



**STORIES OF “THE WORLD AFTER”:  
BRINGING CARE INTO ECONOMIC  
AND POLITICAL RELATIONS.**

A relational approach through crafts.

Estelle Vanwambeke



**OXFAM**

Magasins du monde



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# Introduction

*The global health crisis of 2020 has revealed how much we are living in a world which has lost its bearings. The landmarks which have thus far defined our maps of the world have shifted in an instant, in all four corners of the world simultaneously. Wherever we live, our human lives have been joined in a common destiny in a way never seen before: the suspension of activities “non-essential” to survival, lockdown. The distinctions between North and South, East and West have become blurred, to the point where the North can no longer really be considered a destination to follow, as this time the crisis is experienced globally.*

At the time of the Anthropocene, characterised by a growing precarity of ecosystems, the systemic crisis engendered by the Coronavirus pandemic thus represents the most tangible scenario to date for imagining the future evolution of our ways of life. It also reveals a narrative crisis in the building of a collective future. Imagining and telling the story of a “world after” has emerged as a survival instinct, manifested in a narrative “fever pitch” in official and non-official discourse.<sup>1</sup> A profusion of opinion pieces, columns, analyses and other writing, and lockdown diaries<sup>2</sup> have fought for

the attention of online readers, combining all fields of knowledge, in an attempt to unravel the present which escapes us. Calls to bear witness, to write, to draw,<sup>3</sup> invitations to organise “a gigantic virtual Decameron” have been launched in order to imagine a new world.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, to build a new world, “perhaps you need to have lost one, or be lost yourself”, as Ursula Le Guin suggests.<sup>5</sup> And this crisis might represent our “last chance”<sup>6</sup> to make other stories of the world heard that have been suppressed until now, and to write new ones based on

greater social solidarity, and solidarity with all forms of life. However, the human in search of stories also launches “a serious narrative challenge, which must not be opportunistic”<sup>7</sup>, at the risk of aggravating an “inflation” of the discourse.

Taking this challenge into consideration, how can the story of the “world after” the health crisis of 2020 be imagined and told? On what basis? This study offers an analysis, in the first part, of the extent to which the crisis of world narratives and the crisis of our lifestyles are connected, and the importance of placing care and imagination at the heart of political and economic projects, in order to then focus in the second part on ways of inhabiting, thinking about and constructing the world that are inspired by crafts, and able to stimulate the creation of new, desirable, social and societal narratives which are possible to live with in the long term.

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1 This is what Christian Salmon, author and editorial writer at Médiapart, suggests in his article “Coronarration ou les paroles gelées”, published 03 April 2020 on AOC: <https://aoc.media/opinion/2020/04/02/coronarration-ou-les-paroles-gelées/>

2 During the lockdown period, a large number of media outlets (“official” narrators) broadcast letters and journals of well-known authors. Among numerous other examples, see the lockdown diaries of the newspaper Le Monde, [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/03/18/le-journal-du-confinement-de-leila-slimani-jour-1-j-ai-dit-a-mes-enfants-que-c-etait-un-peu-comme-dans-la-belle-au-bois-dormant\\_6033596\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/03/18/le-journal-du-confinement-de-leila-slimani-jour-1-j-ai-dit-a-mes-enfants-que-c-etait-un-peu-comme-dans-la-belle-au-bois-dormant_6033596_3232.html), or “letters from within” on the French public radio station France Inter : <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/lettres-d-interieur-par-augustin-trapenard>

3 See for example Dreaming the Dark, a call for submissions of creative writing inspired by ecofeminism on the theme “Tomorrow, the world after the pandemic”, run in conjunction with a series of podcasts broadcast on Radiopanik: <https://www.facebook.com/dreamingthedark/>

4 In March 2020 the Colombian cultural review Arcadia compiled a list of books “to help us think through [and get through] the crisis” (<https://www.revistaarcadia.com/libros/articulo/algunos-libros-para-pensar-y-pasar-el-coronavirus/81150/>), and launched an invitation to organise a large “Virtual Decameron”, in place of the Annual Book Fair which was cancelled, in reference to the work of Boccaccio published in 1374, in which seven women and three men flee an epidemic and spend hours “telling each other all kinds of splendid stories” in their refuge at Fiesole: [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le\\_D%C3%A9cam%C3%A9ron/Texte\\_entier](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_D%C3%A9cam%C3%A9ron/Texte_entier).

5 Ursula Le Guin (1981), “Faire des mondes”, published in the work *Danser au bord du monde*, Editions de L’Éclat, 2020, pp. 67-68

6 With reference to an interview with Olivier De Schutter published in the magazine *Alteréchos* on 15 April 2020: <https://www.alterechos.be/cette-crise-est-vraiment-notre-derniere-chance/>

7 Christian Salmon, Op. Cit.



# Part. 1 Constructing the “world after”: how can we find our bearings in the Anthropocene?

*In this exceptional period of systemic crisis, the call from all sides (politics, the media, the associative sector, activists, etc.) to imagine the “world after” seems to reflect, on the one hand, the need to break with the “suicidal”<sup>8</sup> period of the Anthropocene, dictated by the race for technical and scientific progress and the injunction to immediacy (in consumption and production), and on the other hand the paradoxical need to take the time to think and act urgently, to bring about necessary changes without exacerbating the vulnerabilities revealed.*

## 1. A NARRATIVE CRISIS IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

At the beginning of 2020, Coronavirus threw our lifestyles and their narratives into crisis. Astonishingly, it gave us a glimpse of a possible territory for making a definitive break with an obsolete way of being in the world, and finally making room for a “world after”, at least somewhat inhabitable in the long term for all living beings, whether human – and regardless of their geographic, economic or social situation – or non-human. The time period in question in this narrative frenzy is that of the Anthropocene, or Capitalocene, a new planetary age in which it is recognised that the effects of human actions have reached the scale and amplitude of a geological force in their own right, capable of radi-

cally modifying the biogeochemical evolution of the planet Earth. The birth of this new era is said to date from the period after the Second World War, and more specifically from the 1950s, when the world witnessed an unprecedented race for technical and technological progress, and an unbridled acceleration of the industrial production-consumption model, as well as a form of globalisation of the impacts of human society on the planetary biosphere.<sup>9</sup>

While worldwide adoption of the term “Anthropocene” is the object of much criticism regarding what it covers and what it neglects,<sup>10</sup> it has the advantage of alerting humanity to the devastating effects of predatory anthropisation<sup>11</sup> on the world’s ecosystems, and of reflecting the

interdependence of human and non-human vulnerabilities. Paradoxically, in trying to free itself from nature in order to better control and exploit it, humanity has become more dependent on it. “The more autonomous we become, the more dependent we become” remarks Edgar Morin.<sup>12</sup> As we degrade our environments, we degrade our own conditions of existence, and in doing so we reinforce our dependence on other living beings for our survival.

As powerful as its capacity to have an impact on the planet is, the human species nevertheless seems incapable of understanding how urgent it is to repair the precarity it has created. “This brings us to this paradox of the Anthropocene, that at the time when humanity is becoming a telluric force capable of influencing the future of the planet, it seems powerless to influence its own future” the lawyer Mireille Delmas-Marty<sup>13</sup> writes with astonishment, “while at the time of the ‘Great Acceleration’ it is thought that little time is left to avoid what some are already calling the ‘Great Collapse’ of the planet.”

In the face of this contradiction, our ways of telling the story of the An-

8 With reference to the conference given by Edgar Morin during the festival “Agir pour le Vivant” at the Rencontres d’Arles of 28 August 2020, conceived by the publishing house Actes Sud. See: <https://vimeo.com/452497372>

9 Estelle Vanwambeke (2019), “Comprendre et composer (avec) l’anthropocène”, an analysis for Oxfam: <https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/blog/2019/09/09/comprendre-et-composer-avec-lanthropocene/#.X8iojs30nIU>

10 Estelle Vanwambeke, *Ibidem*.

11 Anthropisation is the process through which human populations, in constructing their environment, modify or transform planetary biogeochemistry.

12 Edgar Morin, *Ibidem*.

13 Mireille Delmas Marty, “Repenser le droit à l’heure de l’Anthropocène”, AOC review of 22.07.19. URL link: <https://aoc.media/analyse/2019/07/22/repenser-le-droit-a-lheure-de-lanthropocene/>

thropocene and its obstacles become an area of work in their own right. As necessary as they are, tales of catastrophe do not seem sufficient to turn nations towards more sustainable uses of the world. On the contrary, alarmist narratives tend to pass moral judgement about human responsibility for the current ecological crisis, without differentiating responsibilities, engendering the risk of paralysing individuals' awareness and their willingness to take action, just when we need it most.<sup>14</sup> At a time when "fake news" is in mass circulation, and is sometimes even disseminated with impunity by the most powerful heads of state and other official narrators, it is becoming difficult to discern what is fiction and what is reality, and the denial reflex is going viral. "Just as monetary inflation ruins confidence in currency, narrative inflation ruins the credibility of official narrators", journalists, politicians, experts and scientists, warns Christian Salmon.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this escalation of rhetoric often runs counter to pressing ecological issues, cautions Salmon, and instead moves in the direction of free trade, of those that the philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour calls "globalisers"<sup>16</sup>, and of increasing precarity.

