Authority, Power and Agency in the Work of Building Transnational Sustainable Communities within the European Union

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Abstract

The long-term ecological, financial and social sustainability of the European Union is dependent upon deepening the level of integration among not only the governments of its member states, but also among the people and the diverse communities which inhabit these states – which include their citizens, associations, local and regional representatives, educational institutions, businesses and cooperatives and the ecosystems which support them. Sustainable integration among the nation-states of the EU requires an increasing level of cooperation and connectivity on multiple levels. Such integration includes not only the monetary dimension of relations, but also the manner through which member states are linked by shared ecological, social, cultural and ethical practices. To this end, the project of this paper is an attempt to explore how the work of transnational community building within the EU is fortified and diminished by competing definitions of *authority*, *power* and *agency*. Its thesis is guided by the contention that the EU's current efforts to promote integration are diminished when the principal focus of relations among member states is defined through financial instruments, institutional structures which support them, and market-oriented regulations. This paper will argue that while the financial dimension of relations among EU member states is foundational to the long-term viability of the EU, it's long term sustainability is equally dependent on the development of learning and caring communities, shared technologies, and the acknowledgement of common ecological realities.

Section one of this paper offers some fundamental criticisms of the current state of relations between EU member states, with particular attention paid to developments and trends of the last two decades, and will rely on an analysis from the perspective of the fields of sociology of institutions and organizations, and political science. This approach will place an emphasis on examining what we view as some of the weaknesses of the prevailing "vision" guiding the way relations are defined and maintained among EU member states, which privileges market efficiency and the language of financial instruments in the practice of diplomacy among EU actors.

The second part of this paper proposes an alternative vision of what we believe the EU has the potential to become – a body of nation-states whose connectivities and sense of fiduciary responsibilities are grounded in the promotion and fortification of transnational sustainable communities, which have the capacity to meaningfully cross individual nation-

state boundaries and build bridges which constructively link populations divided by language, cultural identity and perception. We propose that the language of diplomacy that could guide the EU in this direction is found within the transnational ecological crisis that all member states commonly face – one in which the power of human differences and competing narratives are diminished by the acknowledgement of the common requirements for survival: potable water, arable land and clean air. It is through this reality that member states are being invited to see in a clearer sense the limitations of an economic realpolitik view of relations among nation-states, and in its place to embrace the guiding principles of *ecological realism*.

Last year, a Greek student declared on his blog: "The developing European economic crisis has sparked much debate over the economic future of many European countries and has cast doubt on the survival of the European Union itself. Initiating in Greece and propagating its way through Portugal and Spain,(…) these financial calamities have created an overdependence on International Monetary Fund bailout packages (…) compounded by an incompatibly high euro(..) This puts many European countries in economic and political peril."[1] Significantly the student named his message Ethos Logos Pathos, clearly a reference to the Old Greek trilogy used as a philosophical understanding of human life, and also as the basic structure in classic rhetoric.

Since 2008, we have been living amidst the unfolding consequences of the financial crisis, which is a crisis of technology (techno-logos). When markets, firms and states adopt that *techno-logos* as the only way to resolve all the problems, global and local, they do so through imposing ostensibly rational rules on people - individuals, families, communities, and nations. Moreover, a majority of officials, politicians and experts are convinced that beyond this imperative *logos*, the "others," people must also accept a new *ethos*, a new habitus, whose rulings are essentially a matter of technical standards and legality. But do these same officials understand or care about the *pathos* among the lives of humans reduced to becoming producers, consumers, or debtors?

The long-term ecological, financial and social sustainability of the European Union is dependent upon deepening the level of integration among not only the governments of its member states, but also among the people and the diverse communities which inhabit these states – which include their citizens, associations, local and regional representatives, educational institutions, businesses and cooperatives and the ecosystems which support them. Sustainable integration among the nation-states of the European Union requires an increasing level of cooperation and connectivity on multiple levels. Such integration includes not only the monetary dimension of relations, but also the manner through which member states are linked by shared ecological, social, cultural and ethical practices. To this end, the project of this paper is an attempt to explore how the work of transnational community building within the EU is fortified and diminished by competing definitions of "authority," "power" and "agency". Its thesis is guided by the contention that the EU's current efforts to promote integration are diminished when the principal focus of relations among member states is defined through financial instruments, institutional structures which support them, and market-oriented regulations. This paper will argue that while the financial dimension of relations among EU member states is foundational to the long-term viability of the EU, its long term sustainability is equally dependent on the development of learning and caring communities, shared technologies, and the acknowledgement of common ecological realities. To this end, this paper is divided into two sections.

Section one of this paper offers some fundamental criticisms of the current state of relations between EU member states, with particular attention paid to developments and trends of the last two decades. In order to avoid an overly descriptive analysis focusing on a long list of events, or an exhaustive examination of the institutional structures and processes of EU governance, our intent here is to propose some conceptual frameworks which can serve to provide a basis for engaging some of the key limitations facing the EU in its current form. This portion of our paper will rely on an analysis from the perspective of the fields of sociology of institutions and organizations, and political science. This approach will place an emphasis on examining what we view as some of the weaknesses of the prevailing "vision" guiding the way relations are defined and maintained among EU member states, which

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[1]   http://logospathosethos.com/articles/2011/8/10/the-future-of-the-european-union.html.

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The second part of this paper proposes an alternative vision of what we believe the EU has the potential to become – a body of nation-states whose connectivities and sense of fiduciary responsibilities are grounded in the promotion and fortification of transnational sustainable communities, which have the capacity to meaningfully cross individual nation-state boundaries and build bridges which constructively link populations divided by language, cultural identity and perception. We propose that the language of diplomacy that could guide the EU in this direction is found within the transnational ecological crisis that all member states commonly face – one in which the power of human differences and competing narratives are diminished by the acknowledgement of the common requirements for survival: potable water, arable land and clean air. It is through this reality that member states are being invited to see in a clearer sense the limitations of an economic realpolitik view of relations among nation-states, and in its place to embrace the guiding principles of Ecological Realism.

