

**Revaluing the Mundane: a conversation about common concerns  
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***Convivialism: Reframing Society and Economy***

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MH-254-Convivialism Reframing-2017

First, let me introduce myself as a full time academic, activist from time to time in NGOs and in solidarity economy, involved in a strand of thought, that I have contributed to launch in 2010 around the ideas of conviviality, of convivial society.

These ideas were drawn from a book published by Ivan Illich, in 1973

***Tools for conviviality***

where he introduced these concepts of conviviality, convivial tools and convivial society

*Since liberty has been built upon liberalism,*

**it seemed to us that to enjoy conviviality, we need to build on**

**“convivialism”.**

My talk is divided in three parts

I start with **a brief account** of what is ,firstly, a movement of ideas aiming at a radical change to replace the cultural hegemonic way to consider and to monitor our societies

Then, I present the **four principles** which are at the core of a basic convivialism, and which are necessary to make convivial any society.

Finally I come to the implementation:

**which changes in the working of our present societies are needed** to comply with these principles?

*I- Let me give a brief account of two processes*

1) The first is the one that led to the publication (in French) in 2013 of the ***Convivialist Manifesto***

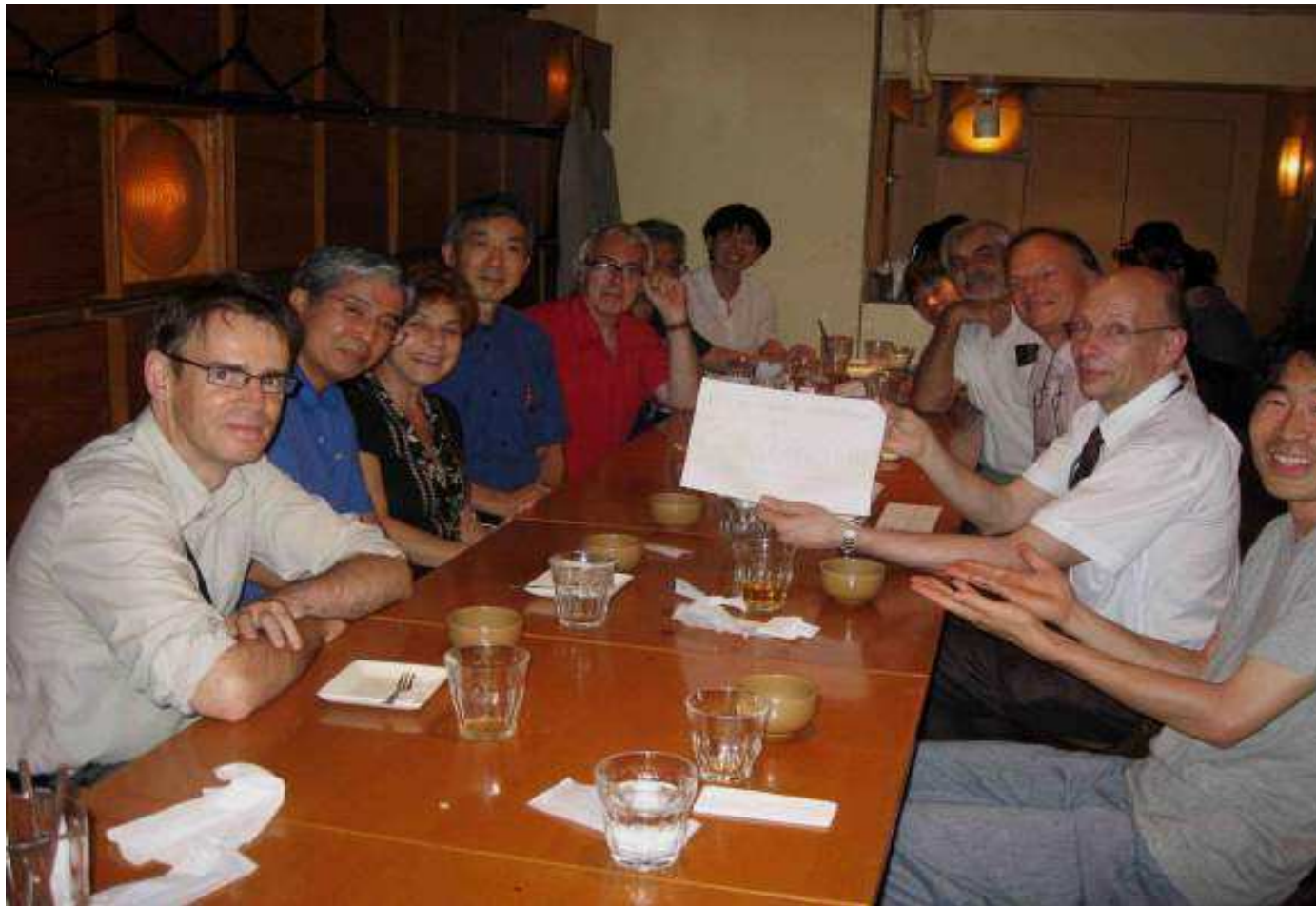
2) The second is the process of on-going dissemination and use of the “convivialist” ideas

