



## Peace on Earth at Last\*

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*“The time of silence, domination and fear has come to an end”*

### Abstract

*Thanks to citizen power the dictum “Si vis pacem, para bellum” can now be replaced by the motto that will mark a new era: “Si vis pacem, para verbum”. Multiple factors will gradually produce a “change of attitude” at the personal level, in free citizens who are persuaded that new paths and new guidelines have to be found.*

*Citizen power will lead the transition from an economy of speculation, production delocalization and war to an economy of global sustainable and human development, based on knowledge and which shall take into account the specific labour and employment features that have resulted from mechanization, robotics and, in general, from digital technology.*

*Walls must be broken down with the power of transparency, conceptual clarity, creative capacity, serenity, balance, consistent implementation of “democratic principles”, justice, liberty, equality and solidarity so that a new framework for action including permanent citizen participation may be gradually set up.*

*It is essential to plant seeds every day that will provide exceptionally good crops for the inhabitants of tomorrow. It's time for action. Time for personal commitment. Time to invent the future.*

### 1. For the first time in history, the transition from force to word is feasible

Since the very beginning, human beings have lived, territorially and intellectually, in extremely restricted spaces where they were born, where they lived and died. They were invisible, anonymous, fearful beings who could not express themselves beyond their immediate environment and who were also largely unaware of the nature and magnitude of the world events. But they were nonetheless the “eyes of the Universe”, the only living beings with the capacity to think, to have a reflex conscience, to know, to imagine, to create. They were elusive beings, but endowed with extraordinary distinctive qualities that they had to use in very restricted areas. They occasionally had a great philosophical, artistic spark, but were invisible and submissive most of the time. History was only a series of events that occurred in an unknown time and space for many centuries. What really happened on Earth has later on been inferred as a result of retrospective studies, once the Earth was known as a whole.

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We must admit that only a few decades ago, when the transition from rural to urban life took place, there were indeed some substantial social, health, economic, political changes but the power remained in the hands of a few men who dominated the rest of men and all women. Everything was solved by force. The adage “Si vispacem, para bellum” was unrelentingly applied. In the middle of the last century, despite the significant progress that had been achieved, a vast majority of the inhabitants of Earth had not yet reached the status of full citizens, and had not become citizens of the world enjoying “freedom from fear” as proclaimed in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948: “These human rights must free humanity from fear”.

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*“Only through citizen participation can a genuine democracy be established.”*

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But, soon after, silence prevailed among the muted and the silent. Some of them remained silent because they could not speak, they were muzzled by ignorance or by a system of zero liberties. Others had the right to express themselves, but they did not dare to do so. “The voice that could have been the remedy was finally nothing but fear”.<sup>1</sup> Suddenly, two decades ago, the voice was heard. The word emerged. This is a historical turning point: all human beings can now express their views, thanks to modern communication and information technology. In the digital era a very recent era but already a well-established one, we are not only able to approach “life on Earth” in real time, but also convey our thoughts and emotions. We can now participate in the affairs of the state, nation and the world.

Women are the cornerstone of the new era; for centuries they have been subjugated by male power and even when they were present on the power scenario, normally due to dynastic reasons, they’ve behaved mimetically. Today, however, gender equality is an essential objective for the radical changes that are needed to achieve equal dignity for all human beings. Equal dignity! This is the basis of all human rights, the foundation needed to build a new coexistence. Regardless of age, skin colour, religion, ideology and sex all human beings are equal in dignity.

Therefore, for the first time in history, the great transition from a culture of imposition, domination, violence and war to a culture of encounter, conversation, reconciliation, and peace is feasible.<sup>2</sup> – I cannot repeat it often enough – that 30,000 people die from hunger every day, most of them boys and girls ranging from 1 to 5 years, while 3,000 million US dollars is invested in military expenditure and weapons. It is unacceptable. It is intolerable that 85 people own more than half the population of the world (3,300 million people), according to a recent report from *OXFAM*.

*We cannot accept it.* The culture of peace and non-violence is a pressing need for the design of our future, and to make so many impossible dreams finally come true.