The EU As It Is: Beyond Decades of Technocratic Drift, A Deep Need a New Sensibility

In 1949, four years after the end of WWII, Robert Schuman declared that the European project could not be considered independently from its humanistic roots. He mentioned particularly the contributions of great European thinkers who have compellingly engaged the themes of peace, democracy and transnational cooperation. These include the Italian Dante Allighieri, the Dutch thinker Erasmus, the Swiss and French Rousseau and the German Kant. Schuman was a Luxembourg-born French statesman who was instrumental in helping to lay the foundations for the establishment of the modern EU. Schuman referred to Europe as a sustainable expression of humanistic ambition and noted,

> The European spirit signifies being conscious of belonging to a cultural family and to have a willingness to serve that *community* in the spirit of total mutuality, without any hidden motives of hegemony or the selfish exploitation of others…. Our century, that has witnessed the catastrophes resulting in the unending clash of nationalities and nationalisms, must attempt and succeed in reconciling nations in a *supranational association*. This would safeguard the diversities and aspirations of each nation while coordinating them in the same manner as he regions are coordinated within the unity of the nation."[2].

Fifteen years later, as European efforts in building integration became the framework for cooperation among 6 nations, Schuman wrote in his book *Pour l'Europe* (*For Europe*): *"Before being a military alliance or an economic entity, Europe must be a cultural community in the highest sense of this term"*[3].

Considering the original ambition of the historical pioneers of a common European community, what is the situation now, six decades later? What has happened to Schuman's compelling insights in the present context of an institutionalized, finance and market-oriented EU? How can we understand and interpret the meaning of the EU's increasing emphasis on defining itself in technocratic terms? By asking these questions, our purpose is not to be trapped in a sterile and depressing inventory of limitations or failures. On the contrary, we need to express these criticisms in order to develop beyond them, and thus be prepared to turn to constructing new approaches to promoting sustainable European integration.

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[2] To read the whole text of this speech given in Strasbourg, (May 16, 1948), or to study other writings or speeches given by Schuman, notably his address to the General Assembly of the UN, see http://www.schuman.info

[3] Translated from the original French by D. Malherbe.

The Empirical Trap: Has the EU been Reduced to an Institutional Construction?

If we compare Shuman's observations to those of the Greek student whose comments began this paper, the dissonance between the two is impossible to dismiss. We must therefore concede that the words of one of the EU's founding architects and visionaries ring hollow in the ears of many young Europeans. During the decades that separate these two generations, the European project progressed through numerous treaties following WII and through the Cold War, resulting in the EEC evolving into an institutional Union of member states and ultimately giving birth to the modern EU.[4] Through this period, the EU has enlarged its spatial, economic and demographic weight by the integration of many states, from Ireland to Greece and from Portugal to the Baltic States. And correlatively, these successive changes of scale have made the need for a deeper level of cooperation and integration among EU member states and their citizens even more essential.

Of course, the initial humanistic purpose of the EU had to be translated into concrete structures of ruling, i.e. into institutional forms and processes. But with the passing years, the situation became more complex. It became apparent early on that a workable balance between the political and technical dimensions of institution building had to be established. These structural needs were then amplified by the dynamics used to integrate new members in a paradoxical mix of technical standardizations in the legal and economic fields, coupled with continual political bargains and tenuous compromises.

As member states and candidates for membership increased during the 80's and expanded even further after the geopolitical reconfiguration of the 1990s, the debates between the advocates and the opponents of extending the perimeter of the EU focused more and more on formal legal treaties and regulations, including economic requirements. In fact, the "economization" of the construction of the EU stemmed in great part from its institutional development processes, a phenomenon which was set into motion in some of the ECC's and EU's founding documents.[5] In contrast to Schuman's insight drawn from the European humanistic tradition, the institutional choices made under the auspices of the EU were formed under marked political and economic constraints. These constraints emerged in response to the need to deal with a number of challenges: discrepancies in the way to deal with the international context of the Cold War, in the national policies which emerged through the restructuring of the European economic and monetary system in the 1970's, and the mimetic changes as a result of the new level financial globalization which the 1980's produced, inspired by principles of a libertarian ideology. The word 'spill over' expresses very clearly the intent and the logic of the European process during these decades. Under these auspices, the construction of a political and social Europe was considered to be a natural consequence of the intertwining of institutional rulings, market-oriented regulations and of the anticipated creation of wealth for member states and their populations.

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[4]   Foundation of the European Community for Coal and Steel (1951); Treaty of Rome creating the European Economic Community (1957); launching of the Common Agriculture Policy (1962); successive enlargements to new member states (1973, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2004); treaty of Maastricht creating the European Union with the principles of an unique open market and an monetary union (1992); agreements of Schengen (1995); Treaty of Amsterdam (1997); Treaty of Lisbon (2007); agreement toward a new treaty including the principle of the budgetary "golden rule" (2011).

[5]   For example, the Treaty of Rome (1957) organized the free circulation of goods without customs rights between the six founder states. In 1986, the Unique Act opened the European markets to foreign investments and authorizes the internal liberty of exchange of services and financial flows. More recently, just before the blow out of the financial crisis, the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) affirmed the principle of "*an open market economy where competition is free*".

As a direct consequence of the Maastricht Treaty, the institution of the Eurozone (EZ), fortified a number of questionable trends. Aiming at a more open space for trade and cooperation within the EU, and at a stronger common position vis à vis other existing or emerging continental major powers, the EZ defined itself through a common currency and thus compelled member states to comply with a precise set of technical criteria. Yet, while the EU included 28 member states, only 17 of them joined the Economic and Monetary Union, confirming there is neither a political consensus between national governments, nor an economic homogeneity behind the expression "European Union." Moreover, from the international financial crisis beginning in 2007 until now, this critical remark has become significant, even in the theoretically and legally defined area of the EZ. In recent years, tensions between the different national governments have grown higher, and political uncertainty has prevailed in some very exposed countries like Greece or Spain. This has led to opposition among national governments to formulas for monetary recovery imposed by the EU central authorities, while at the same time the pressure of financial markets has only served to exacerbate growing tensions. Without giving a too simplified representation of the present European situation, a political and cultural gap has progressively deepened, which has led to an increasing level of distrust and acrimony during the last four years.[6] Some EU members, such as Germany, are perceived by many less economically powerful member states as not willing to share the fruit of their success, preferring to use their economic capability to promote the aims of their individual economy beyond the borders of the EU. At the same time, within southern European countries like Greece, Portugal or Spain, many social movements, often led by populist leaders, prefer to visualize a future outside the EU, spurred by a desire to re-establish their own individual national sovereignty.[7] To these southerners, the prospect of remaining in the EU is neither an ideal nor the promise of a better future. It is rather viewed as an unwanted form of servitude.

