

educ-ecocide

Documentary press file
ECOCIDE, CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR

WHOLE FILE BY TOPIC 
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www.educ-ecocide.com



INTER-DEPENDENCE AT THE CORE OF THE LIVING WORLD

HOW CAN THE CURRENT CRISES BE DISCUSSED WITH OUR YOUTH?

Find lots of educational material and opportunities for action for [each topic](#)
ACTIVITIES, BOOKS, FILMS, COMICS, GAMES...

CONSUMPTION IS A POLITICAL ACT!

Is the Anthropocene due to human nature or our culture?

TOPIC 2 | p.10

HYPER-(DIS)CONNECTED

solastalgia, eco-anxiety, emotions, compassion, mindfulness, meditation...

TOPIC 9 | p.40

CAN WE BREAK THE RULES IF A LAW IS ILLEGITIMATE?

TOPIC 10 | p.46

10 TOPICS

to delve into depending on your areas of interest

WHY HAVE A PRESS FILE?

Current events have shown us that the topics discussed in this documentary are significant at every level. Male and female citizens are up in arms over the urgency of the situation, politicians are looking into it, civil society is rallying together, the youngest generations are expressing a desire for change... We want this documentary to help develop arguments, raise both individual and collective awareness, and enhance initiatives.

The topics covered are vast, complex and interwoven. It is, therefore, crucial to give you the opportunity to have more in-depth

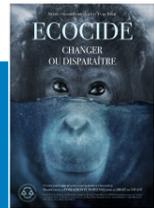
discussions about these ideas and to establish a connection between them. This file is aimed primarily to teachers, educators, teaching staff and parents. But anyone who would like to learn more will find something to whet their appetite. We have chosen to split the press file into ten different topics but they are still closely interlinked in a cross-cutting way. Each topic is around four pages long. Starting with a problematic or motivational situation, it explores the concepts covered, makes links between them, and provides references and educational tools to raise awareness and "experience the topic". It also does this for the "take action" and "be part of the change" sections.

In order to be fully accessible, this file comes in two formats. It comes

as a PDF brochure which can be downloaded (and printed in A4) in its entirety or by topic. The file can also be found on a user-friendly website www.educ-ecocide.com.

This press file was co-designed with the help of a working group of seasoned experts, including scientists, teachers, educators, influencers, and collaborators from associations working on environmental issues, global citizenship or meditation.

Link to the website
www.educ-ecocide.com



HOW CAN THE DOCUMENTARY BE USED?

ECOCIDE - CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR is freely and exclusively available on the YouTube platform.



It can be shown for educational purposes, but no paid screenings of it can take place. Having said that, participants can, of course, be invited to come and support the project at your chosen establishment or organisation.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoTgjCTuPOw

WHAT EDUCATIONAL TOOLS ARE THERE?

As well as providing a list of suggested tools at the end of each topic in this file, a whole host of further educational material is referenced on the Réseau IDée website. A wealth of resources can be found there and it gathers numerous environmental and educational tools from all over the French-speaking world, which can be accessed through a powerful and intuitive search engine. These can also be found at Réseau IDée's resource centre, where they will be happy to advise you. Highly recommended for all educators! www.reseau-idee.be

TOPIC 1	6
How can we reconcile our economic models and limited planetary resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth rate • Gross domestic product - GDP • Planetary boundaries • Ecological footprint • Depletion of resources • Gross National Happiness GNH • Sustainable harmony

TOPIC 2	10
Is the Anthropocene due to human nature or our culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthropocene • Human enslavement • Free will • Technology ethics • Human nature VS Human culture • Politicising environmental crises • Individual and universal responsibility

TOPIC 3	14
Could an ecological imbalance lead to irreversible change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earth System • Physical, biological and chemical destruction • Planetary boundaries • Tipping points • Amplification phenomena • Change or disappear

TOPIC 4	18
Which family do humans think they belong to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hominid species • Cartesian dualism Nature - Mind • Domination and Exploitation • Anthropocentrism • Place of humans • Interdependence • Planetary family

TOPIC 5	22
After our teenage rebellion, does the hope of harmony follow?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathological adolescence • Westernisation • Interdependence • Our relationship with time • Transhumanism • Coexistence • Developing consciousness • Holistic revolution

TOPIC 6	26
I feel, therefore I am? Evolution of new ideas, from Descartes to the present day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cartesian approach • Animal machine theory • Evolution of thought and science until the 21st century • Anthropocentrism and other POV • Shared fundamental interests • Human ethics • Sentient beings

TOPIC 7	30
Are we free to shift the paradigm or must we be slaves to the system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Conformity and submission • Competition • Educational system • Collaboration and mutual aid • Ecocentric views • Regenerative economy • Paradigm shift

TOPIC 8	36
What's the status of Ecocide today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction • Justice • Non-human legal person • Rights of Nature • Comparison to genocide • Crime of ecocide

TOPIC 9	40
Is our society hyper-connected or completely disconnected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper-(dis)connected society • Solastalgia - Eco-anxiety • Becoming more connected with oneself and the world • Emotions • Compassion • Wisdom (interdependent awareness) • Mindfulness and meditation • Reconnecting

TOPIC 10	46
CAN WE BREAK THE RULES IF A LAW IS ILLEGITIMATE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legality • Legitimacy • Opposition • Non-violence • Civil disobedience • Non-Violent Direct Action • Being part of the change • Strength in numbers

LINKS TO THE SCHOOL CURRICULA

Dear teachers,

We sincerely hope that this file will help you incorporate this documentary in your course material. Lots of the ideas developed here can be found in your school curricula for students aged 14+. Obviously, the scope of its use proportionally increases with the participants' age, and it can be used to its full potential with students aged 16+.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to exhaustively cover the specifics of each country, but you'll find a list to help guide you depending on the material you wish to use and how old your students are.

www.educ-ecocide.com

BIOLOGY

A balanced ecosystem?