“There is no challenge that is beyond the reach of the creative capacity inherent to humankind”. There lies our hope. Every unique human being is capable of creating. This sentence, pronounced by Kennedy only a few months before his assassination, is a kind of “ritornello” to overcome the current ethical debacle, the systemic crisis we are going through, the neoliberal economy drift that makes everything depend solely on money, so much so that in Europe in 2003 a monetary Union was approved without any prior political

and economic Union. What nonsense! This is why it is essential today, when we can finally express ourselves, when women are gradually and actively participating in decision-making, when all human beings and not only a few can demonstrate and act according to their own reflections, that the public outcry, the voice of the people, “We, the peoples...”<sup>3</sup> become the driving force for the advent of a “new beginning,” as clearly advocated by the “Earth Charter”.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. A mobilization led scientific, academic, artistic community intellectuals

Only through citizen participation can a genuine democracy be established because, nowadays at the polls in the elections, citizens are counted but are later not taken into account. They are not counted permanently as they should be in a true democracy. If citizen participation were strong, it will no longer be possible to disregard the public outcry. It will no longer be possible to look away because thousands of millions of voices will demand that attention be paid to those actions and measures they deem appropriate.

At last, thanks to citizen power the adage “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” will be replaced by the motto that will mark a new era: “*Si vis pacem, para verbum*”. The great transition will be from force to word, from imposition to dialogue. Today, in our own country we are seeing a complete subordination of the Legislative power to the Executive power, due to the Spanish government having absolute majority in Parliament. And this is how laws are passed, even for basic issues such as education, security, etc. without taking into account the citizens represented by other political parties or simply citizens that are not represented in Parliament.

No attention is paid to people; no attention is paid to their wishes and proposals. Democracy thus becomes a tool that benefits only the rulers.

It is to be deplored that measures, rules and even laws have been recently passed based on absolute parliamentary majority, regardless of the fact that they had a direct impact on the good exercise of human rights. It is within this same context that the exercise of universal jurisdiction has been suppressed, precisely now that people can speak up – think of the “Arab Spring”, which has proved to be so efficient in some cases and equally perverse in others. I am referring to a long-awaited voice which evidences the awakening of citizen power.

The subordination of politicians to markets has gone so far as to allow the unashamed designation, without any prior election, of the governments of Italy and Greece, the birthplace of democracy, because stock securities have set aside moral values, and democratic multilateralism has been replaced by plutocratic groups of 7, 8, ... 20 rich countries. How can a few countries pretend to impose their plans on more than 190 countries who are members of the United Nations?

In his compelling paper entitled “Understanding and Overcoming America’s Plutocracy”, Jeffrey Sachs states that the richest Americans are working in the interest of “the richest among the rich. There has never been a better time for the top 1%”.<sup>5</sup> He then speaks about the gigantic “mega-lobbies” of oil, defence, medical insurance and pharmaceutical industry. In the last partial elections, the multimillionaires and their companies managed to raise a total of 3 billion dollars as funds for the candidates. “The plutocracy spreads like an epidemic until democracy declines and fades away. There is historical evidence proving that assaults against democracies are many times committed by insiders rather than outsiders”.

Till now dissent could only be expressed by attending specific gatherings that often included the use of violence. Now, cyberspace will allow citizen power to have a critical influence in politics, in defining objectives and in taking measures.<sup>6</sup>

It will also be able to channel alternatives and paradigm changes. Gradually, often inadvertently, walls will be broken down, doors will be opened, new bridges will be built, friendship ties will be created and coexistence will no longer be restricted by immutable and insurmountable boundaries, but will rather give rise to radical changes in the ethical, social and cultural spheres. Multiple factors will gradually produce a “change of attitude” at the personal level, in free citizens who are persuaded that new paths and new guidelines have to be found.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Over a period of hundred years, three peace opportunities have been dismissed**

In each of these three opportunities, the Republican Party of the United States, guided by hegemonic ambitions, has prevented the peace initiatives to reach a positive conclusion.