Some Conceptual Reflections on European Deficiencies and Failures

As a synthesis of these considerations, the European makeup has taken on a more technocratic complexion. As the EU has grown, it has arguably become increasingly dominated by a formalized, top-down organizational structure that is both technical and political. In spite of the efforts made to develop elective processes that promote the power of individual citizens,[8] the European project has come to be governed by an abstract and complicated ruling system. While decisions taken in Brussels have most certainly had many positive effects on the lives of the EU's 500 million citizens, they way in which decisions are made is often perceived as disconnected from the everyday lives of average citizens. This disconnect often serves to undermine the requirements for providing leadership which can effectively promote the work of building transnational sustainable communities. Such sustainability cannot be promoted by a political and economic system perceived by many as

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[6]   In October 2009, the new Greek Prime-Minister raised the forecast of the public deficit of his country to 12.7 % of the GNP. This declaration entailed a string depreciation of Greece's financial ranking by the rating agencies; consequently, it marked the beginning of the cascade of emergencies known as the crisis of the sovereign debts. After a first aid reaching 110 billion Euros to Greece and the creation of the *European Financial Stability Facility* (EFSF) (Mai 2010), the EU granted aids to Ireland (85 billion Euros, November 2010), to Portugal (78 billion Euros, Mai 2011) and again to Greece (July 2011).

[7]   Comparable discourses can even be observed in the group of the 6 member states which signed the original treaties of the European construction in the 1950s.

[8]   In 2013, the European Parliament (Brussels and Strasbourg) counts 766 members, directly elected for a period of five years, by more than 400 million people within the member states. The first Parlamentiary Assembly was created in 1957, and named EP in 1962, the process of a direct vote by citizens was established in 1979. According to the integration of new member states, the number of the representatives increased and obliges to find, in every new extension, a balance between former and new members.

more intent on securing its own survival, rather than the long-term well-being of those it was created to serve.

Such shortcomings are hardly the only challenge the EU must face. Arguably looming more ominously are the coming effects of climate change and the diminished ecological predictability and sustainability Europe has historically relied upon. As climate change brings with it large scale transformations in the requirements for the maintenance of sustainable agriculture, mobility, access to essential natural resources, housing, food, care and energy for the people all over the world, many long-held assumptions are brought into question. How will we face this challenge? Is it to be through the same means employed to deal with the monetary crisis - the myopic lenses of financial instruments organized around the optimization of short-term profit? Are we condemned to conceive ethics, especially Christian ethics, as simply a moral affirmation of the techno-logical and legal regime of a globalized world ruled by *"experts without spirit"* ("*Fachmenschen ohne Geist*") and *"pleasure-seekers without heart"* ("*Genussmenschen ohne Herz*")? Are we definitively committed to a secularized and disenchanted relation to life and nature? All these questions are borrowed from or inspired by Max Weber, who wrote them a century ago. They characterize *"the deep heuristic schema"* (*"das tiefheuristische Schema"*) of Weber's work.[9] For Weber, modernity, as the development of rationality, was a kind of Janus, the Roman god with the double face. On one side, modernity offered to humankind new facilities and utilities, related to the progress of technology and the establishment of civil law. But on the other side, modernity appears also for people like a combination of two losses, the "*loss of freedom*" (*"Freiheitsverlust"*) and the *"loss of sense"* (*"Sinnverlust"*).

Today the ethical stakes of globalization and climate change should arguably be expressed through the necessity of reviewing and transcending the dilemma between the legal-technical order of rules and the realm of social sense and spirituality. On one hand, we cannot ignore or underestimate the dangerous pressure of financial rulings that remain highly influential and claim a space at the center of value in many peoples' lives, as expressed in Weberian terms, a new styled *"iron cage of obedience"* (*"stahlhartes Gehäuse der Hörigkeit"*). On the other hand, more than any perceived economic responsibility is the necessity to accept the growing weight of ecological and social systems that can serve to separate and link diverse countries and peoples. In light of this, responsibility, legitimacy and justice become major ecological concerns for humankind. Dealing with such transnational challenges requires a new and unprecedentedly open-minded approach to international cooperation within the boundaries of the EU and with African, South American and Asian nation-states far beyond Europe. Differences in the circumstances of other countries are not only legal and economic - they are also deeply linked to the diversity of cultures, of their history and of their spiritual traditions. Cooperation between members of the EU cannot be shrunk to a simple balancing of scorecards regarding opportunities, threats, the exploitation of raw materials, the enrollment of low cost workers, or the search for new markets.