I had been involved since 2002 in the organisation of an international network of researchers from human and social sciences. The aim of this network is to build a **Political and Ethical Knowledge on Economic Activities “PEKEA”**

Alain Caillé who joined this network had set up in 1989 an association of academic people, a French Review and a series of books to produce debates and analyses around the work by Marcel Mauss, principally **“Essay on the Gift”**. The association is named MAUSS Mouvement AntiUtilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales **Anti-Utilitarian Movement in Social Sciences.**

After eight years of international conferences organised with PEKEA, I took a position in Tokyo and I prepared once again a conference to go on building this PEKEA knowledge. When I was preparing the conference, I remind me of a few writings by Ivan Illich and I worded the title of the conference like that :” **Towards a society of advanced conviviality”**

At the beginning, Alain Caillé was a little cautious, then during the debate, he launched the idea to go forward and to set up **“convivialism”**. This was on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

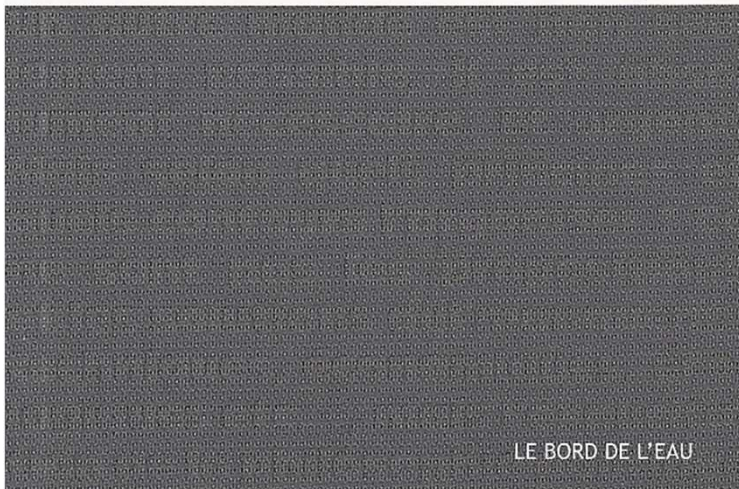
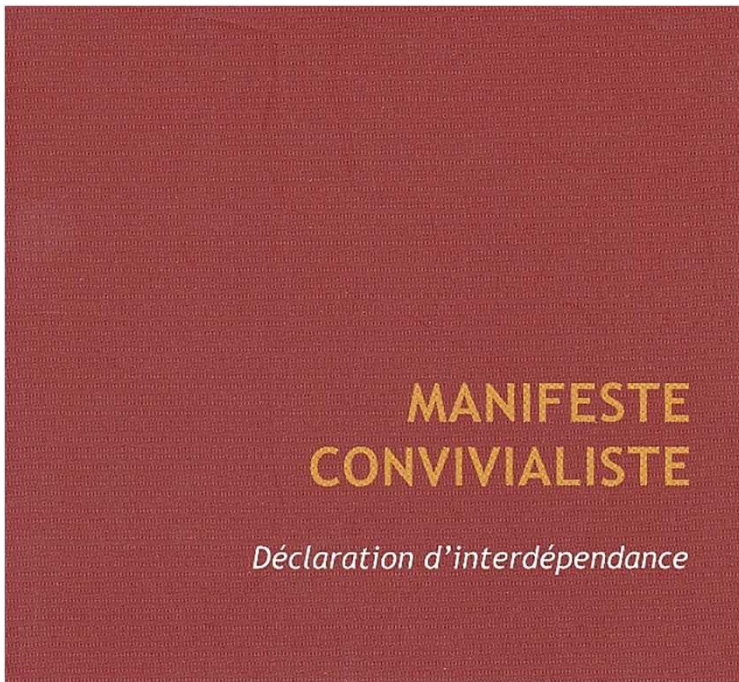