This happened for the first time, as I have often stressed, at the beginning of 1919. President Wilson had come from New York to Brest, horrified by the terrible war of exhaustion, bringing a message of peace to the world: the “Convention on Permanent Peace” should allow conflicts to be resolved through a Society or League of Nations having its headquarters in Geneva. Simultaneously, a Permanent Court of International Justice would be created. The reaction of his own country didn’t take too long: the President had not been elected to be the champion of peace but rather the champion of war. And the interdiction even led the United States – a huge contradiction that has to be taken into account from a historical point of view – to refrain from joining the Society of Nations created by the American President himself.

Everyone knows what happened next. Germany rearmed itself, Nazism and Fascism adopted dictatorial ways of acting and in 1939, World War II broke out.

It was a terrible confrontation with the Holocaust, genocide, and a complete contempt for basic humanitarian standards that somehow relieved the most horrendous aspects of military conflicts. Germany and Italy were joined by the Empire of the Rising Sun who completed its incredible and ambitious “Tanaka Plan” by attacking the United States Navy in Pearl Harbour in December 1941. In 1944, when the end of World War II seemed to be close, President Roosevelt made a great proposal to achieve worldwide peace: aiding the defeated with the Marshall Plan; funding for reconstruction and development by the World Bank and the creation of international agencies whose field of expertise could be very effective for the United Nations: food (FAO); education, science and culture (UNESCO); health (WHO); labour (ILO); promotion of development (UNDP); children protection (UNICEF Fund).

The drafting of both the United Nations Charter and the Constitution of UNESCO, its intellectual branch, was entrusted to thinkers with a great ethical and political clairvoyance. The United Nations Charter begins with the following words “We the peoples...determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. *This sentence summarizes the solutions the world as a whole is claiming for today*, because they should allow to effectively tackle the serious challenges we’re currently facing. It is certainly the people who must take

the reins of their common destiny into their hands. And by doing so, they shall commit themselves with the succeeding generations, assuming a responsibility that is one of the most serious deficiencies of international political action. And they shall succeed in building peace, because to avoid war they will demand from the United Nations the peaceful resolution of conflicts by means of diplomacy, encounter and reconciliation.

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*“There will be transition from a culture of imposition, violence and war to a culture of reconciliation, understanding, alliance and peace.”*

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But it took not very long for “the people” to be totally supplanted by the States as members of the UN General Assembly; soon the victors led by America replaced the vote by the veto and international cooperation – the verb “to share” should have been the key word for a new future – was superseded by exploitation. Another failed opportunity, because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>8</sup> clearly stated the glittering standards that could efficiently lead the humanity as a whole towards a new era where the very foundation of these standards could become true: the equal dignity of all human beings.

The Preamble of this Declaration – I’ve already mentioned it earlier – states that human rights should “free humanity from fear”. With the arms race between the superpowers, United States and the Soviet Union, fear did not diminish, it rather became stronger, and military expenditure and the production of increasingly powerful war artefacts became essential features of a period when walls could have been broken down and bridges of understanding and friendship between all nations of the Earth could have been built, if only the United Nations System had evolved based on the “democratic principles” established in the Constitution of UNESCO.

The third opportunity, also spoiled by the Republican Party of the United States, with the United Kingdom as a coadjutor, came immediately after the end of the “Cold War”. In 1989, when there were signs of peace everywhere, when the Soviet Union became – thanks to the talent of Mikhail Gorbachev – a Commonwealth of Independent States ready to start their long march towards public liberties; when the racial apartheid was eradicated thanks to the extraordinary magic of a prisoner who went out of prison with open arms and, instead of calling for revenge, cried out for reconciliation and forgiveness and managed to achieve them; when peace was reached in Mozambique, and in El Salvador and the peace process was restarted in Guatemala.

When there were signs of peace everywhere, President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher set off a globalizing neoliberal system that replaced democratic principles by the laws of the market, and the United Nations by plutocratic groups. In just a few years there was a real ethical and economic debacle. Markets became the masters of the situation and they relentlessly pressed and set aside political power. The consequence was inequality, poverty, arms race, the degradation of environment, thousands of deaths every day from hunger – dreadful “collateral effects” of a system where the poor become poorer and the

rich become richer. In terms of budget figures – we must insist on this and be ready to mend reality – every day millions of dollars are invested in weapons and military expenditure while many thousands of people die from hunger.