From a theoretical outlook, *power* and *authority* are two well-known concepts in the social sciences, especially in the field of sociology. One could even consider that the frequency with which these terms are used in modern sociological discourse has served to limit their capacity to describe real life situations and future stakes. For our purposes, these terms are actually essential – for they serve to not only describe the impediments to building transnational sustainability, but the means by which sustainability can be nurtured and promoted. Max Weber developed a conceptual distinction between power and authority. In the English translation of his writings, the word "power" corresponds to the German concept "*Macht*," whereas "authority" is given as equivalent to the notion of "*Herrschaft.*"[10]

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[9] According to Müller, Hans-Peter (2007), *Max Weber*, Köln, Böhlau / UTB, p. 22-25
[10] Weber, Max (1921), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft,* Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, p.28-29

According to him, power and authority must both be understood as expressions of social interactions. But they are not characterized by the same meaning and application.[11] In other words, any experience of authority relies on legitimacy, whatever its root – be it charisma, tradition, rationality or legality. In the German source text, Weber particularly insists on the verb "*gelten*" and the noun "*Geltung*," meaning respectively "to be considered" and "validity," or "(being) in force or in use". From the Weberian point of view, legitimacy is regarded as a means of assessing validity. It works dynamically like a process of reciprocal recognition by both parties of the relative positions they occupy.[12]

Weber's perspective opened the opportunity for a wide range of empirical and theoretical contributions. In the field of political or economic sociology, studies demonstrated early that, despite the formal rationality they establish as condition of efficiency and fairness, systems of rules and norms can be very rapidly perverted and can become oligarchical or unfair practices.[13] Basically inherent to law and technology, formal rules are supposed to offer the best conditions to exert a rational, equitable and sustainable authority over social practices. But as fast as uncertainty grows, some officials and experts tend to harness the control levers and use formal rules not as the initial means defined to serve legitimate goals, such as the common interest for the population, but as ends by themselves, dedicated to fulfilling their own interests. Paradoxically, the initial intent of an authority grounded in legitimacy turns progressively to a cynical power that can be seized by a minority.

This teleological inversion called "goal displacement" (or "*Zweckverschiebung*") has been central to the work of economic sociology since 1911. It reveals that social cooperation is not only a matter of laws, standards, tools, audits and controls but also a matter or sense, symbols and interpretation.[14] It is absolutely clear that rules are needed in social life, especially rational and formalized rules, in modern or post-modern societies like those of the EU member states. But to remain sustainably legitimate, these rules must constantly be reread and reviewed in the context of uncertainty, unpredictability, and even mystery. From an ethical perspective, our technical, liberal society appeals to the importance of accountability for officials and experts in the legal-technical forms of compliance, such as national regulations or international standards (e.g., Global Compact, ISO26000). [15] [16]

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[11] Power is exerted as an imposed relation by force or seduction whereas authority is embedded in the frame of an *a priori* hierarchical report between Ego (as superior) and Alter (as inferior). With a predefined type of content, the order given by Ego to Alter can be effective.

[12] See also Suchman, Mark C .(1995), "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches", in: *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 20, n° 3, p.571-670

[13] e.g., in the cases of social movements: Michels, Robert (1911), *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens*, Leipzig,Werner Klinkhardt

[14] Berger, Peter L. and Luckmann, Thomas (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality*, New York, Double Day Anchor; Geertz, Clifford (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books ; Giddens A. (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press; Snow, David A., and Benford, Rodney.D. (1988), "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization",in: *International Social Movement Research*, n° 1, p.197-217; Reynaud, Jean-Daniel (1989), *Les règles du jeu : l'action collective et la régulation sociale,*, Paris, Armand Colin; March, James G., Schulz Martin, Zhou Xueguang (2000), *The Dynamics of Rules: Change in Written Organizational Codes,* Stanford (Cal.) Stanford University Press; Boltanski, Luc, and Thévenot, Laurent (1991),*De la justification : les économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Gallimard ; Boltanski, Luc, and Chiapello, Eve (1999*), Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris, Gallimard ; Scott, W. Richard (2001), *Institutions and Organizations*, Thousand Oaks (Cal.), Sage; Ortmann, Günther (2004) *Als ob : Fiktionen und Organisationen*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften…

[15] Baertschi, Bernard (2004), *La responsabilité éthique dans une société technique et libérale*, CNRS –Maison des Sciences de l'Homme – Alpes, Grenoble

[16] For an example of justification of such standards on the theme of sustainability: Kell, George (2013), "The value of Comprehensive Reporting", in: *This is Africa: A Global Perspective*, September-October 2013, pp. 24-25.

The complicated European regulation system governing monetary practices is a particularly obvious illustration of the risks of reducing the project of European integration to an institutional responsibility. First, if the achievement of the EZ (1999) marked an important step on the way to the European economic integration, since 2007 it has appeared to be a very fragile arrangement, as noted by De Grauwe (2009).[17] Furthermore, this fragility has been deepened during the most recent economic crisis by the bifurcation of EU members between those that belong to the EZ and those who remain outside the Euro, a phenomenon which places into question the economic viability of the system itself.[18] In these conditions, institutions like the European Central Bank and other coordination committees have tinkered with fuzzy political compromises and shaky technocratic structures, ostensibly working with the assumption that adjusting such mechanisms is sufficient for ensuring a stable sense of solidarity among nation-states, and among citizens on either side of their borders.[19]

Considering the systemic difficulty of realizing common ends for all those who participate in the system, EU decision-makers have focused on the means in the great tradition of monetarism, as if these means could be in and of themselves efficient substitutes for the lack of purpose and goals in serving the needs of all EU citizens. Under the outward appearance of democratic rulings and technocratic rationality, the double-sided European monetary construction has turned to a 'huge labyrinthine system,'[20] in other words a complicated institutional mechanism, often perceived as disconnected from the human and social realities that should be inherent to its mission.

Similar conclusions could be made regarding the challenge of transitioning the EU to new sources of energy. Over the last 20 years, the EU has downsized its goals regarding a common policy of diminishing the causes of climatic change. Some countries like Germany or Denmark have engaged a national policy of green energy, whereas others, like France, defend their industrial interests in a blind pursuit of improving their nuclear energy capacity. In this light, while the global economic crisis was triggered by the collapse of the real estate market and correlated mortgage subprime system in the United States, its present effects cannot be separated from the long-term challenges posed by climate change and the increasingly complex requirements of maintaining the integrity of ecosystems. Such dual concerns mean that solutions must be found on a wider and more diverse scale, rather than through an exclusive focus on monetary and institutional approaches. And, if the need for a redistribution

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For recent critical commentaries about ISO 26000: Entine, Jon (2012), ISO26000: Sustainability as Standard? (http://www.ethicalcorp.com/business-strategy/iso-26000-sustainability-standard) ; or about the debate between ISO and the Global Compact in 2009 (http://globalcompactcritics.blogspot.fr/2009/07/iso-responds-gently-to-terse-letter.htmlabout).