**Tokyo, 2010- 07- 11**, the very first day when the concept of convivialism was born.  
I hand a sheet of paper with the signatures of the co-founders, among them you may recognize Alain Caillé(in red) and Serge Latouche (with a beard, on the right in the back).

Alain Caillé, Marc Humbert, Serge Latouche and Patrick Viveret published altogether a first book in 2011 (De la convivialité, dialogues sur la société conviviale à venir [About conviviality, dialogues on the convivial society to come] Paris: La Découverte).

Then at the initiative of Alain Caillé , in favour of a Manifesto, discussions started in Paris with several tens of academics and intellectuals meeting once a month during one year in 2012. I joined them when back to France. This led to a collective book written to launch this strand of thought in the intellectual circles. It was published in 2013

under the title : **Manifeste convivialiste** – Déclaration d'interdépendance [Convivialist Manifesto – Declaration of Interdependance], Paris: Le Bord de l'Eau



Paris 2013

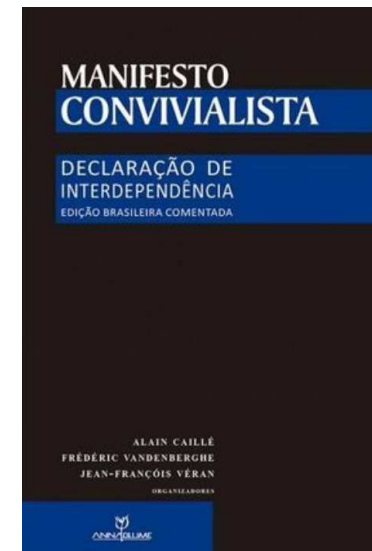
Visit

<http://lesconvivialistes.org>

It is possible to download the Manifesto in French and an abridged version in 10 languages. A lot information is available It is possible to back these ideas by signing with Name and E-mail There are 60 co-authors 150 first backers and more than 3 600 have signed their support on the site.



## 2) The on-going dissemination, use and elaboration of “convivialist” ideas



Frank Adloff, Professor of sociology at Hamburg, was at the origin of the translation into English and into German. He has launched in 2016, a blog in English <http://convivialism.org/>  
Contributions are welcome

## ***II- The four principles of the Convivialist Manifesto***

According to their exact wording in the Manifesto:

1-The principle of common humanity

2-The principle of common sociality

3-The principle of individuation

4-The principle of managed conflict

## ***1- The principle of common humanity***

Humanity is what we have all in common, but beyond that, we share also the lot of all that is around us in the universe: living creatures, the biosphere and the cosmos. This is in fact a *principle of common destiny* for anyone living within this common universe.

Each of us is a small particle in this universe, as great and as ephemeral as any other one. Whatever we do, we can't escape this heteronomous kind of brotherhood that we share with all the children of the universe.

*Brotherhood* is no more than the acknowledgement of **a simple fact of life**. It prevents from any kind of discrimination.

This *principle of common humanity*

is at the core of the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 1948.