Consequently, there is a need to broaden and pluralise accounts of

the Anthropocene without giving in to fear, anger and indignation, by summoning up scenarios that are strong enough to call for "a politics of solidarity and an ethic of difference", suggests Delmas-Marty, capable of being translated into international law, to establish the just environmental and historical responsibilities of the Anthropocene, taking concerns such as relationships of domination and inequalities between nations into consideration. A politics in which we would "all be interdependent, all stand together, all be different", and capable of mustering wills and capacities to act with a focus on greater social and environmental solidarity. According to the author, an "enormous insurrection of the imagination" is needed to envision this new political horizon of intergenerational, intercultural and inter-species solidarity, and this means considering a new compass from which to take our bearings: "without a North Pole, but with a centre of attraction where the regulatory principles of good governance meet."<sup>17</sup>

For Delmas-Marty, finding a sustainable direction in the Anthropocene involves leaving behind "emancipatory humanism", which is built around the myth of modern man as an autonomous being, separate from nature, and reconnecting with

a "humanism of interdependence", inspired by principles of social solidarity between humans and ecological solidarity with non-humans. A central value of this humanism must be the recognition of interdependencies and the resulting human duties towards ecosystems, with a respect for the planetary commons, which cannot be appropriated or alienated.<sup>18 19</sup>

## 2. RECONNECTING WITH WHAT KEEPS US ALIVE

In recent years, the figure of Gaïa has made a major comeback in ecological narratives. For example, to consider this era beset with turmoil the philosopher Isabelle Stengers prefers to speak of the "awakening" or "intrusion of Gaïa", rather than the Anthropocene.<sup>20</sup> Gaïa refers to the notion of the Earth as a superior being in whom the Ancient Greeks believed, and with whom they maintained a relationship based on respect, not on alienation or exploitation. Gaïa was a sort of Mother Earth, who brought together all "earthly" beings, whether animals, plants or humans, at an equal level in a single society. This figure of nature endowed with the power to act (and not relegated to decorative status) goes against the tide of modern discourse. She allows other narra-

14 Estelle Vanwambeke, *Ibidem*.

15 Christian Salmon, *Ibidem*.

16 Bruno Latour (2020), "Imaginer les gestes-barrières contre le retour à la production d'avant-crise": <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/fr/node/849>

17 Mireille Delmas-Marty, "Vivre ensemble dans un monde déboussolé", AOC review of 23.09.20. URL link: <https://aoc.media/analyse/2020/09/22/vivre-ensemble-dans-un-monde-deboussole/>

18 Delmas-Marty explains that a humanism of interdependence has emerged in international law since the Stockholm Declaration (1972) and gained momentum since the Earth Summit in Rio (1992). "By referring to 'the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth', international law recognised the interdependencies between humans and other components of the ecosystem. It drew its conclusions in 2015 in terms of common objectives, such as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 25 September 2015) and the 3 objectives of the Climate Agreement (15 December 2015). Various projects are being added to these [Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, Declaration of the Rights of Humanity, Pact for the Environment], whose common point is a recognition of interdependencies and a resulting deduction of human duties towards the ecosystem".

19 Mireille Delmas Marty, *Op. Cit.*

20 Isabelle Stengers, *Portail des Humanités Environnementales*, interview with Olivier Taïeb of 15 December 2013: <http://humanitesenvironnementales.fr/fr/les-ressources/les-grands-entretiens?page=2>



tives neglected by progress to emerge, recounting a plurality of possible groupings and structures between living species.

The use of Gaïa in connection with contemporary environmental issues is a consequence of the work of the scientists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, who adopted the term in the 1970s to provide a more complex definition of the Earth than the homogenous-looking sphere that can be observed by satellite. Indeed, they define the Earth as a controlled atmosphere-biosphere: “the total ensemble of living organisms which constitute the biosphere and can act as a single entity to regulate chemical composition, surface pH and possibly also climate.”<sup>21</sup>

This definition has inspired the work of many contemporary researchers on pressing climate and ecological issues. Among other things, it makes it possible to go beyond the limiting definition of nature which modernity has placed in opposition to “exceptional” human culture. Bruno Latour also adopts this hypothesis of Gaïa to demonstrate how much human existence holds up only as far as it holds onto/is held up by other living beings. Indeed, “being alive” depends on conditions favourable to our existence which are themselves ensured by other living beings, and more precisely by their

involuntary waste (the eliminations of bacteria, vegetation, vertebrates and invertebrates which maintain oxygen, aerate and fertilise the soil, etc.).<sup>22</sup>

Gaïa is, in this sense, what simultaneously connects living beings, sustains them, and has them sustain each other. It is a collection of substances and relationships tying humans to each other and to their surroundings. It is therefore not external. In other words, humans and the environment are connected in a relationship of dynamic interaction in which each influences and transforms the behaviour of the other.<sup>23</sup> Oil, for example, considered crucial to support lifestyles and global trade in the Anthropocene, only became a “resource” with the human invention of the internal combustion engine. Nevertheless, the climatic changes resulting from its massive exploitation are today forcing humanity and all living things to make new adaptations in their environments to protect themselves from present and future risks, such as, for example, floods, forest fires, or new pandemics.

Gaïa is a figure of nature who compels us to accept the interdependence of all living species in life and in death, and to recognise a power to act in non-humans just as much as in humans. In doing so, she has

the merit of complexifying the modern narrative of human exceptionalism in relation to the rest of the living world, while at the same time emphasising the rapid nature of ecological change. In this way she allows ethics and politics to reconnect, and non-humans to be brought into the political sphere, along the lines of citizens’ initiatives calling for legal personality to be accorded to a forest, mountain or lake, such as Lake Erie in Ohio, USA,<sup>24</sup> or the river Whanganui which was recognised as a living entity by the New Zealand parliament in 2017; or like the community of women and men who have organised an action research project in Brussels to make adaptations to their neighbourhood based on the qualities and trajectories of water;<sup>25</sup> or, finally, following the example of the scientists, citizens and artists who are sketching out the possible forms and ways of functioning of a parliament for the Loire in France, where fauna, flora and different tangible and intangible components of the river would be represented.<sup>26 27</sup>

### 3. PUTTING CARE BACK AT THE HEART OF A POLITICS OF INTERDEPENDENCE

Thinking about the interdependence of human and non-human condi-

21 Lynn Margulis, J.E. Lovelock, “Biological modulation of the Earth’s atmosphere”, *Icarus* Volume 21, Issue 4, April 1974, Pages 471-489

22 Bruno Latour, *Face à Gaïa. Huit conférences sur le Nouveau Régime climatique*, Paris, Editions La Découverte, 2015.

23 For greater depth regarding the notion of “human environment”, see Patrick Beaucé’s study on the path of the geographer Augustin Berque regarding the work of philosopher Watsuji Tetsurô on Fudô, the human environment.

24 See: [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/02/22/les-habitants-de-toledo-dans-l-ohio-appelles-a-donner-un-statut-juridique-au-lac-erie-pour-sa-survie\\_5426743\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/02/22/les-habitants-de-toledo-dans-l-ohio-appelles-a-donner-un-statut-juridique-au-lac-erie-pour-sa-survie_5426743_3244.html)

25 In reference to the action-research project “Brusseau”: <https://brusseau.be/>

26 For further information, see: <http://polau.org/actualites/auditions-parlement-loire-1/>

27 For greater depth on the subject, see: [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/02/22/quand-la-nature-est-reconnue-sujet-de-droit-cela-permet-de-reguler-des-activites-industrielles\\_5426799\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/02/22/quand-la-nature-est-reconnue-sujet-de-droit-cela-permet-de-reguler-des-activites-industrielles_5426799_3244.html)

tions of existence requires a corollary recognition of the interdependence of our vulnerabilities. This calls for an ethic of "care", a field of research that is particularly invested in analysing and understanding the fragilities engendered or exacerbated by the Anthropocene, and to attempting to construct appropriate responses.

Indeed, "we are often dependent beings for we are fundamentally vulnerable", explains the philosopher Fabienne Brugère, for whom "reference to vulnerability becomes essential from an ontological<sup>28</sup> perspective, in order to integrate the protection of nature or the environment into issues of protection".<sup>29</sup>

The ethic of care questions the idea that individuals are entirely autonomous and independent, in line with an emancipatory humanism.<sup>30</sup> It is based on a recognition of our interdependencies in life and in vulnerability. The word "care" is polysemantic, at once meaning an interest (preoccupation, worry) and an attention given to others who are "in need". This attention is accompanied by a gesture, as part of an active process. Care is therefore both a disposition and a practice of establishing a relationship between caregivers and care receivers.

In this context, political scientists Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto suggest that caring be viewed as a

generic activity "that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web".<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, for Tronto, "care is perhaps best thought of as a practice",<sup>32</sup> a term which, according to the author, covers the inseparable dimensions of care: thought (attention), and action (gesture). In this definition, which for the political scientist extends to non-humans, a practice can be defined as "of care", or "caring", when its purpose is the maintenance, perpetuation and repair of our world, a world which has become particularly vulnerable.

However, faced with this broad interpretation of care, Tronto gives a more detailed outline using four "phases", formulated as follows: 1) "caring about", in other words attentiveness to the need for care; 2) "taking care of", which involves taking responsibility for care; 3) "caring giving", which corresponds to the actual work that needs to be done; and 4) "care receiving", namely the response of the person receiving the care.<sup>33</sup>

Ideally, Tronto tells us, an integrated act of care, namely one that is "well accomplished", must cover

these four essential and interdependent dimensions. Attentiveness to another being does not lead to care if it is not followed by a responsive action that is adapted to their need, and vice versa, an action carried out for others is not "caring" if it is not dispensed with a particular attentiveness allowing the existence of a need to be observed, and the possibility of responding to it. A relationship is not established if there is no meeting between the words, the actions and the need felt. The vulnerable individual's reception of the care is just as important as the attention paid to the conditions of vulnerability, and to the appropriate response.

For example, a medical act may not be caring, as attested by the recent media attention given to the violence women experience in obstetric practice. In the same way, concern about hunger in the world, or climate change, may not change the problem if it is not followed by an action to tackle the problem, and if this action is not adapted to the needs of the people directly suffering as a result of it. This was something demonstrated by the Yellow Vests movement in 2018, when a measure taken by the French government to reduce greenhouse gases (the carbon tax) threatened to reinforce the precarity of a section of the country's citizens.

The adequacy of the care given in

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28 Adjective which can be translated as "existential" (Editor's Note)  
29 Fabienne Brugère (2011), *L'éthique du "care"*, Coll. Que sais-je ?, Ed. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, pp.66-82.  
30 Cf. Part 1, chap. 1  
31 Tronto, J.C. (1993), *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, New York and London: Routledge, p.103.  
32 *Ibidem*, p.108.  
33 *Ibidem*, pp.105-106.

relation to the identified need is therefore vital in an integrated practice of care. This involves four “inextricably linked” moral elements which Tronto and Fischer have identified to define the practice of the ethic of Care, namely *attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness*.