And inequalities are growing because centre-left parties are joining the neoliberal scheme led by big capital.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. Transitions that were inconceivable a few years ago have become possible today**

It will now be citizen power that in a few years will lead the transition from an economy of speculation, production delocalization and war to an economy of global sustainable and humane development, based on knowledge and which shall take into account the specific labour and employment features that have resulted from mechanization, robotics and, in general, from digital technology.

There will be transition from a culture of imposition, violence and war to a culture of reconciliation, understanding, alliance and peace. The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, approved at the United Nations General Assembly in September 1999, is the new path that will no doubt allow humanity to reach a “new beginning”. Transition from subjects to citizens happened with the advent of a new world as a result of the implementation of the four “Contracts” I proposed, at the end of my mandate as Director General of UNESCO in 2000: a new social contract; a new natural contract; a new cultural contract; a new ethical contract.<sup>10</sup>

The transition from subjects to citizens specially requires the capacity for dialogue which includes both the ability to listen and to freely express our own opinions. It requires an *intercultural*, *interreligious* dialogue but also, and maybe above all, an *intra-religious* dialogue, because when Huntington warned about the possibility of a “clash” between Islam and Christianity, he was driven by specific interests, he said precisely what was expected from him and what could please the ears of the magnates of the United States and its Republican Presidents. Today it is clear that the most pressing action is to settle conflicts between Sunnis, Shiites, Salafists...

Till now the great leaders of neoliberalism have been persuaded that actions taken to achieve their geostrategic and economic ambitions at any cost (even the intentional violation of all established standards to invade Iraq in 2003) would go unpunished because the vast majority of citizens would remain silent.

And besides, distraction has been used as a resort, trying to make the most of the huge power of media to uniformize people, to induce as many people as possible to compensate their political disaffection with an obsessive and abusive involvement in sports clubs and institutions. But all this will not last very long. Corruption, ethical abjuration found in so many politics professionals, who become flatterers, clappers instead of members of parliament ready to reinforce, to improve political representation and participation, will gradually discredit them and it will be the voice of people that will prevail.

Let's review history. The review will show that what deserves to be repeated happens again and what should have never happened doesn't occur ever again. *Let's never forget,*

*in our everyday behaviour; the past that is so critical to be able to make the right decision about tomorrow's paths.* Pablo Picasso said that “The quality of a painter depends on how much past he carries with him”. We must be aware of the past, an ascertained past that will empower young people with the strength they need for high-flying.

## 5. Break Down Walls, Build Bridges

Walls must be broken down with the power of transparency, conceptual clarity, creative capacity, serenity, balance, consistent implementation of “democratic principles”, justice, liberty, equality and solidarity so that a new framework for action including permanent citizen participation may be gradually set up. Nobody should fool himself: citizens will not keep still and continue to be angry, oppressed and silent. If there is no evolution, there will be a revolution. If there is no agreement, there will be a break-up. And that must be prevented at any price. The brilliant future where all human beings and not only a few will have a dignified life requires that, once and for all, it is up to “the people” to decide their own future.

To break down walls and build bridges it is essential to establish quick and consistent procedures that will allow justice, especially in specific cases, to be speedy and efficient. And it is essential to implement the major *social priorities at a worldwide scale*: food for everyone; access to drinking water; high quality health services; environmental protection; education for everyone during the whole life.

The result will be peace. “Peace is a specific behaviour” was said in Yamassoukro in 1989,<sup>11</sup> when the great transversal program of UNESCO on the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence was launched.

There is no peace without justice. There is no peace without human development. There is no peace without equality. Peace is incompatible with discrimination, arbitrariness...

According to José Saramago “The worst thing about patience is that it can be infinite”. Therefore, patience must be exercised, but within well-defined boundaries. Today there are many “unattainable” goals that may become possible tomorrow. I like to repeat the sentence of a group of mountaineers who said “we succeeded because we didn’t know it was impossible” – imagination, courage, knowledge.

Deep analysis, serenity, strength and the ability to say “no” when markets – behaving as imperatively as they have done lately – force politicians, with unprecedented and unacceptable pressure, to make decisions that should have never been made.