### **Article 1.**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in **a spirit of brotherhood**.

### **Article 2.**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, **without distinction of any kind**, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, **no distinction shall be made** on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

## ***2-The principle of common sociality***

“Human beings are social beings and their greatest wealth lies in their social relationships” [2014, p.31].

As Maurice Godelier wrote [ 2012, *The Metamorphoses of Kinship, London, Verso*], because of humanity’s group existence,” it takes more than a man and a woman to make a child”. In order for human life to flourish, humans have to become a part of the group. They must not only develop physiological and physical aptitudes, but also aptitudes for life, i.e. for interaction with others and with their environment: they have to learn the gestures, language, words, and attitudes that are suitable at the right moment, in the right place.

We had no choice to find parents and a place to come, language and culture to learn. That start in our life and our first steps are not merit from us ; all our life we will be relying on others, on their solidarity to pursue our life.

*Solidarity, Society*, is at the beginning. This is acknowledgement of **a simple fact of life.**

### ***3- The principle of individuation***

“Always bearing in mind these two first principles, a legitimate politics is one that allows each of us to assert our distinctive evolving individuality as fully as possible by developing our *capabilities*, our potential to be and to act.” [2014, p. 31].

Every human being is welcomed into and educated by a group that is part of a concrete natural environment where she/he gradually creates and constructs her/his own unique individuality by developing her/his power to be and to act [Spinoza, 1677]. The ideal of paying attention to others implies to give recognition to everyone [Honneth, 1992] and to give to everyone the autonomy necessary to the affirmation and evolution of her/his own individual life, which responds to everyone’s universal need.

This is **a choice to make**, an ethics in favour of *freedom* for all.

#### ***4- The principle of managed conflict***

“Given that each of us has the power to express our distinctive individuality, it is natural that human beings should sometimes oppose one another. But it is only legitimate for them to do so as long as this does not jeopardize the framework of common sociality that ensures this rivalry is productive and non-destructive. *Good politics* is therefore politics that allows human beings to be individual by accepting and managing conflict” [2014, p. 31].

This sentence refers to Marcel Mauss’s *Essay on the Gift*. Where as a conclusion he stated that the clan, the tribe, and peoples have learnt -and thus tomorrow, in our civilised world, classes and nations and [...] also individuals need to learn-  
**-how to oppose each other but not to massacre each other**

Where are living free individuals ? They are living collectively. The word “collective” could apply to the informal personalisation of the common sociality of individual human beings living in a group, within an environment, a group which is then forming an “us”. This group will follow a same direction, sharing a common destiny, provided that certain conditions exist. It supposes that a general will can form itself to clearly express the framework accepted and respected by all.

Democracy was advocated by Rousseau “Find a form of association which defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate, and by means of which each one, while uniting with all, nevertheless obey only himself and remains free as before.” This social contract is a Law to manage conflicts.

As a citizen, the human being is making the Law, and as an individual, the human being obeys the Law. The Law is the same for all.

Here again it is **a choice to make** in favour of democratic *equality*.



## **The four principles of the Convivialist Manifesto**

According to the above analysis, I may shorten the enunciation with a four words motto

### **Brotherhood-Solidarity-Freedom-Equality**

*1-The principle of common humanity - **Brotherhood***

*2-The principle of common sociality - **Solidarity***

*3-The principle of individuation: - **Freedom.***

*4-The principle of managed conflict - **Equality***

### ***III- Changes to make in the working of our present societies***

#### **How to reframe society and economy?**

We were convinced that there are already million of attempts, and localised experiments of change that are working in the real world, with an implicit application of these principles.

We do think that the dissemination of these experiments would be highly important to contribute to a better world.

Despite their huge number, throughout the world, the global trend has not changed yet.

Thus, deeper analyses are still needed to give a clearer vision for the future, to show the path, to design the components of a convivial society and economy.

Academics and essayists are invited to propose their ideas to the discussion with the civil society.

To pursue this aim, we organised a first congress in Rennes, France, at the end of 2015, during 3 days.