- The first, attentiveness, involves being attentive to the needs of others in order to respond to them, and shifting our focus away from ourselves and our personal goals and ambitions in order to do this. It is an indispensable condition of caring. From this point of view, inattentiveness to the needs of others is a moral failing.
- The second, responsibility, supposes asking ourselves what we have done or not done, which has contributed to the appearance of the need for care, and which we must think about from now on.
- Competence amounts to “making certain that the caring work is done competently”. Competence is both a guarantee and an indicator of the success of the caring act.
- Lastly, responsiveness suggests considering the other in their otherness, a way of understanding the needs of the other without trying to put oneself in their place.<sup>34</sup>

Taking care lastly involves being concerned with the consequences and the final outcome, in order to “give the means to the care receiver

to respond”, Brugère tells us, following Tronto’s proposal, and therefore recognising a capacity to respond in the care receiver. “The ethic of care entails an anthropology of vulnerability, an ontology or a world, an awareness of the dignity of dependence and a philosophy of “taking care”,<sup>35</sup> she argues.

How can we respond to the growing complexity of the interdependence of our interconnected human and non-human vulnerabilities? How can we tackle the causes and consequences of climate change without exacerbating vulnerabilities? The notion of care and looking after vulnerabilities encounters many dilemmas, which are tempting to ignore because of their complexity, following the example of globalisers<sup>36</sup> with Donald Trump<sup>37</sup> leading the way.

It is likely that if each individual recognised and took care of the relationships that keep them alive, they would never tolerate the indecent conditions of living, working and dying of the other individuals on whom they depend (human and non-human alike), relegated to the outskirts of cities, the invisibility of the night, or the other end of the production chain, for example. If we were to describe and add up the services on which we depend in order to live, work and die in the Anthropocene, and if these services had to cease, our vulnerabilities would be revealed.

Narratives of the world after therefore cannot avoid an ethic of care which considers life on Earth as a fabric of human and non-human (Gaïan, we might say) interdependencies in life and death. In this way, they open up the possibility of a politics and an economy of care, which could lead political and economic relations to include aspects which they traditionally do not include, such as mutual listening to needs, a recognition of the other in their difference, and a redistribution of capacities and responsibilities for caring.

Whether in relation to politics, governance or the economic system, an ethic of care involves avoiding any reflex to standardise responses to the impending social and environmental problems. The last fifty years have demonstrated how much massification (of governance, of production, of consumption), in response to goals of efficiency, has been as disastrous as it has effective. Rendering markets dependent on international channels, including in a sector as essential to life as the food sector, has increased their vulnerability.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. STAYING WITH THE URGENCY: THE STORY OF A “THICK” PRESENT

There is an urgent need for us to accept and fully inhabit the trouble

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, pp.127-135.

<sup>35</sup> Fabienne Brugère, op. cit., p.81.

<sup>36</sup> Latour B. (2020), “Imaginer les gestes-barrières contre le retour à la production d’avant-crise” : <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/fr/node/849>

<sup>37</sup> On 1 June 2017, Donald Trump officially announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement. Signed in 2015 by 195 countries after much negotiation at the COP 21 conference, this text aims to limit the average temperature increase on Earth to below 2°C.

<sup>38</sup> Olivier De Schutter, op. cit, explains the fragility of food systems that depend on global flows, whether for foodstuffs or labour. According to De Schutter, “re-localising, regaining a little food self-sufficiency, strengthens resilience”.

in our complex world. This is the proposal developed by Donna Haraway in her work “Staying with the Trouble. Making kin in the Chthulucene” (2016).<sup>39</sup> For Haraway, staying with the trouble means “living and dying well together on terra”,<sup>40</sup> in this possible world that she prefigures in her work under the name of “Terrapolis”,<sup>41</sup> a place where it is important to take care of the ecological, economic and species differences that bring beings together.

As words and stories are never innocent, Haraway turns them into a political playground. She pays sensitive attention to the multiple possible meanings and reappropriations of words in order to create inhabitable worlds. The notion of “togetherness” is crucial in her proposal, since it suggests ways of living and dying which are based on the recognition of interdependence between the human species and the rest of the living world (i.e. the remaining 99.9%!<sup>42</sup>), and the possibility of building “empowering” cooperative relationships, meaning ones that render us responsible, capable of responding for and with other species in the precarious context of the Anthropocene (“Response-able”, according to the author’s play on words).

Haraway is also interested in the distinction between “urgencies” and “emergencies”. She places Terrap-



*Image of a moving garden by Gilles Clément, Parc Matisse, in Lille, Lille Europe station. 8 hectares, creation 1990. Associate artist: Claude Courtecuisse, Associate landscaper: Cabinet Empreinte, Eric Berlin. © Copyleft*

olis within a situation of “urgency”, describing a quality or state that will suffer no delay, resulting in a need for action, as opposed to the second term, “emergency”, which has connotations for the author of “something approaching apocalypse and its mythologies”, in as far as it signifies “an unexpected and difficult or dangerous situation, especially an accident, which happens suddenly and which requires quick action to deal with it”.<sup>43</sup> “Urgency” for Haraway unlocks other temporalities which may be appropriated and inhabited. It opens the possibility of coming out of paralysis in order to take care of (respond to) a present which necessitates new responses,

ones that are radically multi-species, anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-capitalist, and which take note of growing vulnerabilities.

It is consequently in this time of “urgencies” that Haraway situates the need to reflect and act in the Anthropocene, which she proposes considering rather as the era of the “Chthulucene”, a term that she invented taking inspiration from both the monster Cthulhu (a famous figure in American science fiction literature, “the embodiment of the racist and misogynistic nightmare”<sup>44</sup>), and the spider Pimonia Cthulhu from California. The Chthulucene does not have the function of re-

<sup>39</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble. Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Éd. Duke University Press, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p.29.

<sup>41</sup> Haraway describes Terrapolis as a place open to possibilities, where Science Fiction and Speculative Fabulation and Feminism (SF) play a game of inter-species “responsibilities” and where it is possible to get away from the story of human exceptionalism, to create tales of cooperation between companion species that are interdependent in life and death. “Terrapolis is a mongrel word composted with a mycorrhiza of Greek and Latin rootlets and their symbionts.”, explains the author, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> A study published in May 2018 by three researchers from the Weizmann Institute of Science and the California Institute of Technology has indeed revealed that the human species represents only 0.01% of total biomass, far behind plants (82%, totalling 450 billion tons of carbon), and bacteria (13%). See: Estelle Vanwambeke (2019), “Comprendre et composer (avec) l’Anthropocène”, an Oxfam analysis.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p.37.

<sup>44</sup> Florence Caeymax et al., [2019] *Habiter le trouble avec Donna Haraway*, Ed. Dehors.

placing the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene, but of opening a new space-time narrative where it is possible to tell a different story of the era in which we live, by weaving tentacular connections with the rest of the living world.

More than a point in time, the Chthulucene is a pragmatic proposal for a move to action in the urgency and precarity of present times. In light of this, the philosopher Julien Pieron interprets that the time of the Chthulucene is not a chain of events which follow one another in a sequence, but rather a volume, that is to say a "stratified" space-time where each layer is a form of sediment in contact with others, sometimes overflowing, colliding with and wrinkling the other layers. Rather like in compost, an image dear to Haraway and which gives birth to her SF (for science fiction, speculative fabulation, speculative feminism, etc.) character Camille, a hybrid individual born of compost, half human, half butterfly, an inhabitant of Terrapolis in the Chthulucene.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, Pieron observes in his analysis that the time considered by Haraway in the Chthulucene is vertical and thick (unlike the horizontal and linear time of the Anthropocene), and is written taking multiple forms of life and capacities to act, human and non-human, into ac-

count. In this time of the Chthulucene, vertical and thick, the past and the present dialogue and meet, giving rise to tension.<sup>46</sup>

More than a cumbersome legacy that should be discarded or transformed, the past for Haraway is not something to sweep behind us, Pieron tells us, but rather "the ground on which we stand, like a reality which is not inert, dead or gone, but which can crop up from time to time and come to the surface in our present lives".<sup>47</sup>

Thus, following Haraway's invitation to "stay with the trouble", "the issue of time gains in intensity".<sup>48</sup> And "becoming" does not mean "moving on", but "doing-with" (with the trouble, and with others), giving a new existence to the present events, and increasing their power in order to build a common future desirable to all living things, by weaving tentacular connections and stories rather than binary anticipatory narratives.<sup>49</sup>

The time of the Chthulucene is in this respect a time which welcomes reversibilities and contradictions "without seeking to resolve them", which tolerates improbable, sometimes unfortunate cohabitations, with the intention of rendering all individuals and collectives capable of response and action, in a common future which does not cast aside

the past, but looks it in the face and comes to terms with it. Rather like in the network of connected trees developed by the Russian artist Olga Kisseleva,<sup>50</sup> or in the disobedient gardens of the landscape architect Gilles Clément,<sup>51</sup> living spaces left "to the free development of the species that settle there", or even in the garden of La Semeuse in Aubervilliers. Initiated in 2010 by the artists Marjetica Potrč and RozO Architects, the latter weaves astonishing connections between the plant biodiversity and the cultural diversity of the French city.<sup>52</sup>

## 5. THE FUTURE: A PATH LESS TRAVELLED MORE THAN A DESTINATION

Faced with the urgency for new narratives, fiction is the subject of increased attention, as much in the social, political and environmental sciences as in literature. It is perceived as an inventive resource for stimulating imaginations and rediscovering an individual and collective power to take action regarding our present, following a politics of solidarity and an ethic of care.