I know from experience that saying “no” when we are presented with and forced to take wrong paths not only causes enormous satisfaction and peace of mind but generally results in threats vanishing and unacceptable grounds becoming evident.

Tuesday, 28 October 2014, – wrote Ignacio Ramonet,<sup>12</sup> – was a historical day. In the first place, because in very few occasions has the Pope convened at the Vatican a World Meeting of Popular Movements; in the second place, because there have been even fewer occasions when the Pope has directly spoken to them, telling them he wants to hear “the voice of the poor because the poor not only suffer injustice, they struggle against it” and, praising solidarity, he also said: “The Pope wishes to accompany you on this journey”. And

he wishes to do so because “the poor are no longer waiting with arms crossed for solutions that never arrive; now they want to be protagonists and find themselves the solutions for their problems... I hope the winds of protest will turn into a gale of hope... All this happens when the human being is placed at the centre of the system where the money has now been placed... That is why we must raise our voices”.

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*“Democracy can neither be granted nor imposed. It cannot be established from the top down but rather from bottom up, thanks to citizen participation.”*

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## 6. Democracy is the Solution

In the eighties it was agreed to replace democratic principles by the laws of the market. Now power moves away from the Western world and battles that need to be fought are no longer economic but mostly political. “We cannot live on our knees any longer. We cannot accept any further pressure from the markets. Politics must stand up”, I wrote in 2011. And, once I had listed the most pressing actions to be taken at all levels, I ended by saying that “a Universal Declaration on Democracy<sup>13</sup> would be particularly appropriate since only within this context could the full exercise of human rights be foreseeable.”

The only solution is a real democracy at a global and local level. And democracy can neither be granted nor imposed. It cannot be established from the top down but rather from bottom up, thanks to citizen participation.

*International democracy:* We urgently need to restore a democratic multilateralism, putting an end to the inefficient and discretionary “oligarchic groups” imposed upon us by the globalizing neoliberalism once and for all. With a strong *United Nations*, endowed with the moral and formal integrity that is needed, the invasion of Iraq would have never happened, as I have already mentioned; the “Arab Spring” would have been adequately guided; the nuclear disarmament would have become a reality, and Mafia organizations trafficking with weapons, drugs and people would no longer benefit from their current impunity at the supranational level; the World Trade Organization would not have overstepped its boundaries and more funds would be allocated to aiding sustainable and humane development, and worldwide priorities (food, drinking water, health services, education ...) would most certainly have been implemented. Caring for environment, which is a pressing intergenerational responsibility, would no longer be a cause for alarm and a serious irresponsibility as it is today.

*Critical objectives:* To be able to complete, reorientate or rebuild, from a new United Nations System,<sup>14</sup> the current situation and trends (examples): promoting the excellent emancipation process that is being carried on in Latin America; in the European Union,<sup>15</sup> establishing political and economic union Treaties that will round off the current Monetary Union; circulating and implementing in all European countries the excellent Charter of Fundamental Rights<sup>16</sup> and “inventing” a new Europe by reinforcing its status as a great champion of creativity, solidarity and vigilance;<sup>17</sup> contributing to China “transparency” and



to its speedy evolution towards a system of public liberties. An adequate evolution of the “giant dragon” – from the ethical, social, structural, environmental standpoint – is essential for the new era,<sup>18</sup> in Africa, promoting the reinforcement of Pan-Africanism to allow this major continent to play at last in the worldwide scenario the role it deserves to play; paying special attention to India, a great country, who has been a champion of democracy under very difficult circumstances; coordinating action in case of natural or human-instigated disaster; resorting to “third-party intervention” to avoid massive violation of human rights (as was the case in Cambodia and Rwanda, for instance) or in specific cases that require the presence of Blue Helmets because there are no representatives of the people or no official negotiators at the international scale (as was the case of Somalia).

A matter of great concern at a worldwide scale is the rearmament of Japan and China, promoted as usual by the large arms industry corporations and also – I must insist on this once again because it is an essential element for the construction of a new future – by a United Nations System deprived of the means necessary to arbitrate the major processes that are already or will be shortly at stake.