We had plenary sessions with more than 20 speakers and 11 workshops in parallel sessions that were organised by activists on experimentations in the field of solidarity economy as car-sharing, local currency, direct sales in agriculture, in the field of participative democracy, new forms of education...

Let me present a synthesis of what emerged from these discussions. Many speakers revised their contribution to give a written piece and I could edit a book with all that, just published in January 2017.



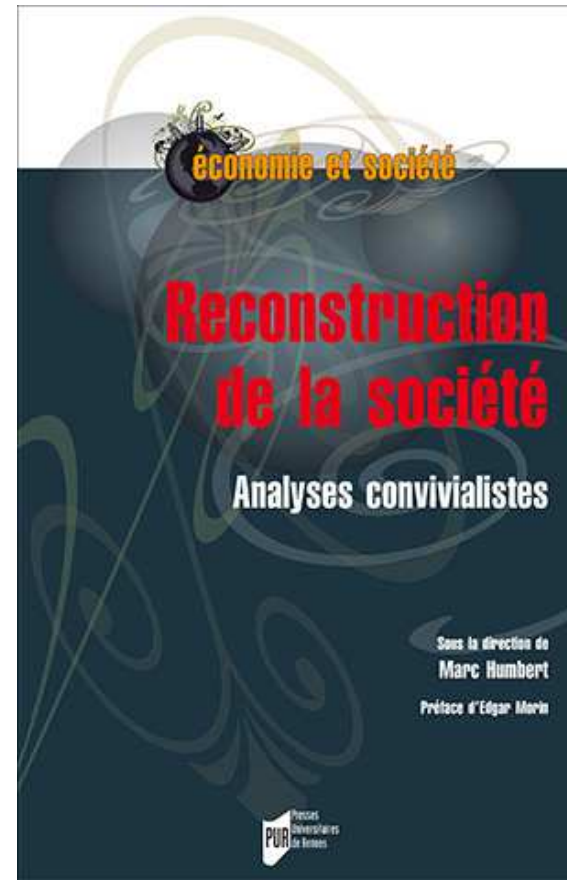
UNIVERSITÉ RENNES 2  
Colloque international organisé par le Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Analyse des Processus Humains et Sociaux (CIAPHS - EA 2241) et le réseau PIR46

## UN AUTRE MONDE SE CONSTRUIT

du 26 au 28 octobre 2015

Université Rennes 2 - Campus Villejean  
bât. L / amph L3

Another World  
is Being Built



# Rebuilding Society

Convivialist Analyses

PUR 2017

According to my interpretation of the discussions,  
***four working areas have been identified***

1- The mode of Government

2- The collective rationale

3- The individual behaviour

4- The biggest challenge: to free the well-living together

## **1- The mode of Government**

In our present time, our societies have never been heteronomous to such an extent. Everything is imposed upon them in the name of the Market's Law. Very often the word "governance" replaces "Government" as if management would replace politics.

The spirit of democracy requests a "civic society", i.e. an involvement of all citizens processes of deliberation and decision to have the society working and evolving. In participating, all citizens will recover the necessary power on her or his personal, family and collective life.

Important changes should be implemented.

1) To multiply the places where would be organised deliberation between citizens

2) To avoid a too vertical and too centralised government systems.

A subsidiary principle should be enforced strictly: decisions must be documented, prepared at the lower government level possible, closer to the people

3) A general rule should be "to govern with the people » and no « to govern the people"

## 2- The collective rationale

For at least 70 years, and step by step in almost all nations in the world, the collective rationale has been to pursue growth, technical progress and rise in productivity. This global race implies competition between individuals and between nations to win.

This journey dedicated to the religion of Growth for ever brings global warming, exhaustion of natural resources, rising inequalities between individuals within nations and between nations.

This is called *Hubris*



To stop this hubris as a collective rationale is necessary.

It is difficult as growth is a general hope, it looks like the only means, to get out poverty and sufferings, to get some pieces coming down from the top rich by some trickle-down effect.