Indeed, faced with the hellish alternatives<sup>53</sup> of the Anthropocene, fiction is considered as food for action. It operates through games of deviation and transposition between

45 Donna Haraway (2016), *Staying with the trouble. Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Éd. Duke University press, pp 134-168

46 Julien Pieron, (2019), *habiter le trouble, habiter le présent*, in the collective work *Habiter le trouble avec Donna Haraway*, Ed. Dehors, p 275-297

47 Ibidem, p. 283.

48 Florence Caeymax et al., Ibidem, p.51

49 Donna Haraway, Ibidem, P. 38.

50 On this subject, see Benjamin Leclercq's article published 30 November 2020 in the online magazine *Usbek&Rica*: <https://usbeketrica.com/fr/intelligence-des-arbres-aussi-respectable-que-la-notre>

51 See the work and writing of the architect, landscape designer and gardener Gilles Clément: <http://www.gillesclement.com/>

52 See: <http://www.leslaboratoires.org/projet/la-semeuse/la-semeuse>

53 An expression taken from Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre, developed in their work *La sorcellerie capitaliste. Pratiques de désenchantement*, éditions La Découverte, 2005, 2007.

several worlds and, in doing so, "paves the way for a possible between the necessarily impossible and the necessarily existing"<sup>54</sup>. Placing strain on an existing problem through a speculative detour (sometimes minimal and a long way from futuristic science-fiction scenarios) allows it to be seen from another angle, to be better understood, and allows us to imagine how things "could be." In fiction or storytelling, "the future is not a destination, but a path less travelled that can be followed in order to unfold the imagination between the present situation and the suggested world"<sup>55</sup>.



Brusseau citizen action-research project. Source: <https://brusseau.be>

The narrative challenge, in order to tackle the cascading crises, is to overthrow capitalist, racist and sexist modern fiction with a profusion of new stories, capable of imagining and bringing into being new ways of life that give a place and a voice to possibilities of solidarity and cohabitation between species. This is the work which many participants from the scientific, artistic, associative and political spheres are undertaking, in an interdisciplinary exercise.

In the context of clubs, workshops, seminars and other laboratories for reading, reflecting and writing, members of the public, both experts and enthusiasts, strive to imagine scenarios that call social and environmental inequalities into question

and model desirable and sustainable economic and social lifestyles, without reproducing the discriminatory conditions of the Anthropocene.

It is thus possible, for example, to very seriously play the webgame *Juste un jeu*<sup>56</sup> ("Just a game"), devised by the Belgian association *l'Autre Lieu* in order to pose moral and ethical questions regarding "social justice", by wandering through imaginary (visual and aural) landscapes that are to a greater or lesser extent populated or deserted, living or dead, terrestrial or ethereal. The paths chosen test the players' convictions. They plot courses leading them to make decisions, and, taking mutual dependencies and reciprocal responsibilities into account, to think of "social justice"

as a concept that is "dense", "tangled" and "directly connected to others", made up of intertwined vulnerabilities, and which is "less concerned with the development of its content than its conditions of development".

One may also join the globalised "Haraka" movement, in order to think about the materiality and guiding principles of "Antémonde", a world as fabulous as it is emancipatory, radically anti-capitalist, queer<sup>57</sup> and feminist thanks to "tinkering" with imaginary worlds.<sup>58</sup>

It is even possible to break down the racist borders of our modern societies, and to explore alternative futures for the inhabitants of marginalised urban areas, by leaving in

54 Yves Citton, "À travers la fiction : forces de l'image, de l'exemple et de la merveille", Paris, *VACARME* review No. 54, 19 February 2011: <https://vacarme.org/article1970.html>

55 Estelle Vanwambeke, "Soins de suite : sur les possibilités de repenser le soin et l'hospitalité dans l'anthropocène à travers la fiction", in *Anthropocène 2050*, the research blog of the Lyon Urban School, 2020 : <https://medium.com/anthropocene2050/soins-de-suite-sur-les-possibilit%C3%A9s-de-repenser-le-soin-et-lhospitalit%C3%A9-dans-l-anthropoc%C3%A8ne-a-CC%80-ec723710ec9c?source=rss-----1>

56 "Juste un jeu" is a "serious game" proposed by the associations *l'Autre lieu*—RAPA, le Centre Franco Basaglia, Revers and CEMEA as part of a campaign on social justice: <https://justicesociale.be/>

57 The term "queer" is defined by the dictionary Merriam Webster as "odd", "strange", "weird", "differing in some way from what is usual or normal" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/queer>). This term denotes a highly political issue when it is used to refer to people whose gender identity and sexual orientation does not correspond to binary norms. For more depth on the subject, read the author's analysis "Let's Queer le débat écologique! Entretien avec Brigitte Baptiste" (2020): <https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/download/lets-queer-le-debat-ecologique-entretien-avec-brigitte-baptiste/#.YEoQTPnKiRs>

58 Les Ateliers de l'Antémonde: <https://antemonde.org/epoques/haraka/>

search of "the suburb of TURFU" and its "hidden dimensions".<sup>59</sup>

In these cases, among so many other inspiring examples, the construction of new fictional worlds is a work of collaboration. When speculations are pooled within a community, they act as catalysts allowing our relationship to reality to be collectively redefined, by provoking debate on multiple possible futures. Indeed "the discussion, within a group, of individual identifications and transpositions which take structure through it, opens a possible space for debate, as well as a collective shift towards an "elsewhere" that is possible for all in the long-term".<sup>60</sup>

At the heart of these narrative experiments, we find common concerns for building systems that are capable of leading social, political and economic relations to include the recognition of different forms of life and needs, the redefinition and fair sharing of the common resources necessary for living, and approaches to tackling vulnerabilities.

The material world, trade between nations, channels of goods and services and monetary transactions are reconfigured in a web of relationships guided by principles of "care". The relationship to time, work and know-how is redefined, and traditional knowledge inspires new forms of life.

Turning to fiction and science fiction to permit ourselves to imagine a world freed from the bounds of modern narrative is not new. As early as the end of the 19th century, William Morris,<sup>61</sup> the figurehead of the "Arts and Crafts"<sup>62</sup> movement, imagined the forms that a 20th century society free from capitalist predation and industrial disfigurement could take.

In his *News from Nowhere* (1890), Morris sketches the future he dreams of for modern societies, based on libertarian and brotherly values. He projects himself as the protagonist of a futuristic dream where he meets, in a distant time, a series of characters and situations allowing him to confront the impasses of modern times that he sees coming, and to imagine ways of relating to work that are based on individual satisfaction, the fair distribution of income and mutual aid, and a system for trading services that is freed from monetary transactions (thus avoiding the trap of capitalisation).<sup>63</sup>

In this society of the future, no one is confined to a single job or a task: the weaver also works as a boatman, and the boatman as a farmer during the harvest, and so on. Cities do not eat into the land of the countryside, and coexist with the plant life that dominates the concerns of his nar-



"Just a game" offers to explore the contours of social justice. <https://justicesociale.be>

<sup>59</sup> "La Banlieue du Turfu" is a project run by the designers Makan Fofana and Max Mollon. See: <https://gaitelyrique.net/evenement/sur-les-traces-de-la-banlieue-du-turfu>

<sup>60</sup> Estelle Vanwambeke, *Ibidem*.

<sup>61</sup> William Morris (1834-1896) was a British textile designer, furniture and art manufacturer, and also a painter, printer, and writer as well as an activist for the poorest in society. He co-founded the Socialist League in 1885. Moreover, he has been credited with the birth of "Fantasy" as a literary genre in England, which is characterised by a mixing, in an epic atmosphere, of myths, legends and narrative themes of fantasy and science fiction (according to the definition of Fantasy proposed by the Larousse encyclopedia. For more information on the subject, see: <https://tantasy.bnf.fr/fr/comprendre/william-morris-lecrivain-aux-mille-visages/> )

<sup>62</sup> The Arts and Crafts movement was an artistic movement for reform in the fields of architecture, decorative arts, painting and sculpture, spearheaded by William Morris and the writer and poet John Ruskin in England in the 1860s, which then developed in the 1890s to 1910s, at the end of the Victorian era. It echoed the concerns of artists and craftsmen in the face of modern "progress", in a context of contested British world domination and rapid changes in landscapes and societies under the impetus of the industrial revolution, which gave rise to a new social structure. Source: [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts\\_%26\\_Crafts](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_%26_Crafts)

<sup>63</sup> From his second chapter onwards, he questions our relationship to money and its accumulation, when he meets the first character of his epic, a boatman who transports him to the opposite bank of the Thames, and who, embarrassed, refuses the money he offers him in return. Furthermore, the coins that the author is carrying have oxidised during their journey into the future, an image of their obsolescence in the model of community living and working dreamed of by Morris.

rative.<sup>64</sup> His central characters are those marginalised by modern societies: women and proletarians whom Morris defended throughout his life, even though the story does not fully overturn gender relations<sup>65</sup>.

Lastly, his *News* gives a prominent place to crafts, which he spent his life promoting and practising. From a vase to interior decoration to clothing, the author describes in a detailed and exhaustive way the objects and places he discovers in the future, carefully made from noble and high-quality materials, in the continuation of a know-how inherited from centuries of practice. These objects, these places and the

know-how contained within them contribute to a feeling of space and freedom, two qualities conducive to what Morris considers to be a society based on principles of equality and fraternity, in contrast to the growing industrialisation which characterised the first half of the century and which impacted the field of decorative arts, giving rise to poor quality mass-produced furniture.

*News from Nowhere* embraces the idea promoted by its author that crafts are a source of satisfaction, in as far as one participates in each stage of the production of a piece of work, and that one can only do a

good job if one lives and works in a healthy and pleasant environment. For Morris, it was urgent, even in the 19th century, to promote and reinstate manual work, while safeguarding and relearning traditional techniques.

What if, in the sequel to Morris's political utopia, crafts were to return to the centre of our social and economic lifestyles in these times of ecological urgency? What can the craftsperson's way of thinking and doing teach us, in order to inspire new eco-political and economic narratives based on a humanism of interdependence and an ethic of care?

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64 Plants are very present in the imaginary worlds that Morris orchestrates in his works of Fantasy (see for example *The Wood Beyond the World* [1894], *The Well at the World's End* [1896] and *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* [1897], etc.), just as textiles are.