More generally, for a significant array of academic criticisms and reflections of the biases and effects of standardization: Brunsson, Nils, and Jacobsson B. (dir.) (2000), *A World of Standards*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, and notably: Higgins, Winton, and Tamm Hallström, Kristina (2007), "Standardization, Globalization and Rationalities of Government", in: *Organization* 14(5).

[17] De Grauwe, Paul (2009), "The Fragility of the Eurozone Institutions", research rrticle in: *Open Economic Review*, published online, 22 December 2009.

[18] Sifakis-Kapetanakis, Catherine (2011), "EU Institutional Framework and Euro zone Crisis" available at : http://www2.euromemorandum.eu/uploads/ws5_sifakis_eu_institutional_framework.pdf

[19] Concerning the steering of the monetary policy, the governance of the European Central Bank differentiates the Board of governors (members of the EZ) and the General Board (including the non members of he EZ). In the same way, the European Board in charge of the Systemic Risk (prevention and control of macro financial risk) splits the attributions of its chairman and those of the vice-chairman. And last but not least, the coordination of the budget policies is the competency of the Council of ministers has two levels, the Eurogroup as a consultative and informal meeting structure open to EZ members, and the Ecofin, common to the ministers of the whole EU.

[20] Adapted and translated from the French idiomatic expression « une véritable usine à gaz »: Demma, Claude (2013), « Zone Euro-zone non Euro : le casse-tête des deux Europes », in: *L'Europe a-t-elle un avenir ?, Alternatives Economiques*, Hors-série n° 95, pp. 46-47.

of added-value are real throughout the world, including the EU, an effective means addressing these multiple challenges will not be realized through exclusively economic solutions, even if they are on the scale of Roosevelt's post-Depression New Deal program.[21] Whatever the complexity of the economic stakes could be - economic being understood here in in wider sense than monetary or financial - the stakes go beyond the capacity of simply establishing new regulatory frameworks for investments, trade and cooperation. The connection between the present turmoil affecting financial capacities, ecological sustainability and growing resource scarcity requires that solutions to the EU's economic challenges involve not only political institutions and the technocratic processes of decision-making and enforcement. The nature of climate change itself is transnational, and affects all countries, including the EU's wealthiest members as well as those on its economic margins.[22] So too does climate change and its attendant ecosystem challenges affect individual EU citizens across all social locations, and in turn arguably serves to underscore the factors which further the de-legitimization of political mechanisms which comprise the EU's transnational democratic systems.[23] [24] This amalgam of challenges finds the EU standing at the crossroads.

Domains of Action	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Free circulation of the workers and coordination of national insurance schemes	Regulative	Regulative	Regulative	Regulative	Regulative
Equality of remuneration and treatment between the women and the men	No action	No action	Distributive	Distributive	Distributive
Health and Safety in the work	No action	No action	Regulative	Regulative	Regulative
Education and vocational training	No action	No action	Distributive	Distributive	Distributive
Employment	No action	No action	Distributive	Distributive	Regulative
Fight against discrimination	No action	No action	No action	No action	Distributive
Convergence of the systems of social welfare	No action	No action	No action	No action	Coordination
Pensions	No action	No action	No action	No action	Coordination
Health care	No action	No action	No action	No action	Coordination
Fight against social exclusion	No action	No action	No action	No action	Coordination
No European Action	**Regulative Action**		**Distributive Action**	**Coordination of the National Policies**	

Positioning of European Social Action: Adapted from Palier (2013: 67)[25]

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[21] Lipietz, Alain (2013), « Transition énergétique : dernières chances pour l'Europe », in: *L'Europe a-t-elle un avenir ?, Alternatives Economiques*, Hors-série n° 95 pp. 70-72.

[22] For the UN Human Development Indicators ranking, see the reports (1990-2013): http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/.
For an intra-European analysis: Lefebvre, Mathieu, and Pestieau, Pierre (2012), *L'État-providence en Europe : performance et dumping social, Paris*, Editions de la Rue d'Ulm (GEPREMAP).
For the territorial and social inequalities in France: Haas, Sandrine, and Vigneron, Emmanuel (2010), *Solidarités et territoires: l'engagement des établissements hospitaliers et services privés d'aide à la personne non lucratifs*, FEHAP / La Nouvelle Fabrique des Territoires.

[23] Maurin, Eric (2009), *La peur du déclassement : une sociologie des récessions*, Paris, Seuil

[24] Dupuy, François (2005), *La fatigue des élites*, Paris, Seuil

[25] Palier, Bruno (2013), « Le long chemin de l'Europe sociale », in: *L'Europe a-t-elle un avenir ?, Alternatives Economiques*, Hors-série n° 95, pp. 66-68

Democracy and Legitimacy in the Eyes of European Citizens

In a recent book entitled *« Les ennemis intimes de la démocratie »* (*"the intimate enemies of democracy"*), the French philosopher Tzvetan Todorov (2012) engages in a critical questioning of the meaning of democracy. He asks whether or not modern expressions of democracy are reducible to a kind of virtuous incantation, a pure verbal excitement, actually disconnected from the experiences of people living under its auspices. This question notably concerns the phenomenon of European integration, almost 70 years after the end of WWII, and 25 years after the fall of the Berlin wall. After decades of continental rivalries, world wars, ideological totalitarianisms and the absolute horror of the *Shoah*, the EU found its first roots in the resolution of "never again," grounded in the desire for peace among the civil populations of war torn countries.