The desire to have always more is a universal desire and Government are promising it to their people, voting people or not.

However, If we want to save our humanity, we cannot escape from what Illich pointed out (p. 107):

“The only response to this crisis is a full recognition of its depth and an acceptance of **inevitable self-limitations**”

There exist other collective desires, as universal as the one to get more.

Everywhere people have the desire to live in peace, in good understanding with each other, and with other nations;

This is the universal desire of « well-living together ».

It is upon this desire that we may base another collective rationale.

A society not based on the pursuit of Growth

A society based on the pursuit of the Common Good

The goal of society should be to pursue the *Common Good* – singular, which is a different concept than the one used to speak of one among several concrete, *common goods* – plural that are necessary to reach the *Common Good*.

The Common Good is explained in the following terms by Aristotle.

The feeling that we exist is inseparable from the co-existence and from relations of affection and friendship that make it a valuable Common Good.

Our primary task and our ultimate goal is to maintain, to sustain and to improve what constitutes our Common Good.

**The task of Economy is to help the Society to pursue the Common Good.**

### 3- The individual behaviour

A society which is at the pursuit of Growth for ever, relies on individuals who are behaving as *homo oeconomicus*.

Rivalry and self-interest dictate the behaviour.

This behaviour leads to *pleonexia* (Platon), which is a usual case when one takes more than that should be her or his share.

Here, the key word for change, is **care**.

This concept of « **care** » is taken from Carol Gilligan (1982- *In a different voice*) and triggered a strand of thought with authors like Joan Tronto.

It seems according, to them, that this is a capacity specific to women **to take care of the other**, and this goes further than the *empathy*. It is also to acknowledge that everyone is vulnerable.

*“It is a specific activity in human specie that encompasses all we do aiming at maintain, perpetuate and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible”*

Convivialism is a “life word”, an attempt to build a world where it is good to work and to live altogether within Nature.

Convivialists have the ambition to bring to reality “the shared insight of people that they would be happier if they could *work* together and *care* for each other” as Illich put it [1973, p.50 ].

This is a posture that may be worded “post-virilist”(beyond male-chauvinism) with a priority to cooperation instead of a priority to competition, with a benevolent eye to vulnerability, diversity, pluralism instead of promoting selection, elimination, universalism.

#### **4- The biggest challenge: to free the well-living together**

Everyone is stuck, like in a straight-jacket, in a megamachine which is monitored by 1% of the world population, an elite, an oligarchy that is able to convince the rest of the population that there is no Alternative but to climb and to stay in this megamachine. This is a cultural hegemon.

It is based on the priority given to economics.

We have to get out of a situation of centrality of the Economy. A French philosopher (Emmanuel Mounier) expressed this urgent task in 1949  
“The primary place of Economy is an historical disorder and we must get rid of it”.

The Economy must be at the service of The Society to give the possibility to thrive to all attempts that are aiming at a “well-living together”.

A preliminary list of tasks to be performed in order to free the « well-living together »

1) To disseminate a dissent discourse, as that of « convivialism »

2) To push to the de-commidification, as far as possible, of goods, especially public goods, and activities and reverse the tendency

*See the inspiring Michael Sandel's book « What Money Can't Buy- The Moral Limits of Market »*

3) To reverse the financialisation, and to get rid of fiscal paradise, corruption, fiscal optimisation and the domination of finance on the real economy

4) To downsize too large companies and too large institutions

Illich claims that a Tool, beyond a certain threshold, from being a servant is becoming a despot.

The principle of **subsidiarity** is a guide to limit and to regulate the size of tools, the size of enterprises and the size of institutions as well.



However, this is not time to conclude with a ready-to-use convivial economic model, at least not yet.

Academics involved in so many out-of-doxa fields, and activists are needed to help building altogether a convivial society for the sake of humanity.

Provided that the bulk of their research be consistent with the idea that it is compulsory to avoid that Economy keeps its central place in the working of our societies.

***Thank you for your attention!***