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A proposal for immediate change of way of living and measure of our footprint

Proposal: reduction of our personal ecological footprint

The proposal

We (i.e. the people who want to) choose to commit to reduce radically our respective personal impact on the planet. Each one who wants to be part of this new way of living declares him/herself ready to change fundamentally their own habits in order on one hand to reduce drastically their ecological footprint and on the other hand to try to bring it to what can be considered as the equitable world average that is sustainable. According to Global Footprint Network, the present average world consumption has a footprint of 2.8 ha/pers, but the real biocapacity of our planet is only 1.7 ha/pers. The footprint of Australians is in average of 11.7 ha/pers. To be able to reduce our footprint in such a radical way we need to help one another to find the most effective and quickest ways by sharing our experience and our imagination. The aim is not to organise a new competition but on the contrary to experiment together what are the best means to reduce effectively our impact on the planet while improving the way we live. We are probably doomed in a first stage not to succeed brilliantly – reducing our impact by half would be already a success - but the real effort will yet show where the most consistent obstacles are and we will find together the practical solutions and the necessary motivation. Slowly we will succeed to reach this average that seems now so difficult to implement.

The means

We will have to apply radically the means we already know so well – many people do that already - or if necessary to invent new ways how to live in harmony with the universe, i.e. not to consume more than our average share of what the planet can produce as resources and not to generate more wastes than it can absorb. This is a question of quantity (how much is available) but also a question of quality (what is available and when). The reference for what reveals itself to be equitable is not the measure of what we wish to do or what we are accustomed to do, given the society to which we belong. The real reference is given (imposed) by our environment: it is the average of what is available for all of us on this planet, whether we are rich or poor. We have only one possibility: adapt! Recognising this fact is the condition for a true and radical change.

If the measure is imposed by our environment, our choices are yet not imposed by others but remain our own. We remain free to choose what we want to commit to. We do not need to compete to be the best. We have to do what seems right and true to ourselves. In order to achieve this we can

decide for instance to install a solar system and rely only on solar stand alone, to never fly, to not use air conditioning, to buy only very few quality goods that last (simplicity), to not buy goods made in China but to buy local goods even if they are dearer, to grow our own food, to not order stuff through internet, to use recycled goods, etc... The list of possibilities is infinite. We know it already by heart.

It is evident that many people try already to do that. Yet the proposal consists in structuring this common effort to make it a more powerful and effective tool to change the way we live and to make it more visible, i.e. to shape it a means of pressure on corporations and governments. An important aspect of this kind of covenant is that it will soon generate a network of people who will relate to one another in their effort to share their experience and bring support to one another. It is not a new association or party; it is just a link of reciprocal help and inspiration. Here also it is the opportunity to develop a new range of relationships, not based on market or technology, not on leisure time but on what matters most in our lives. And more important: it will convince other people that there is a solution and even that this solution offers a better life quality. By the way we intend to practice what is true and equitable we may propose an example of what can be done. And still more important we will respond to the call of youth (school strikes) to act urgently and try to restore their hope and trust in us.

The calculator

We can only manage quantitatively what we can measure. We need therefore to be able to calculate our respective ecological footprints with precision. There exist a few systems like for instance the calculator of the Footprint Network (<https://www.footprintnetwork.org/resources/footprint-calculator/>) which seems to be the best among them. It would be then necessary to improve it into a more elaborate and precise tool that would also allow us to calculate smaller changes in our way of life, like using a solar car or burning one's own wood or being vegetarian or producing our own food or energy, etc... The tool can certainly be adapted, and this necessity for improvement is then not the main problem for now.

The most important result of measuring our real footprint is to allow us to grasp reality as it is and to mature in our understanding. We have nowadays the tendency to over-evaluate our rights to consume more than others because we are rich and we are accustomed to do so. We can pay for it! The rigorous measure of our ecological impact will open our eyes and reveal to us what we are truly doing. This is maybe not very nice for our egos but it is nevertheless the necessary condition to adapt to an adequate ecological and social behaviour based on equity. On the other hand, if we are able to measure the progress we make by changing our habits, we will be encouraged to persevere.

The challenge remains: who is ready to jump in? A true commitment to these new radical choices as a daily personal practice would not only generate an important reduction of our collective footprint but it would also generate a radical pressure on our governments which would be forced to act in a true way, yet without paying the price of being disowned.

It is a dream that can become reality tomorrow. If not it is death.

Please consider this proposal seriously. It seems insignificant but it is indeed extremely powerful: going back home!

The change of our ways of life is the only solution; everybody can do it; it is immediate; if

many people join it will have a very quick and powerful effect; it does not cost anything. This is certainly the core of the solution. All other aspects (technology, legislation, management, etc) will be only ways to make this new option more effective.

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