65 In her analysis of the place women hold in *News from Nowhere* [2004], Catherine Durieux highlights that despite his libertarian aspirations, Morris fails to overturn gender relations in his utopian construction. *News from Nowhere* is imbued with a Victorian vision of women, and therefore strongly essentialist, where the latter are still largely assigned to roles of seduction and domestic chores, of female companions "complementary to men through their specific qualities, but never as equals able to compete with them" writes Durieux, even if, however "gender equality seems to go without saying and to be a given in this new world". For greater depth, see: Catherine Durieux, "Les femmes dans *Nouvelles de Nulle Part*", *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* [Online], XIII-1 | 2004, Online since 01 September 2004, connection on 07 January 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/3277>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.3277>



## Part 2. Crafts as a basis for thinking about tomorrow's economy

*Following the perspective outlined above, this second part focuses on crafts as an intrinsically relational model of thinking, living and doing, which falls within a relationship of interdependence and care with a community and an environment. It supports the hypothesis that craft modes of production can fuel new narratives in favour of an economy that tackles vulnerabilities and redistributes governance.*

### 1. CRAFTS AS A RELATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

Building on 'Actor-Network Theory'<sup>66</sup> and 'Good Living',<sup>67</sup> the designer Daniela Salgado-Cofré suggests thinking of craft production as relational, in other words, following the arguments developed previously, as a production activity intrinsically linked to its environment. In craft activities, the technical gesture at once expresses a vision of the world, a tangible heritage and a mode of relating to the surroundings of the individual who performs it, whether those surroundings be urban or rural.

This applies equally to traditional crafts, namely crafts inherited from a tradition that is often rural (which include a practice, knowledge and beliefs passed down from generation

to generation within a community linked by a common culture, history and geography), and to neo-crafts, stemming from a context and knowledge that are more recent (falling within a globalised geography and integrating, for instance, digital technologies and semi-industrial production methods). Crafts therefore consist at once of a gesture, a practice and a knowledge base interlocked in a set of reciprocal relationships, which take shape as they are given shape by their context and the people who practice them. Craft practice is also, from this point of view, the reflection of social, economic and geographical relationships between territories.<sup>68</sup>

Consequently, a craft object is one which incorporates into its production and value chain elements of a

community's territory (natural resources), its tangible and intangible heritage (its cultural influence) and its identity. This "relational component" of the craft object actually makes it more sustainable and more resilient, Salgado-Cofré analyses.

Indeed, from an analysis of the clay pottery craft community located in the village of Pomaire in Chile,<sup>69</sup> which has managed to maintain its know-how despite industrial competition and a lack of protective measures by the State, the designer argues that the craft sector has a greater capacity for resistance and adaptability in the face of crises.

For Salgado-Cofré, crafts as a situated practice are as much a way of "being" as of "doing", shared by a community that sees its activity as a way of life going beyond the resulting product. Its interdependent link with its environment and the local socio-economic context allows it to modify the criteria of manufacture according to the changing conditions of its surroundings, "to obtain the greatest value from a modest capital, always starting from creativity".<sup>70</sup>

66 Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is a sociological approach developed from the 1980s onwards by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, Madeleine Akrich and other researchers from the Center for the Sociology of Innovation at Mines ParisTech. It is different from conventional sociological theories in that it takes not only humans, but also non-human living species, objects and discourse into account in its analysis. The latter are considered as "actors" or "agents" in the same way as humans. This approach marks a turning point in human and social sciences and environmental sciences, for among other things it contemplates new ways of thinking about living collectives, by studying the arrangements that redistribute powers between humans and non-humans. For greater depth, see: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/fr/taxonomy/term/32.html>

67 More than a philosophy, "Good Living" (a literal translation of "Buen Vivir" in Spanish) is a pragmatic proposal developed in Latin America, for the organisation of social life based on collective well-being as an alternative to the economy of efficiency based on the idea of "development". It has its origins in the conceptions of collective well-being of "sumak kawsay" in Quechua and "suma qamaña" in Aymara, and the rights of nature. Source: Arturo Escobar, *Design for the Pluriverses*, 2018, Duke University Press, p. 148

68 Crafts are understood in this study as "the practice of skill acquired through the transmission of knowledge within a community to which the practitioner belongs, and forming part of a system of open knowledge that evolves through experimentation". For greater depth regarding this definition, see: Estelle Vanwambeke (2017), "Crafts, Development Policies and Fair Trade: Challenges and Perspectives through the Lens of Design", Oxfam, pp. 8-10 and Baudoin, N. (1). "Crafting for Change. Dos experiencias de creación participativa en Francia y Argentina". *Economía Creativa*, [13], p.75. <https://doi.org/10.46840/ec.2020.13.04>

69 See: <https://pomairegedas.cl/>

70 Daniela Salgado Cofre (2020), *La vuelta a la producción global y la alternativa relacional de los artesanos*, Revista Acto y Forma, Vol. 65, No. 9. <http://www.actoyforma.cl/index.php/ayf/article/view/106>



In May 2020, a virtual gathering brought together artisans and designers from the Garland community and Oxfam, to discuss the results of the "Life after Lockdown" survey launched by Kevin Murray and Estelle Vanwambeke.

Its connection to its surroundings and context in this sense makes the craft sector more adaptable to change, capable of reinventing itself more easily. This capacity for resistance, "which seems to be linked to its relational character", particularly attracts the attention of the author during a period of pandemic which blatantly reveals the fragility of commercial relationships entwined in globalised trade, in which certain stakeholders depend almost exclusively on international markets and channels.

While this adaptability does not apply to all craft practices (it must be recognised that many have been com-

pletely absorbed by the speed of technical and technological changes in production and information, and that in many communities there is a problem of inter-generational transfer of traditional know-how),<sup>71</sup> this analysis is of interest in imagining more resilient economic models for today and tomorrow, inspired by the relational nature of crafts.

The systemic crisis of 2020 has indeed shown the extent to which local and regional production and consumption networks have been a source of innovatory initiatives and responses, while all over the world entire production chains have been shut down. Some companies, for ex-

ample, decided to temporarily redirect their production in order to manufacture protective objects and equipment allowing the spread of the virus to be limited, often for the healthcare sector. In this way they avoided putting all their staff out of work.<sup>72</sup> Many 'Fablabs'<sup>73</sup> have done the same. New networking and distribution platforms between producers and consumers have been created, or have been strengthened by this time.<sup>74</sup> The links between some twin-towns have even rediscovered their purpose by setting up solidarity-based supply chains, etc.<sup>75</sup>

All these initiatives, large and small, have in common that they are atten-

71 Estelle Vanwambeke, *Ibidem*, pp-10-14 and 26-27.

72 See on this subject: [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2020/03/25/masques-gel-hydroalcoolique-des-entreprises-changent-leur-production-pour-lutter-contre-le-coronavirus\\_6034410\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2020/03/25/masques-gel-hydroalcoolique-des-entreprises-changent-leur-production-pour-lutter-contre-le-coronavirus_6034410_3234.html)

73 The Fablab of the Free University of Brussels, for example. See: <https://sciences.ulb.be/science-vous/le-fab-lab-1>

74 Such as the Open Food Network, for example: <https://www.openfoodnetwork.be/>

75 For example, read about the initiative set up between the village of Muhlbach-sur-Munster (Haut-Rhin) and the municipality of Kermaria-Sulard in the Côtes d'Armor, with which it is twinned: <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/insolite/coronavirus-un-village-breton-commande-1000-munsters-pour-soutenir-un-eleveur-alsacien-1588608386>. The website of the 'Association des Maires de France' is brimming with virtuous initiatives and practices in this area: <https://www.amf.asso.fr/m/COVID19/>

tive to vulnerability, and in some cases tackle it, following an ethic of care,<sup>76</sup> relying precisely on an operating model woven from a network of relationships. They are based on a relational model and offer fertile ground for future learning.

Indeed, in the damaged context of the Anthropocene, those involved in the design, manufacture and propagation of lifestyles have a responsibility to rethink ways of establishing relationships, and to invent forms of production and consumption capable of guaranteeing an inhabitable world for today and tomorrow.

Therefore, crafts may constitute a model of production and consumption to be looked at more closely in order to create “barrier gestures” that act against “precarity-inducing” economic mechanisms, and to build economic models based on a relational ethic of interdependence

and care. What can craft practices inspire in order to support or initiate an ethical and pragmatic transition of the world economy that integrates territories, identities and communities? What new economic stories is it possible to write using the relational model of crafts?

A new narrative based on the craft model of living, thinking and doing requires two contradictions to be taken into account. First of all, however relevant they may be in light of the challenges of social and environmental solidarity at local and global levels, crafts remain marginal and generate little revenue due to the overwhelming competition of international markets with local markets, such as in the fashion industry. In the face of competition, the only way craftspeople can compete is to reduce sales prices, at the expense of their own families and communities. Therefore, “craftspeople are

associated with poor sectors of the population, and traditional knowledge is considered marginal, inadequate and decontextualised from the world”, notes Salgado-Cofre.

Secondly, the craft sectors that managed to access the international market in the 1980s (whether through the conventional economic system or through alternative models based on cooperation, such as fair trade) today find themselves in a situation of growing vulnerability, for they are too dependent on distant markets. Paralysed during the crisis, craft and food value chains, even those based on solidarity and fair trade, are being forced to rethink their economic model in the short and long term. Unsurprisingly, faced with the decline in exports and the massive reduction in tourism flows, craftspeople find themselves confronted in a singular and unprecedented way with isolation and precarity.

Fundraising appeals from craft communities around the world are symptomatic of these contradictions: how have communities with such a heritage and know-how become so dependent on international trade? This unprecedented situation highlights the limits of an economic model centred on consumption, and the need to support a transition towards economic models centred to a greater extent on the values of social, ecological and cultural interdependence, rather than on interchangeability.<sup>77</sup>



<sup>76</sup> Cf. Part 1, chap. 3

<sup>77</sup> The notion of interchangeability used here is inspired by the philosopher Baptiste Morizot's analysis of the crisis of sensitivity and political attention of the "average modern person" in relation to other forms of life that populate environments. Reference: Baptiste Morizot (2020), *Manière d'être vivant*, Ed. Actes Sud, Coll. Mondes Sauvages, pp. 31-32

How, then, can an economic and social policy be constructed that is capable of moving beyond the dependencies engendered in the Anthro-Capitalocene and of reinventing links of interdependence without exacerbating vulnerabilities? In order to cope with future crises, this policy will necessarily have to make intercultural, interspecies and intergenerational solidarity a priority, and be guided by an ethic of care, following the argument developed in the first part.