This sentiment was understood and shared by a group of western politicians, probably not saints, but pragmatic and engaged officials, who were fully aware of the impasse of any prospect of nationalist withdrawals or revanchism.[26] More recently, the major geopolitical changes of the European map in the 1990s seemed to give a new hope of revival for the ideals of a continent at peace, gathering at last its eastern and the western regions after 50 years of profound division. But far beyond this somewhat stereotypical representation of a complex, non-linear historical process, Todorov wonders about the present weakening of the European democratic model. He emphasizes the entanglement of many factors in this worrying evolution. According to him, the European integration is undermined by major drifts like changes in the way people think within a heterogeneous framework of countries and communities, as well as the triumph of a technocratic, legal and short-term formalism in the way the European project itself is managed. In that context, the present reality of the EU could be compared to a postmodern avatar of the humanistic and modernist idea of democracy. Freedom, as a condition of democracy, has to go through the experience of the individuals without whom no community and no union can be effective. In other words, the EU project claims to respect the letter of its intent so obsessively that the spirit is lacking. As a consequence, Todorov points out that this formal, institutionalized and technocratic way of construction introduces harmful effects into the democratic life within its own territories and communities. Tied up in a web of dilemmas, contradictions and democratic failures, the logic of European integration leads to misunderstandings, rejections and self-interested withdrawals that are exploited more and more by populist movements in many EU countries. Paradoxically, in the EU today, nobody seems to dispute the abstract principle of democracy; but, despite this apparent consensus, only a few people seem to be able to engage themselves in a democratic project that goes beyond their own self-interest.

As we come to the end of the first portion of our analysis, our critical and conceptual approach sounds quiet pessimistic, like Todorov's analysis. But as we move to the second portion of our analysis, it is our intent that our reflections open the way for hope and positive responses. These responses are not positive in the modernist sense of the triumphal march of an endless progress, but instead are offered in what we hope is the spirit of a humble, pragmatic and humanistic approach, aimed at exploring potential avenues for promoting transnational cooperation and solidarity among individuals, communities and nation-states of the European Union.

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[26] See for example the interesting biography of Robert Schuman written by an historian: Roth, François (2008), *Robert Schuman: du Lorrain des frontières au père de l'Europe*, Paris, Fayard)comment about. An anonymous but official comment is available on the site of the government of the Grand-Duchy of Luxemburg (www.europaforum.public.lu/fr/temoignages-reportages/2008/10/roth-schuman/index.html); it is entitled *« "Père de l'Europe" ou "saint en veston" ? »* (*"The 'Europe's father' or A 'Saint in jacket'?"*). In fact, as he was his lifelong an engaged member of the Roman Catholic Church, Robert Schuman was proposed after his death for a beatification process which is still pending today.

According to Todorov, salvation does not emerge from outside, but rather from within people through their inner capacity for self-criticism, and the human search for improvement. This aspiration does not mean a passive obedience or submission to the belief of the endless progress of humankind. Quite to the contrary, Todorov insists on the importance of an ethical ideal, relying far much more on the deep and existential needs of trust and hope than on technical or political calculation. In that sense, restoring an open perspective in the project of European integration requires the willingness to instigate and support initiatives which promote transnational commitments to sharing, cooperating and developing competencies, sense and trust across nation-state borders.

Social cooperation and ethical attitudes are not only a matter of laws, standards, tools, audits and controls, and they are no longer only a matter of monetary criteria or financial regulation. The legitimacy of the European project, as well inside as outside of the EU borders, is fundamentally a dynamic and collective reconstruction of understanding, perception and willingness. It requires the use of living symbols in action, like the willingness to share interpretation in the respect of various identities.[27] These elements correspond to the concept of *"binding factors,"* without which no social action can be structured, and no social structure can produce action,[28] particularly in the context of the complexity and uncertainty of post-modern societies.[29] For this reason it is utterly clear that rules are needed in social life, especially rational rules, always more sophisticated, in contemporary European society. But to remain sustainably legitimate, these rules must constantly be reread and reviewed in the context of uncertainty, unpredictability, and abiding mystery.

The EU As It Could Be: Authority, Power and Agency in an Eco-Centric European Union

As outlined in the first half of our paper, the shortcomings of privileging a monetary definition of community among EU member states are clear and numerous. Such shortcomings suggest two critical questions: 1. To what degree should market-oriented and monetary relationships be allowed to define the deepest core realities of relations between EU member states? And 2., What are the principal non-monetary means that might serve to promote and fortify sustainable ties among EU member states? As the Dutch and Canadian ecological thinkers Wackernagle and Rees have observed, the *human economy*, most readily expressed in monetary terms, is in some respects an artificial construct, one that allows governing bodies to unilaterally print currency, and determine its value detached from clear foundational value.[30] They argue that it is in fact what they call *earth economy*, defined in terms of specific and limited "natural capital" (such as fish stocks, arable land and fresh

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[27] Berger, Peter L. and Luckmann, Thomas (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality*, New York, Double Day Anchor; Geertz, Clifford (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books ; Giddens A. (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press; Snow, David A., and Benford, Rodney.D. (1988), "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization",in: *International Social Movement Research*, n° 1, p.197-217; Reynaud, Jean-Daniel (1989), *Les règles du jeu : l'action collective et la régulation sociale,*, Paris, Armand Colin; March, James G., Schulz Martin, Zhou Xueguang (2000), *The Dynamics of Rules: Change in Written Organizational Codes,* Stanford (Cal.) Stanford University Press; Boltanski, Luc, and Thévenot, Laurent (1991),*De la justification : les économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Gallimard ; Boltanski, Luc, and Chiapello, Eve (1999*), Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris, Gallimard ; Scott, W. Richard (2001), *Institutions and Organizations*, Thousand Oaks (Cal.), Sage; Ortmann, Günther (2004), *Als ob : Fiktionen und Organisationen*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften

[28] Giddens, Anthony (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

[29] Giddens, Anthony (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity,* Cambridge, Polity Press ;

[30] Wackernagel, Mathis and Rees, William E., *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*, (Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers, 1996).

water) which is the true foundation of economic reality. *Earth economy* is thus the ecological equivalent of a currency being tied to a gold standard. There are only so many hectares of arable land – more cannot be printed at will. While viewing relations among nation-states through the lens of *earth economy* cannot be done without acknowledging the great importance of the human economy, it does in fact open the door to new and arguably more sustainable definitions of *authority*, *power* and *agency*.