With regards to the *environment*, the first thing that must be done is to limit the huge power of large energy corporations. Renewable energy should be encouraged, by carrying on a prior in-depth study. Regarding issues that can be irreversible, it would be totally irresponsible to look the other way as has been done till now.

*At a national scale*, we should encourage countries with a great cultural diversity, such as Spain, to implement a system allowing differences of all kinds to be compatible with the unanimous observance of “democratic principles”, which ensure the necessary overall cohesion, as it is the case in federal and confederal systems.

Democracy is subject to continuous evolution and it must take into account in every historical period the distinctive conceptual and “physical” features (such as the ecological environment) it must not only adapt to but also anticipate. It is now clear that a new way of approaching work as well as labour, time and space is needed, and a new world energy map.

Among the proposals I have made at a global, regional and national level<sup>19</sup> it is worthwhile stressing the prevention of tax evasion; immediate abolition of tax havens; computer transaction taxes; strict regulation of “instructed machines” in the stock market and industrial relocalization.

And above all, I insist, promoting at all levels a genuine democracy. The Universal Declaration on Democracy<sup>20</sup> includes sections dealing with *social democracy*, *political democracy*, *economic democracy*, *cultural and international democracy*. Article eleven deserves special attention because it states that *all dimensions and features of the economic democracy shall be subordinated to social justice*. It is said that a product is not altered by changing the order of its factors. This is not true in the case of social and economic facts. The United Nations ECOSOC Commission has always focused on economic aspects and has in very few occasions dealt with social issues. It was not until the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, in 1995, when a meeting on social development was finally held. It took place in Copenhagen, that same year, and the meeting concluded with eight major “commitments”. But neoliberalism prevented the social aspects from prevailing.

Other essential aspects of democracy are universal jurisdiction, world citizenship, and permanent awareness of our common destiny. A matter of the utmost urgency is the establishment, and strict observance at a planetary scale, of laws ensuring an appropriate behaviour at different levels, so that the main requirements for a dignified life for all human beings are readily complied with. “Who if not everyone?” – I like to repeat this question posed by the great Catalan poet, Miquel Martí i Pol. It must be *everyone*. The time for disparities, for excruciating inequalities has come to an end because, in the anthropocene, points of no return may be reached that would be equally negative for everyone, regardless of their place of origin and social “status”.

*We should all see democracy as an everyday behaviour; as a rule and pattern of life. As mentioned earlier, democracy can neither be granted nor imposed.*

A few years ago, in my book “*Un mundo nuevo*,”<sup>21</sup> I wrote: “How can the appropriate preservation of the biosphere be reconciled with the development of the socio-sphere? Who will be responsible for transmitting the ecological wisdom to us? Who will show us the path towards a more balanced and supportive development?” A sustainable and humane development is certainly the best way to achieve a peaceful coexistence.

## **7. “Another world” is possible. Bearing the future in mind**

For the first time in history, human beings have the possibility to invent new ways of living together to ensure their survival as a species. This global change on our living conditions generates new possibilities and at the same time compels us to face new difficulties that had never before arisen. Problems currently experienced by some human beings could very well transform the whole planet in a very short period of time. With scientific development, but also with its application to mass destruction, the future of every human being, regardless of his race or religion, is more than ever closely related to the future of all his fellows.

Extreme ignorance and poverty; racial, religious or ideological fanaticism; intolerance and contempt towards others; inequality and injustice are all a source of violence. These are the human situations that lead to marginalization, indifference, resentment and hate. Being able to tackle conflicts from the very beginning requires the capacity to identify root causes and to take timely action. Anticipation and prevention that may result from this capacity are the supreme conquest, a conquest that suits the distinctive faculties of the human species.

The computer revolution has given rise to a new relationship between labour, capital and technology. “How will the labour market be regulated in an era of automated production processes?” – wonders Diego Beas.<sup>22</sup> It is worthwhile analysing the dysfunction caused by Google in the world of information and advertising; by Apple in mobile phones and music; by Amazon in books and product distribution, especially because very few employees are required by these companies as compared with “traditional” large companies; and, while admitting that many “habits” should be radically transformed, we should nonetheless promote a rational use of technologies that have already become an essential pillar of the “new era”.