## 2. DEVISING BARRIER GESTURES TO ACT AGAINST THE PRECARIETY-INDUCING MECHANISMS OF THE WORLD ECONOMY.

In the face of the crisis, it is important to analyse the relationships that support, strengthen or deteriorate our lifestyles, the economic exchanges that depend on them, the relationships that we wish to preserve, and what we are ready to give up in order to face present and future challenges together.

This was the proposal launched in March 2020 by Bruno Latour in an article translated into 10 languages,<sup>78</sup> while the human world was coming to a standstill. According to the theorist of the Gaia hypothesis,<sup>79</sup> the crisis of 2020 represents an opportunity, in as far as it gives us a

chance to think of “protective measures [...] so we don’t go back to the pre-crisis production model”, taking advantage of the imposed time of lockdown to describe, individually and collectively, “what we are ready to give up; the chains we are ready to reconstruct and those that, in our behaviour, we have decided to interrupt”. This descriptive task reveals fairly quickly the extent to which the false promises of “modern progress” have failed to deliver. Indeed, they can only be kept at the expense of the extreme precarity in which an entire section of the world’s population is living.

Going back, at the end of the crisis, to the way things were before, to “business as usual”, would amount to a “waste” of this crisis in Latour’s view, for “globalisers [...] seem to have a very clear idea of what they want to see coming back post-crisis: the same but worse, fossil fuel industries and giant cruise ships as a bonus. It is up to us to confront them with a counter-inventory.”<sup>80</sup> In Latour’s view, while we have a good chance of emerging from Coronavirus, it is less certain that we will find a way out of the much greater crisis of ongoing ecological changes. “It is right now that we have to fight so that the economic recovery, once the crisis has passed, does not bring back the same former climatic regime against which we were battling, until now somewhat in vain.”

In order to do this Latour suggests describing, in an exhaustive and detailed way and with the help of a series of questions, the activities “which we feel deprived of by the crisis, giving us the feeling that our basic requirements for subsistence are under attack”;<sup>81</sup> those that we are keen to continue and develop; those that we would be willing to give up; and the proposals that we would formulate to help those who would suffer the consequences of abandoned activities. From this exercise (carried out worldwide by a multitude of official and unofficial narrators) and from a pooling of its results, all kinds of attachments and dependencies should emerge, which in turn should sketch out living-territories, and, as Latour writes, “a landscape composed of lines of conflicts, alliances, controversies and oppositions”. Defining a living-territory, the author tells us, “for a terrestrial being consists in listing what they need for their subsistence, and, consequently, what they are ready to defend, for their own survival if necessary”.<sup>82</sup> This is an essential step in order to find an individual and collective capacity for action in the crisis, and in order to design an economic model that does not reproduce the inequalities generated by the model that we are seeking to replace.

Together with the Garland community<sup>83</sup> of craftspeople, designers and

78 Latour B. (2020), “What protective measures can you think of so we don’t go back to the pre-crisis production model?”: [http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/downloads/P-202-AOC-ENGLISH\\_0.pdf](http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/downloads/P-202-AOC-ENGLISH_0.pdf)

79 Cf. Part 1 Chap. 2

80 On this subject, in its annual report on inequalities published on 25 January, 2021, the NGO Oxfam alerts us to the fact that the world’s largest fortunes have been spared, or even strengthened by the health and financial crisis, while the poorest see themselves thrown further into precarity. See: [https://www.oxfamfrance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Rapport\\_Oxfam\\_Davos\\_inegalites\\_2021.pdf](https://www.oxfamfrance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Rapport_Oxfam_Davos_inegalites_2021.pdf)

81 Latour B. (2020), “Imaginer les gestes-barrières contre le retour à la production d’avant-crise”: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/fr/node/849>

82 Latour B. (2017), *Où atterrir ? Comment s’orienter en politique*, Ed. la Découverte, pp. 115-125.

83 See the website: <https://garlandmag.com/>

artists coordinated by designer Kevin Murray (also Senior Vice President of the World Crafts Council in the Asia Pacific region), we put this pragmatic proposal into practice. Using four questions inspired by those proposed by Latour, we examined our craft-based economies, with the aim of developing them in order to continue to live from them sustainably, in dignified and decent conditions:<sup>84</sup>

1. Coronavirus effect

What part of your daily life is the most challenged by Coronavirus, including activities that are now suspended?

2. Hope to recommence

What are the activities, now suspended, that you hope might develop/begin again, or even be created from scratch (include why this activity is positive to you)?

3. Leave behind

What are the suspended activities you would like to see NOT coming back and why?

4. How to restart

What kinds of measures do you advocate to help, workers / employees / agents / entrepreneurs to acquire capacities / means / finances / instruments allowing for restarting / development / creation of this activity?

Although it seems quite accessible at first glance, this exercise involves a great deal of complexity. Inspired by the cahiers de doléances ('ledgers of complaints') customary during the French Revolution (which Latour already suggested revisiting in 2019, with the emergence of the Yellow Vests movement), this inventory is an investigative tool based on an exhaustive description of our lifestyles and living-territory, not on a public opinion debate.<sup>85</sup> It was therefore "just" a matter of observing and describing, in as much detail as possible, our lifestyles and living-territories traversed by crafts, to reveal the rhizome<sup>86</sup> of our dependencies and vulnerabilities.

How many lives are connected to a single economic activity? Which goods and services does the latter need in order to function? How many families depend on the income generated by this activity to provide them with health care and education, among other things? How many food baskets does this income pay for, and who are the people who allow those baskets to be filled through their production, processing and distribution activities? ... How many plant and animal lives are involved? The list goes on. The scope of this situational analysis is infinite, ranging from the microscopic to the global, and requires a real recognition of other living beings, humans and other-than-humans, tied to our

lives as "earthlings".

After an initial individual reflection, about twenty people involved in crafts from several countries, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Chile, Belgium, Australia, Kenya and India – some were members of the Garland community, others Fairtrade partners of Oxfam in Belgium – met virtually on 09 May 2020, in the spirit of 'building doors, not walls', to pool their responses to the survey.<sup>87</sup>

As many initiatives as vulnerabilities engendered by the health crisis came out of this pooling, and three main avenues for development emerge from them in order to shape "the new world" in, and through, the craft sector.<sup>88</sup>

**i. Fostering local economic diversity to reduce dependence on international channels.**

The pandemic has highlighted the craft sector's over-dependence on export and tourism markets to guarantee its survival. In many cases, as in Kenya for example, there is no local consumer market for the crafts of the region. Yet historically these craft products were made and used locally. Is there a way to reawaken the value of crafts at a local level?

For those craft products that are struggling to win over their home

84 Link to the online survey: <https://airtable.com/shr4ccJ0cAuZz0Nt>

85 Bruno Latour, *Ibidem*. See also : [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/01/09/bruno-latour-faisons-revivre-les-cahiers-de-doleances\\_5406572\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/01/09/bruno-latour-faisons-revivre-les-cahiers-de-doleances_5406572_3232.html)

86 The image of the rhizome is borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. According to "French Theory", the rhizome is a structure in a permanent state of change, in all horizontal directions, and devoid of levels. Among other things, it aims to counter the pyramid hierarchy (or "arborescence"). Source: Wikipedia. On the interdependence of our vulnerabilities, see Part 1. Chap. 3.

87 Link to the online survey: <https://airtable.com/shr4ccJ0cAuZz0Nt>

88 Numerous inspiring reflections and initiatives are cited in the campaign "Spring will come: Planning for a post-coronavirus future", diffused by the online magazine Garland: <https://garlandmag.com/loop/spring-is-coming/>

market, there is a need and an opportunity to introduce new designs for functional everyday objects, rather than continuing to develop souvenirs and other decorative items aimed at external markets.

In India, the new terracotta bottles designed by The Design Studio illustrate this possibility. Based in Bolpur in West Bengal, this young company was co-founded two years ago by Koushik Ghosh and Prodip Polley, and is entirely dedicated to Indian crafts and the promotion of the sector.<sup>89</sup>

In Thailand, the economic model of self-sufficiency promoted by King Ramia IX aspires to a subsistence ideal which places greater value on manual production. Theoretically, this model encourages inhabitants to "socially immunise" themselves against crises through food self-sufficiency, diversifying their production and reducing their dependence on the purchase of manufactured products by relying on attitudes of moderation, integration into the ecosystem and cooperative and solidarity-based organisation within communities.<sup>90</sup>

Fostering economic diversity creates greater resilience in producers' countries and communities. Olivier De Schutter is one of the most influential contemporary thinkers in Belgium and in the world on this subject. UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights since March 2020, and

former Special Rapporteur on the right to food in 2008, he advocates an economic model of resilience rather than efficiency, which places commerce in the service of social and ecological solidarity.

In contrast to an extractivist and predatory economic model (which for instance favours monocultures at the expense of biodiversity, and the reduction of production costs at the expense of human rights), the search for resilience consists of "fostering diversity at the local level, in order to reduce dependence on global production and distribution channels, in a territorial approach that promotes local economies and also has benefits in terms of health and the environment".<sup>91</sup>

As with permaculture in the agrifood sector, economic diversity involves combining a multiplicity of models that are able to complement or even regulate each other, prioritising the circularity of value chains, the functionality of traded goods and services, the pooling of services and know-how, and cooperativism. Such economic models focused on social and ecological merit are more resilient than those focused on consumption.

This proposal is not about "calling globalisation as a whole into question", but about rebalancing trade relations, including through the imposition of social and environmental standards in trade policies

inspired by principles of interdependence and solidarity.

Indeed, faced with unpunished de-territorialised globalisation, the re-localisation of part of the economy suggests a re-territorialisation of tangible and intangible flows (financial flows, information flows), as well as responsibilities for social, climatic and health risks, or even for globalised crimes (trafficking, corruption, terrorism). This forces us to creatively rethink international, financial and legal reasoning, as emphasised by Mireille Delmas-Marty, in whose view "in the time of the Anthropocene, we also need the imagining forces of law in order to conceive a new legal mindset".<sup>92</sup>

## ii. Towards greater legal responsibility for economic players

To increase their resilience, the economies of the "world after" must be supported by legal instruments that protect creation, social and environmental rights in the value chain. At the virtual meeting of 09 May 2020, there emerged an urgent need to establish measures for the protection of craft creations, to allow the craft sector to face the current crisis and future crises. Some inspiring initiatives in this direction have been tested during the pandemic and are worthy of development. They include establishing a solidarity clause between producers and buyers which commits the counterparty regardless of the political and health situation.

