independence is nothing more than the ethical and political affirmation of the unique experience of each person's life, and of each one as part of a collectivity.

It is very different from conservative individualism, which denies the dimension of being part of a collective, depending on it and, in relation to it, building individuality. Individualism is the promotion of *self made men*, which is behind the principles of dominant capitalist civilization – sexism, homophobia, racism, the rule of the strongest, the smartest and the most competitive. Individualism is, in last analysis, the denial of the social sphere, and of the principles which establish collectivity and individuality. After all, individuality can only exist when based on common principles and values, which defend the same right to individuality to all, indistinctively. Individuality is a condition of social emancipation, of fighting for justice, of construction of biocivilization. Individualism is the reaffirmation of dominant productivism and consumerism, of individual accumulation, of wealth-concentrating mechanisms and of natural destruction.

All the considerations above infer the matter of culture and the importance of cultural diversity for the sustainability of life and of the planet. It is through culture that individualities are managed; also, culture is the axis for determining common humanity and intersubjective diversity, basic conditions for the interaction between emancipated human beings, and of them with the use/conservation and regeneration of natural life. A vibrant culture is a diverse culture, which values the potential of the people by whom it is constituted, and which enables the realization of sustainable ways of life. This is one more founding aspect of society, economy and power for biocivilization.

## **7 – Peace and Democracy**

It is not possible to achieve biocivilization without peace; it is an essential condition, bearing in consideration all the principles and pillars that were highlighted. Imperialism, warfare, wars and the violence that has been culturally and socially internalized in economic and power structures support dominant civilization. The productivist and consumerist society we all know feeds from conquerors, from exploitation, from debt slavery, from inequality and social exclusion on global levels, from the intense use of global resources. In this sense, peace is not only an objective for biocivilization; it is an essential condition for sustainability of all forms of life to flourish.

Here we meet the question of a strategy for biocivilization. Surely, the dismantlement of all forms of present domination, and the transformation of cultures and of unequal relations, of minds and hearts, are pieces of political engineering defined by practice and by daily processes in which generous, bold innovation must be motivated by dreams and by utopia, mobilizing and creating momentum.

There is no historical process without movement and without the dispute of social forces. The main question here is how to promote constructive dispute, renouncing armed violence of all kinds, and betting on peace. I loudly affirm something that congregates different visions, ideas and proposals inside World Social Forum: the strategy must be to democratize democracy.

It is not within our possibilities to synthesize all the present debate about democracy, its limits and its possibilities. We must make our option for democracy clear. The previous statement might be tautological; however, it expresses the most important strategic option: the construction of a possible track towards biocivilization must cross the uncertain and tortuous sidetracks of democracy, through the radicalization and the democratization of democracy itself.

This affirmation will make more sense in the face of the 30 years of active citizenship that Ibase (see Grzybowski, C., Braga, V., e Motta, E. *Indicadores de cidadania; uma proposta do Ibase em construção*, 2011). Democratization is understood as “equalization of asymmetrical and unequal social structures through political action. In this, huge transforming potential is revealed. Democracy is a method of political action, of searching for possibilities in difference and in oppositions, resulting in a feasible historical agreement” of uncertainty. Democracy is defined as a process, more than an objective. Hence, “objectives are searched for, are reached and are qualified by the **democratic method**, in a **process of collective construction**, of permanent dispute, of relative and transitory losses and victories.

We are facing a possible route in the present moment of social dispute. For this reason, different collective social subjects, with their influence, alliance and coalition power, constitute themselves as constructive forces of possibility, submitting legitimate fights to democratic rules and principles. Institutions reveal the state of democracy and its legality, but it are permanently targeted by new legitimate demands of collective subjects who, in the center of civil society, review the existing understanding of legality and give place to new (and also temporary) rights and responsibilities.

Focusing on the construction of biocivilization, we must consider, here, that democracy will open tracks that enable the transformation of the structures of present society if collective subjects, oriented by the ideal of a new civilization paradigm, tension it in such direction. In other words, participative citizenship is the key. “The essence of democracy is direct action, on the streets and on public spaces [like the recent examples in the Arab world have utterly shown us], but it does not end there. Democracy always implies in more participation, and confuses itself with participation. The quality of participation defines, in last analysis, the quality of democracy itself” (id. *ibid.*)

From a radical perspective, such as the one we adopt at Ibase, democracy is simultaneously moved by the ethical principles and values of equality, of diversity, of solidarity and of participation, but into practice through



democratic action and active citizenship. Actions and objectives are based on ethics. Such a foundation can transform all that has been said before about the essence of biocivilization into a possible utopia, in which imagination, formulation and action aims the transformation of impossible change into possibility.

Actually, both the imperative of peace and the method to promote de democratization of democracy are the transforming catalyst of what we have today, into biocivilization. The roads to be built are built in the movement of walking further; they cannot be set *a priori* for all the territories around the planet, with their natural and cultural diversity of people, in the search for *well being*. When connected and recognizedly interdependent, we can build a new architecture of power for biocivilization, through democracy and peace, from local to global levels.

### *A possible transition agenda*

The construction of a new paradigm does not happen within few days; it is a long and contradictory historical collective process which requires the efforts of many generations. Dream, reflection about practice, the genius and the boldness of some, the commitment and the hard work of others, systematizing and research, all of this nourishes the process. We are facing a process whose results we cannot preview, in spite of the definition of the starting point and the tracing of a direction to follow, although this direction can change.

A process of similar proportions will necessarily be permeated by conflict, disputed, made of coming and going, marked by advancements and setbacks, influenced by the correction of paths and of the strategies to be followed; in sum, it will be made of discoveries and of inevitable failures, involving groups, communities and social movements, political spheres and power groups, economic, cultural and religious organizations, from local to world level.

This is not a homogenous process, despite the interdependence we have reached throughout the constitution and the development of capitalist industrial society, especially with recent globalization. The multiple diversities – of natural conditions, of forms of social and economic organization, of political and cultural management – will necessarily exert influence upon the process and upon its results.

All this is necessary, but insufficient. Without political will and determination applied to the search of a new paradigm, the most probable to happen is the least daring and transformative: adapting to the dominant model and mitigating its impact, without effectively changing its logic. This is the direction pointed by the most advanced proposal that stems from industrial capitalism, for instance, the “new deal” proposed by green economics. It is all about a new front for capitalist businesses, in order to keep growing and accumulating, and not a proposal for transforming economy and power in direction of what I hereby define as biocivilization.

This second part of the booklet, following the discussion proposed in the first part, seeks to raising proposals regarding what must be done here and now, starting immediately, inside the system, exploring its contradictions and amplifying the potential of emerging new possibilities, planting the seeds and guaranteeing a virtuous process of democratic transformation that seeks the transition to biocivilization. We must change daily practices, such as consumption patterns and ways of living, working and coexisting, in order to implement caring for what is fundamental, starting from our

community, our town or our city.

This is an open collection of proposals, which, on their turn, are not yet totally clear. They are proposals under construction and an invitation to reflection, to engaging, to action, to the formulation of new proposals. To simplify, the points raised have been arranged by themes, by great fronts of collective action. If the route proposed here is able to motivate the collective subjects involved in fights for the sustainability of life and of planet, certainly it will be corrected and enlarged, and new matters will be object of discussion. This is the most immediate objective of Part Two, taking into account the near presence of a collective process: both the occurrence of the Forum for Environmental and Social Justice, in January 2012, in Porto Alegre, and the subsequent collective gathering on occasion of the Rio + 20 summit, in June 2012.