With appropriate advice, “the people” will make sure – through an active and constant participation – that the roots and common source of democracy are respected by “calling things by their proper name”, and by letting us be citizens instead of mere subjects. In this regard, attention should be paid to “competitiveness” achieved by a highly skilled and

extremely inexpensive workforce which prevails over talent, patents and the promotion of R&D&I. In the new context, it will be up to knowledge and human creativity to provide, within a totally different labour and production framework, the major guidelines of a life worth living.

Yes, future must be invented because it is yet to be. Today we can rely on something as important as experience, which has to be supportive, proportionate to the extraordinary increase in longevity. It is an unexplored treasure that may now too, at last, contribute to radical changes at all scales. Somebody will surely tell us “this is impossible”; “nothing can be done about it”. But now we will all be aware that we have to learn to see, to observe and to reflect in a different way. And to make the most of experience and solidarity gained throughout so many lives.

This process that can today be accelerated by citizen participation has already been discussed by Edgar Morin.<sup>23</sup> As long as we have seeds and we have furrows where they can be planted come wind or weather, there will be a few catalysts capable of shedding light on the horizons that seem so gloomy today.

In “Humanism : inventing the future”,<sup>24,25</sup> I emphasize how confident I am in the capacity of humanity – based on global consciousness, gender equality and the ability of everyone to express himself – to take into its hands the reins of its own destiny and to eradicate any type of governance that has replaced universal values by financial interests. The XXI century will be the era of rebellion in cyberspace, and the prelude to liberty and equal dignity for everyone.

Yes, future must be invented because it is yet to be.

It is essential to take action based on our own reflections. Gorbachev, one of the most powerful men on earth at a given period of time, dared to take action according to his conscience. Today, 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he proclaims the power of civil society and the everlasting importance of freedom of speech and press, as well as the undeniable influence of internet and cyberspace. Succeeding generations need examples such as those provided by a nonagenarian Stéphane Hessel and an octogenarian Mikhail S. Gorbachev, who have mobilized young people and led them to tomorrow’s paths.

These are some relevant paragraphs of the speech by former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev in Berlin on 9 November 2014 to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the fall of the Wall: “The events of the past few months are the consequence of short-sighted policies, of seeking to impose one’s criteria while ignoring the interests of one’s partners. Instead of becoming a leader of change in a global world, Europe has turned into an arena of political upheaval, of competition for spheres of influence and of military conflict. If this continues, *Europe could gradually become irrelevant* at an international scale.

Gather together, listen to each other. The key to it is a strong political will to move in this direction and to establish jointly agreed action priorities. Dialogue, dialogue to enable us to work together to ensure our future. Future is the only thing that matters. We urgently need to activate cooperation to be able to address global challenges: extremism, poverty, inequality, environment and migration. Global challenges, no matter how different from each other, have all one common basic feature: there is military solution for none of them!”

It is now up to the scientific, academic, intellectual community to try to mobilize and give sense to all those subjects who will gradually become full citizens. If Europe does not react, the “culture of democracy” will settle in the south.

Political leaders today are still unaware of the fact that people are no longer a silent audience. Now they can express themselves. A new compass must be used to avoid bewilderment, every time events such as the emergence of “Podemos” highlight the monotony that has prevailed in the past and when the future is not as we expected it to be.

Our hope lies in the capacity of every unique human being to think and create; this should be the axis and the foundation of the future we are dreaming of.

This is why philosophy is so important. And longevity has so much increased that it will allow us, if we make a good use of it, to convey – as I have already mentioned – a big cumulus of experiences to young people.

Sowing! It is essential to plant seeds every day that will provide exceptionally good crops for the inhabitants of tomorrow. It’s time for action. Time for personal commitment. I will conclude with a sentence by José Luis Sampedro: “Today’s decline is an opportunity for us all to take action together, because another world is not only possible, it is a fact”.

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#### Notes

1. Federico Mayor, *Terral: 1990-1997* (Barcelona: Circulo de Lectores, 1997)
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