89 See: <https://garlandmag.com/loop/terracotta-water-bottle/>

90 For further information see, for example: [https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/environnement/le-roi-du-developpement-durable-est-thailandais\\_912719.html](https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/environnement/le-roi-du-developpement-durable-est-thailandais_912719.html)

91 See: <https://www.alterechos.be/cette-crise-est-vraiment-notre-derniere-chance/>

92 Cf. Part 1, chap.1. Mireille Delmas, Op. Cit. : <https://aoc.media/analyse/2019/07/22/repenser-le-droit-a-lheure-de-lanthropocene/>

Moreover, a resilient economic model must restore traditional knowledge and cultural expressions to their rightful place and value, in an equal and fair relationship with creations protected by laws pertaining to the intellectual property rights of individuals and industries. This is the battleground of the Cultural Intellectual Property Rights Initiative (CIPRI), co-founded by lawyer Monica Moisin, for example.

Through mediation and training campaigns in the fashion sector, the CIPRI team defends and enforces the rights of craft creation communities against the misappropriation of their traditional knowledge and creations by certain major brands who will, themselves, go on to “intellectually” protect their creations, boosting their margins in the process as their products and collections become more successful.

Indeed, several cases have arisen in recent years of a production and distribution brand of international size taking inspiration from a technique or a motif inherited from traditional knowledge, or even roughly copying it, then claiming it as their own creation and reaping the profits—which will inflate in proportion to the success that the product gains through marketing. This, with

no profit for the production community from which the motif originates, nor even a recognition of the ownership or traditional heritage of the motif, and while the production community is struggling to find a place in the global consumer market to sell its products.<sup>93</sup> In this respect, the CIPRI recently defended the Oma ethnic minority living in the province of Phongsaly in North Laos against the Italian haute couture business Max Mara Fashion Group, accused of plagiarising the traditional designs of the Oma community for its Spring/Summer 2019 collection.<sup>94</sup>

The problem is twofold in this power relationship. On the one hand, original designs lose their craft and traditional value by falling into the cogs of these major brands’ mass production. On the other hand, the communities involved, rendered invisible, obtain no share of the profits generated by the appropriation of their know-how. Once again, this deepens inequalities in favour of the richest.

Moisin highlights that intellectual protection laws are based on a model dating from the 18th century,<sup>95</sup> which developed with the invention of the printing press to protect the rights of individual authors. This model excludes collective knowl-

edge, shared by a community, on the pretext that the specific authors (of this knowledge) cannot be recognised. Common knowledge, creations, designs, and cultural techniques therefore fall within the scope of the public domain. Property is a notion belonging to the field of law, corresponding to an economic model that defends individual property over and above the common good, a long way from models of community life based on sharing and cooperation, following an ethics of interdependent Good Living.

Moreover, although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 recognises the universal right to “freely participate in the cultural life of the community” and the benefits that result from this, no concrete agreement has been reached to establish an international legal framework to protect the artistic rights of communities. “It is very complicated to draw the line between protection and restriction,” explains Moisin, but this lack of protection has created an indecent situation, in which it has become possible to place a brand name on a traditional creation, without the community whose inheritance it constitutes being able to demand the right to consent and a proportion of the sales revenue.

93 Interview with Monica Moisin carried out for the study on 07 October 2020.

94 The similarity is glaring, according to the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (TAEC) who identified the plagiarism. Put side by side, the designs in the Max Mara collection are identical to those of the Oma craft community who has been practicing them for hundreds of years. Therefore it was indeed plagiarism and not “inspiration”, according to the TAEC, who works for the preservation of cultural diversity in Laos, and who then launched a media campaign to put pressure on Max Mara. Inspiration is the argument most frequently used by major brands accused of cultural appropriation, such as Louis Vuitton (concerning Masai crafts from Kenya), Dior (accused of copying a coat from the Bihor region of Romania) or even Isabelle Marrant (accused of plagiarising the traditional motifs of the indigenous community of the State of Oaxaca in Mexico). For greater depth on the subject, see also the article and analysis by Roland D’Hoop: [https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/blog/article\\_dossier/artisan%2%b7e%2%b7s-vs-multinationales-de-la-mode-comment-combattre-lappropriation-culturelle/#.YBF-4BbjJPY](https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/blog/article_dossier/artisan%2%b7e%2%b7s-vs-multinationales-de-la-mode-comment-combattre-lappropriation-culturelle/#.YBF-4BbjJPY); et [https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/blog/2017/12/28/mexique-quand-les-artisan%2%b7e%2%b7s-avec-le-soutien-de-letat-se-rebellent-contre-le-plagiat-par-des-grandes-marques/#.YBF\\_XxbjJPY](https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/blog/2017/12/28/mexique-quand-les-artisan%2%b7e%2%b7s-avec-le-soutien-de-letat-se-rebellent-contre-le-plagiat-par-des-grandes-marques/#.YBF_XxbjJPY)

95 1709 more specifically, explains Monica Moisin, together with the invention of the printing press.



Member of the OMA community analysing a production by the Max Mara Group. Source: Cultural Intellectual Property Right Initiative. [www.culturalintellectualproperty.com](http://www.culturalintellectualproperty.com)

Consequently, the principle of protection, according to the lawyer, should be supported by three rules: the "consent, credit and compensation" of the production communities concerned. This "3Cs' Rule" has given its name to a campaign aiming to change the practices of cultural appropriation in the fashion and accessory market, where it is

possible to establish a dialogue and create synergies between traditional knowledge and innovative technologies, between "traditional" cultures and "modern" cultures.<sup>96</sup> In this vision, craftspeople are stakeholders in the dialogue with designers, brands, buyers, etc., and not merely the subordinates/producers in the value chain.

As for other initiatives, a reflection group was convened during the 2020 pandemic by the UNESCO Chair on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the University of Laval in Canada, on the possibility of extending principles of justice and fairness inspired by fair trade to the area of culture.<sup>97</sup> UNESCO has also set up a program called "Living Human Treasures"<sup>98</sup> which seeks to highlight the value of the "living" knowledge and skills related to intangible heritage. Perhaps this research and these programmes will lead to a greater recognition of the role of craft communities (traditional crafts, neo-crafts, artistic crafts, etc.) in culture, and will support the creation of economic models guided by principles of solidarity, transparency and accountability.

### iii. Keeping bonds alive

One of the biggest lessons of the pandemic will probably prove to be remembering how connected we are, as beings who think and act through and from our bonds of attachment and detachment. New Information and Communication Technologies have represented key resources for maintaining personal and economic relationships: for sharing the experience with our friends and family, for developing e-commerce, for managing the logistics of assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable, for attending conferences on the other side of the world, perhaps even for receiving remote training and support for pro-

<sup>96</sup> See: <https://www.culturalintellectualproperty.com/the-3cs>. To apply the principles of consent, credit and compensation to the cultural rights of communities, the CIPRI proposes the creation of a digital platform where different traditional cultural expressions would be registered and protected under license.

<sup>97</sup> Source: interview with Maxime Mariage, PhD student at the University of Laval and researcher for the UNESCO Chair on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

<sup>98</sup> See: <https://immaterieelerfgoed.be/nl/inspiratie/living-human-treasures>



jects,<sup>99</sup> like the weaving workshops in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, for example.<sup>100</sup> Driven by the pandemic, designers and craftspeople have developed new ways of interacting on the web.

Furthermore, many designers, makers, and craftspeople have taken advantage of the time in lockdown to develop their work, their technique, or develop new products. The World Wide Web represents a global showcase where it is possible to organise one-off events for the exhibition<sup>101</sup> and sale of works developed in 2020, and to discuss the evolution of know-how and designs during this period.

In this regard, the health crisis has given rise to a profusion of new consumer products, revealing the extreme difficulty of implementing policies based on an ethic of care. Indeed, while the urgent mass development of personal protective equipment (masks, visors, office partitions, etc.) has made it possible to prevent the spread of the virus, it raises many concerns regarding the recent progress on reducing single-use plastics.<sup>102</sup> This presents a real challenge in future productions, and an opportunity for the craft sector to develop objects that contribute to sustainably preserving the diversity of life forms on Earth, in an ethic of care, which is therefore relational. This

effort can only be effective if it accompanies new inspiring narratives, demonstrating the importance of the role of each player involved in the value chain, and the interdependence of the processes linking them to each other and their natural environment. Inspiring stories in this respect are told by craftswoman Jane Sawyer's "Ceramics for a Fragile Planet",<sup>103</sup> as well as the "Botanical Atlas of Chile" by the jeweller Lucía Nieves Cortés,<sup>104</sup> which aims to "activate a relationship between humans and plants". The Universal Declaration of Material Rights, for a more "just" treatment of the materials which make our human lives and habitats possible, is also a seminal building block in constructing new subversive economic narratives.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, without serving as a substitute for the physical links and attachments essential to living with others, virtual communities for the sharing of knowledge and information such as the Garland community are crucial in fostering an emulation of the alternatives that are being created on all sides in response to the urgency and precarity of the Anthropocene, and in fostering the creation of networks and narratives around those alternatives.

### 3. CRAFTS AT THE HEART OF A NEW NARRATIVE FOR THE WORLD ECONOMY

Craft economies have been marginalised in favour of a global model of efficiency, and yet today they are inspiring many ideas for coping with future crises. How can they support a transition towards an economic narrative where cultural, ecological, spiritual and economic elements are united not separated? The arguments presented in the preceding chapters help to draft some proposals in order to give direction to this new economic order which, to become resilient, must embrace an economic diversity based on caring for the different forms of life and living-territories involved in interdependent kinship relations, as inspired by craft practices. The ethic of care in the economic domain involves guaranteeing that the discrimination generated by the model of the "world before" is not reproduced.