How might Authority be defined among EU member states in positive and proscriptive ways that cleave to the realities of Earth economy? The work of the Lutheran social ethicist Larry Rasmussen invites us to consider the ecological realities of the land itself as a principle source and a starting point – the land with it's geographic contours and common ecosystems that do not always respect political borders. The integrity of such systems, Rasmussen notes, cannot be secured by individual nations acting alone, but only through sustained levels of cooperation and coordination.[31] A portion of the ozone cannot be purchased or preserved by even the wealthiest nation. The phenomenon of climate change itself only underscores the reality of this ecological interconnectivity. For example, diminished snow packs in the mountains of Switzerland and France affect the water levels and ecological resilience of rivers in Germany, Italy, and Spain.[32] These interconnected ecological realities serve to determine the far more durable borders of bioregions that transverse multiple nation-states, and whose ecological integrity has measurable impacts on the long-term prospects for sustainable employment, food security and human migration patterns. Such transnational ecological connectivity suggests that human economic activity that aims for long-term resilience must therefore be more concretely tied to *earth economy* realities by design based in foresight. Sustainable employment, food security and the promotion and support of transnational sustainable communities will not be achievable in the absence of deepening this connection.

While theoretical ecological arguments are attractive, they do not increase sustainability without concrete application. The work of building transnational sustainable communities that deepen ties among EU member states requires the use of common languages. While the Euro itself clearly offers a common language – to the good and detriment of the transnational community it serves – what other languages might the EU harness to strengthen ecologically sustainable ties among it's member states? One among many answers to this question is found in the work of the Italian thinker Carlo Petrini, the founder of the International Slow Food movement and the network of food communities it produced, called Terra Madre. The aim of Terra Madre is to create connectivities among consumers, cooks and farmers which privilege sustainable agricultural practices, while teaching the value of honoring and fortifying local cultures through the common hermeneutic of food, a language spoken and celebrated across the EU. Petrini argues that the third industrial revolution will not be based on the work of financial actors or information technology innovators, but rather through the collective choices, actions and work of farmers and consumers - average people on the ground – who must intimately live within the limits defined by the authority and power of the ecosphere itself, grounded in the realities of climate change.[33] Petrini argues that the work of Terra Madre is to help people to see that their true neighbors often live on either side of artificially drawn political borders.

The eco-centric notion of *power* in this case is measured by the degree to which regional communities can meet their resource and waste disposal needs within their own respective

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[31] Rasmussen, Larry, *Earth Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) and *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

[32] For a comprehensive and accessible explanation of resilience, see Walker, Brian and Salt, David, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World,* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006).

[33] Petrini, Carlo, *Terra Madre: Forging a New Global Network of Sustainable Food Communities*, (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2010) p. xix.

bioregions. As bioregions often do not neatly fall within politically drawn borders, the language of intra-European diplomacy must now move beyond its current focus on privileging monetary cooperation and competition between communities defined by national identities. Moving beyond the privileging of diplomacy being conducted by national governments, eco-centric approaches to building bridges among people of different European nationalities opens the door to elevating the practice of paradiplomacy – the conduct of diplomacy by subnational, regional and local governments on either side of national borders, as well as civil society actors, including the members of Terra Madre's food communities.[34]

The definitions of power that emerge from this approach include not only the power that comes from being able to identify and speak the common transnational language of agriculture, but also the power of the ecosphere itself, which can increasingly be seen as having its own, often unpredictable *agency*. For example, as climate change necessitates increasing adaptations in the practice of viticulture, and impacted human migration patterns alter the ethnic identities of those who harvest the grapes, the processes that produce wines that serve to define regional identities reveal new dependencies and new vulnerabilities that do not respect national borders. At the same time, the experiences of one community in a particular ecological niche may well provide crucial insights to coping with the effects of climate change in another. For example, a wine grower in Spain's arid region of Extremadura may well be the best source of information for French Burgundian wine makers who are struggling to maintain their standards and output in a modern or future France in need of more rain. In this light, earlier definitions of *agency*, which focused on financial commerce and standards, now give way to the need to acknowledge that in fact there are many factors over which traditional arbiters of power no long have as much agency as they imagined. Agency in this regard is rooted in the willingness and ability to *adapt* and in turn to *share* what has been learned in one context with those who struggle in another location. As climate change brings ecological systems previously thought to be stable to what resilience theory calls the stage of release or collapse, human adaptation and the efficacy of agricultural practices that draw on the evolving creativity and agency of people on the ground gain a vital, new level of importance.

Applying the Insights of Ecological Realism to the Practice of Diplomacy and the Building of Transnational Sustainable Communities Among EU Member States

Defining relations among EU member states in terms of monetary and financial instruments only serves to fortify the cleavages and competition endemic to the disadvantages of a *realpolitik* (realist) worldview. Such an approach to diplomacy privileges a broad set of materialistic assumptions regarding human exchanges, and understands nation-state conduct as guided by the desire to acquire, retain and project power. It is this worldview that sees alliances among nation-states as only temporary by definition, and the individual, sovereign nation-state as the largest durable human entity capable of sustainability. Modern interpreters of realpolitik, such as Hans Morgenthau, argue that the rules that have governed the praxis of political realism were founded in European antiquity, and are impervious to change.[35]

In stark contrast to the realist view of relations among nation-states, *ecological realism* holds that power cannot be defined in terms of the capacity of individual nations to coerce

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[34]   Cornoago, Noé, "Perforated Sovereignties, Agonistic Pluralism and the Durability of (Para)diplomacy," in Constantinou, Costas M. and Der Darian, James, eds., *Sustainable Diplomacies,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 89-108.
[35]   Morgenthau, Hans J., Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

other nations through the use of economic or military means, but rather that *real power* emerges from the capacity of a nation or a group of nations that share a common bioregion to protect, cultivate, efficiently utilize and share natural capital.[36]   The recognition that bioregions themselves are the central arbiters for defining borders and common realities among human populations is central to the worldview of ecological realism.