#### i. Towards an economy based on craft values

While modern deterritorialised culture has prioritised its relationship with capital over the inhabitability of its environment, in other cultures we still find the power of kinship ties with an extended community of living beings. "Money is to the West what kinship is to the rest,"<sup>106</sup> sug-

99 See, for example, the masterclasses of the Australian Ceramics Association <https://www.australianceramics.com/2019/09/11/masterclasses-2019-2>

100 See: <https://garlandmag.com/loop/spring-is-coming/>

101 See, for example, the Aboutface exhibition of masks: <https://artisan.org.au/blogs/artisan-journal/aboutface>, or the Colombian review Arcadia's call for people wishing to exhibit textile creations developed during the lockdown: [https://www.revistaarcadia.com/agenda/articulo/que-se-borda-y-cose-en-tiempos-de-pandemia/82079/?fbclid=iar1ndu9kq6dhp\\_cw0tffjaem1vhx4vnykmpgqick0okhianpb0z7cbtloya](https://www.revistaarcadia.com/agenda/articulo/que-se-borda-y-cose-en-tiempos-de-pandemia/82079/?fbclid=iar1ndu9kq6dhp_cw0tffjaem1vhx4vnykmpgqick0okhianpb0z7cbtloya)

102 For greater depth on this point, see: Estelle Vanwambeke (2020), "Magique, Tragique et autres « hics » du plastique", an Oxfam analysis: [https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/download/magique-tragique-et-autres-hics-du-plastique/#\\_X\\_xjDZNKjwc](https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/download/magique-tragique-et-autres-hics-du-plastique/#_X_xjDZNKjwc)

103 See: <https://garlandmag.com/article/blood-moon/>

104 See: <https://garlandmag.com/article/atlas-botanico/>

105 See: <https://theuniversaldeclarationofmaterialrights.org/>

106 See the online conference: <https://pourdavoud.ucla.edu/video/money-is-to-the-west-what-kinship-is-to-the-rest/>

gests anthropologist Daniel Potts, a specialist in Near Eastern archaeology. In other words, perhaps kinship ties will have a brighter future than money in the "world after". Creating kinship ties is fundamental to the Chthulucene of Donna Haraway,<sup>107</sup> who, as early as 2003, published *The Companion Species Manifesto* to consider the junction and coalitions between seemingly incompatible individuals and species (humans and animals in the book), as a possible way out of the impasse of the racist, capitalist, patriarchal and individualist myth of modernity. Life in the Chthulucene is built from a network of interdependencies and intersubjectivities, outside of the normative structures that separate and create hierarchies among individuals, societies and species.

Kinship is also a central element in craft culture, which finds its expression in a community, which is itself linked to an environment from which it draws situated knowledge (know-how and social skills), as discussed previously. The relationship of belonging to and interdependence with a community is certainly the principal strength of crafts, both in politics and in economics, for developing greater resilience in the face of current and future crises.

Consequently, one of the principal challenges in constructing a new global economic "ecosystem" consists of resetting the "development" indicator to point towards resilience

Jane Sawyer, *Star*, 2018, ceramic, clear & gold glaze, terra sigillata, 28 X 28 X 5 cm  
Via Garland: <https://garlandmag.com/article/blood-moon>



rather than efficiency, by emphasising the value of interdependence between communities based on solidarity (between cultures, generations and different species), where each player may find their place in the value chain, and their capacity to act and make decisions regarding it in an intersubjective and fair relationship.

In this new order, trade and transactions would take place directly between communities of producers and communities of buyers for example, which would allow light to be shed on the opaque areas of value chains, with consent as a guiding principle. From this perspective, trade would only be one element of the economic transaction, not its focus.

For individuals who are deterritorialised – because of globalisation, or because they have migrated in

the hope of better living conditions<sup>108</sup> – crafts can furthermore establish a link between two cultures, making it possible to join a community through the transmission of knowledge, as at *La Fabrique Nomade*,<sup>109</sup> for example.

## ii. Guaranteeing that conditions of discrimination are not reproduced

In the utopian society that William Morris imagined in 1890, which links together "good living" in a community and well-being at work, including through craft know-how, social relations between women and men remain imbued with a strongly essentialist vision, in which women are still largely assigned to roles of seduction and domestic tasks, as female companions "complementary to men through their specific qualities, but never as equals who

107 Donna Haraway, *Op. Cit.*, p. 103. The author issues the challenge to "Make kin, not babies! It matters how kin generates kin", in other words to think about life and the family in the Chthulucene as a network of interdependencies and intersubjectivities, outside of the normative structures that separate and create hierarchies among individuals, societies and species. On the Chthulucene, see Part 1, chap. 4.

108 Bruno Latour, *Où atterrir? Comment s'orienter en politique*, Ed. La Découverte, 2017, pp-16,18

109 See: <https://lafabriquenomade.com/>

can compete with them" according to Catherine Durieux's analysis, even if, however, "gender equality seems to go without saying and to be a given in this new world".<sup>110</sup>

Although News from Nowhere should be seen in the context of its time, it is nevertheless useful to draw from it that we must take particular care not to reproduce, in our new economic and ecological narratives and their implementation, the conditions of discrimination (race, class, gender) of the model of efficiency that we seek to replace. The economic ecosystem to be rebuilt must be able to guarantee that relationships of interdependence and vulnerabilities will be cared for, according to an ethic of "care", without exacerbating existing fragilities.<sup>111</sup>

While the year 2020 will go down in global history for the health crisis linked to Coronavirus, it nevertheless marks the 25th anniversary of

the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; the 5th anniversary of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; and the 10th anniversary of the founding of UN Women, among other noteworthy events.

But precisely at this time of celebrations for the rights of women and girls on the world stage, the conference organised on the initiative of the Advisory Council on Gender and Development in Brussels on 29 November 2019 was an opportunity to sound the alarm regarding the backlash that is threatening progress for the rights of women and girls, at a sexual and reproductive, political, cultural, social, economic and environmental level. The conference highlighted, for example, the urgency of carrying out a detailed intersectional feminist analysis on the

economy, to build new forms of economy in response to the exploitation and commodification of women and natural resources.<sup>112</sup>

Against the backdrop of the health crisis, the scale and urgency of the ecological debate allows new demands (ecofeminist, anti-racist and queer) to "bind the culture of struggle to the culture of the living", as Baptiste Morizot remarks,<sup>113</sup> and opens the way for new environmental and "eco-territorial" leaderships, following the example of Fatima Ouassak, political scientist and founder of the "Front des Mères"<sup>114</sup> collective, and of Daiara Tukano, an indigenous activist from the Amazon, both of whom combine struggles against discrimination based on race, gender and ecology; or like Malcom Ferdinand, environmental engineer and defender of a "decolonial ecology".<sup>115</sup>

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110 Catherine Durieux, *Op.Cit.* Cf. Part 1, chap. 5

111 Cf. Part 1, chap. 3

112 Estelle Vanwambeke (2019), "Quels défis pour l'autonomisation économique des femmes 25 ans après la Déclaration de Pékin ? ", An Oxfam analysis: <https://www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be/blog/2019/12/18/quels-defis-pour-lautonomisation-economique-des-femmes-25-ans-apres-la-declaration-de-pekini/#.X9DtwBNKiCQ>

113 Baptiste Morizot, "Nouer culture des luttes et culture du vivant", article published in the review *Socialter*, 05 January 2021 : <https://www.socialter.fr/article/nouer-culture-des-luttes-et-culture-du-vivant-1>

114 See: <https://www.front2meres.org/>

115 Malcom Ferdinand, (2019), *Une écologie décoloniale. Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen*. Coll. Anthropocène, Ed. Seuil

# Conclusion

The global crisis of 2020 has demonstrated with unprecedented force how fragile our lifestyles and our narratives of the world are, and how our dependence on other living things is growing as our living conditions in the Anthropocene are deteriorating. At the same time, however, it has opened an extraordinary field of possibilities for experimenting with other forms of telling the story of and living in our world in the face of urgency, by taking note of what is damaged, and by taking care of the vulnerable, by way, for example, of fiction. "Tell me how you tell stories, and I'll tell you what you are participating in constructing," suggests philosopher Isabelle Stengers.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, words and stories have the capacity to influence our lifestyles and our relationship to the world. They are charged with an inventiveness capable of inspiring and shaping collective trajectories.

More than an exercise in futuristic imagination, telling stories of the "world after" makes us think about the way in which we will build society from the experience of our collective vulnerability. Consequently, this study suggests that narratives of the "world after" cannot escape an ethic of care that considers life on Earth as a fabric of human and non-human interdependencies in life and death. Only in this way can

it be conceivable to imagine political and economic models for the present and the future that come under the notion of "care", namely ones which bring into political and economic relations elements such as the recognition of the other and their needs in all their difference, and the just redistribution of capacities, means and responsibilities for caring... while also ensuring there is no reproduction of the conditions of gender, class and race discrimination which form the basis of the neoliberal capitalist model.

A major challenge in the sphere of economics consists, on the one hand, in repairing economies made fragile by an increased dependence on international markets in recent decades, and, on the other hand, in weaving or strengthening a network of plural economic players, channels and narratives, sovereign in governance and united in resilience.

By looking at the singularity of the craft sector as an intrinsically "relational" model of thinking, doing and living (namely in a relationship of interdependence and care between the members of a community and with an environment), it is possible to identify very concrete avenues for reflection that will allow us to imagine and prefigure the "economies of tomorrow" (in the plural rather than the singular), ca-

pable of inventiveness and resilience in a damaged world. Indeed, at a time when the whole world is being invited to rethink and reinvent its links and ways of connecting, craft economies are bursting with production and consumption initiatives likely to inspire "barrier gestures" that protect against the "precarious" economic mechanisms of the Anthropocene.

Consequently, the professions of traditional crafts, neo-crafts, DIY, makers, etc., regain their full *raison d'être* in the context of current and future cascading crises. The know-how, materials, manufacturing and governance processes encountered in the broader craft sector can inspire new narratives for a new, diversified world economic order, based on an ethic of care and difference, and finally capable of tackling vulnerabilities among present and future generations of living things.

Finally, imagining and implementing a new political and economic "pluriverse" will have to be done by coming to terms with the legacies and relics of the past, including its darkest aspect – its capitalist, sexist, and racist component – in order to bring about a world that is habitable in solidarity for all terrestrial beings.

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