What might it mean if EU member states were to define their relationships and the project of transnational community building among member states through the lens of ecological realism? In broad terms, authority in this light would have to be seen in terms of the ecosphere itself, and its capacity to strengthen and diminish ecological, social, cultural and economic resilience. In this way, the monetary fortunes and economic exposure of individual European economies would have to be re-evaluated in light of their dependency on the climate not changing. At the same time, what might be seen through a realpolitik lens as sources of strength (such as autonomy) could come to be seen as sources of weakness. And what is traditionally seen as weakness (such as dependency), could come to be seen as a source of strength insofar as dependency necessitates the deepening of transnational ties, while potentially revaluing the moral guidepost of fiduciary responsibility toward one's neighbors. In turn, ecological realism holds that while primary agency is governed by the ecosphere itself, human agency is rooted in people having the capacity *to understand the requirements of sustainability*, and the willingness to recognize and be guided by the fact that EU nations and their citizens live in a web of intimate ecological interdependence.   While many economic commentators have observed that the long-term viability of the Euro is diminished due to the lack of a universally acknowledged central monetary authority, the ecosphere itself is both contiguous and central to multiple transnational European realities. In this regard, natural capital is a currency that will remain viable and valuable regardless of the fluctuations or vicissitudes of the human economy.

Religion, Ethics and the Requirements of Building Community in a Pluralistic European Context

There is little question that currently one of the more corrosive sources of tension within the EU is rooted in the fear and resentment associated with modern encounters of those who are considered "Other" by dominant European groups. Whether it is through increased levels of human migration that open borders allow, through illegal immigration by those seeking to escape the limits of the economic South, or by the growing influence of Islam associated with newcomers to the EU in a historically Christian Europe, cleavages old and new are impacting the viability of normative European models of social and cultural sustainability.   This encounter with an Other who is growing in numbers and influence has invited EU member states and individual citizens to re-evaluate how modern European identities are defined, interpreted and claimed.

Some who would prefer the diminishment or even dissolution of the EU claim that this development is one of the root causes of European economic instability, and calls into question the long-term viability of maintaining a Europe that is congruent with its historical roots.   Yet others see the growing ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism of the EU's population as a welcome development, one that holds the potential to give birth to a Europe which is more profoundly transnational and more concretely interconnected with nations, economies and cultures beyond the borders of the EU.

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[36]   For a more amplified description of ecological realism, see Wellman, David Joseph, *Sustainable Diplomacy: Ecology, Religion and Ethics in Muslim-Christian Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) pp. 29-41.

Building transnational sustainable communities requires acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension of human connectivity and difference. To this end, the economic, political and cultural developments which have infused a greater level of human diversity into the life of EU member states simultaneously invites members of historically dominant European groups to interrogate their own religious and cultural identities and claims in a new light. This phenomenon is played out in different ways in different contexts. In a France constitutionally committed to a strong secularism, the encounter with an overtly religious Other is an invitation for French citizens to examine what remains of the influence of Christianity in their own lives and the architecture of French culture. In Spain, the encounter with North and Sub Saharan Africans is an invitation for Spaniards to acknowledge their collective debt to their own profoundly African and Islamic roots. In Romania human migration is a double sided coin, one in which Romanians themselves experience becoming the Other while searching for work in Western Europe, while those who remain at home define themselves over against their ethnic Hungarian, German or Roma neighbors whose ancestors arrived in earlier migrations.

All of these encounters are arguably an opportunity for citizens of the EU to acknowledge the utility of understanding not only the cultural impact of religion, but also its abiding influence on the way moral norms are formed in ostensibly secular cultures. Operative definitions of hospitality, justice and responsibility to one's neighbors are all arguably intimately connected to what were originally religious claims. At the same time, the encounter with the religious Other highlights the limitations that are placed on individuals and populations who are religiously illiterate – both in terms of understanding their own religio-cultural identities and those of people who do not share their identity. The value of such knowledge has little to do with whether or not one is an actual practitioner of a tradition.

Yet beyond the cultural and intellectual value of understanding religion, those who seek to nurture and broaden sustainable communities would do well to critically examine the spiritual dimension of human connectivity with the land and every community that is defined by its relationship to the land. That the ecological crisis should be seen as the primary challenge of the present and future is clear, but what has not yet become clear is that the common ecosphere we share provides the lingua franca of a new type of diplomacy – one in which words like "air," "water" and "land" are readily apprehensible and present the possibility of conveying profound spiritual meaning. It is these words that hold the potential to become the building blocks of communities that have the capacity "see" beyond the limits of the national borders of individual nation-states, and visualize a new approaches to peace building and cooperation. The requirements of building ecological sustainability in the context of climate change necessitates acknowledging that some components of the ecosphere cannot be owned and controlled by any one nation-state, and that their potential conservation or destruction are connected to competing claims rooted in divergent religio-cultural worldviews and theological anthropologies. The common ecological needs of populations on either side of these cleavages is one key to understanding new approaches to transnational community building.

The project that eventually became the EU was a highly creative and profoundly ambitious response to the incalculable loss of life born of two world wars, which wove together the death of millions, the destruction of economies, and unprecedented levels of coercive nationalism and xenophobia. It was the recognition that the borders of sovereign, individual nation-states were in fact not the best guarantor of security which informed the construction of a common European community. As the power of the memory of the events that led to the EU's formation fades among younger generations, one might actually consider the common transnational ecological crisis – though a tragedy on multiple levels, as also a gift – one that holds the potential to necessitate a new and more profound level of inter-European

cooperation. For it is the transnational nature of the ecological crisis itself that reveals a common European ecological history and a new language of diplomacy, grounded in the requirements of ecological sustainability and survival. This is a language whose authority, power and agency go well beyond the myopia and short-sightedness of an exclusively financial or institutional set of concerns. The power of this new language lies not only in its ability to speak to material realities. Its power also illumines the spiritual dimension of relations – one that engages core values rooted in land, food, diverse human cultures and respect.

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