- Find the many different factors and explain the relationships involved in a dynamic, steady-state ecosystem.
- Concepts covered: species; biotope; biocenosis; ecosystems; inter- and intraspecific relationships between living organisms; transfer of matter and energy flow.

Unity and diversity of living beings (and) From genetics to evolution

- Despite their extraordinary diversity, highlight the similarities between living beings and infer that they have a common origin.
- Based on observations of changes to biodiversity over time, provide an initial explanation for the way species evolve.
- Concepts covered: plant cells; animal cells; bacterial cells; biodiversity; timeline of evolution; hypothetical common ancestors; natural selection.

The impact of man on ecosystems

- Identify and explain the significant impact of human activity on an ecosystem.
- Develop a scientific argument to criticise how the actions of human beings impact an ecosystem, offering preventive and remedial solutions.
- Concepts covered: ecosystems (food webs; transfer of matter and energy); 5 main causes for loss of biodiversity; overexploitation of resources; pollution; biological invasion; climate change; ecological footprint; ecosystem services (production, regulation, well-being).

ECOLOGY

- Concepts covered: abiotic factors; biotic factors; ecosystems (diversity, functioning, dynamics).

CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

Chemical equilibria

Predict in which direction evolution is heading with an irreversible reaction.

Earth and the cosmos

temperature; structure; atmosphere; greenhouse effect; radiative balance...

ENGLISH

The English teacher will find things to build up their course material throughout this file. It will include the following:

Know-how

justification, clarification / defending an opinion, judgement of fact or value judgement, negotiation...

Knowledge

evolution and current thinking, factors influencing periodic changes, formal language style, literature and writers, evolution of cultures...

Furthermore, a large number of literary works are recommended in each topic under the "experience the topic" section. They are categorised by the quality of their content and diverse styles (from Rabelaisian novels to comics, as well as old and new philosophical tales).

HISTORY

Issues and challenges of our time

use the past to shed light on challenges of our time

Growth and crises

growth or economic development process; social stratification and inequality; what constitutes a crisis

Ideological trends

capitalist, collectivist, liberal systems, legal system: rights and duties; democratic or non-democratic features of a system; characteristics of humanism-inspired opinions or philosophies

GEOGRAPHY

Sustainable development

Globalisation

Migration

Geological ages

Anthropocene

Uneven population

and resource distribution

Natural hazard and technological management

SOCIAL SCIENCES

The teacher will find things to build up their course material throughout this file. It will include the following:

Competition and cooperation

Consensus and conflict

Public and private

Individual vs collective

Self-interested behaviour vs normative behaviour

Production and reproduction

Commercial and non-commercial

Social inclusion and exclusion

Humans dealing with

consumption; work; free time; their environment; hardship

ECONOMICS

Economic indicators and measurements

Economic approaches

Economic policies

Economic international relations

Civil and social rights

PHILOSOPHY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The teacher will find things to build up their course material throughout this file. Here are some of them:

Evolution and current thinking

factors influencing periodic changes

evolution of cultures

Social and political relationship with the environment

Participating in the democratic process

Legitimacy and legality of norms

Truth and power

Science and expertise

distinguishing between a democratic debate and scientific expertise, and attempts to use science

Bioethics

Freedom and responsibility

concepts and conditions of individual and collective commitment

The State: why, how far?

call the concept of the State into question, hypothetically opt for a political system and justify it

Furthermore, a large number of literary works are recommended in each topic under the "experience the topic" section. They are categorised by the quality of their content and diverse styles (from Aristotle to comics, as well as old and new philosophical tales).

HOW CAN WE RECONCILE OUR ECONOMIC MODELS AND LIMITED PLANETARY RESOURCES?

TOPIC 1

- Growth rate
- Gross Domestic Product - GDP
- Planetary boundaries
- Ecological footprint
- Depletion of resources
- Gross National Happiness GNH
- Sustainable harmony

How can we measure if a country is doing well? Modern economic models measure a country's health by, essentially, basing it on its growth rate, in other words, the variation of its economic wealth from one period to another. This wealth production is measured annually by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which quantifies the added value of all goods and services. Economically speaking, in order for a country to develop properly, it must have a positive growth rate and its GDP should grow every year. Satish Kumar¹ warns us about this blind obsession with unlimited growth. In the end, we're at risk of focusing on trivialities to the detriment of what truly matters.

Even though this indicator still seems hegemonic, it is now being called into question by many economists. First of all, it doesn't take into account the core activities that are essential when it comes to developing our societies, such as domestic work, time spent on self-care, taking care of our families

1 ECOCIDE documentary: 20'41"

2 Robert Kennedy, March 1968, candidate for the American presidential election

“The GDP measures everything, except that which makes life worthwhile.”²

and others (volunteering...), or human and social costs such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, discontent or crime. In contrast, it incorporates the added value of oil spill clean-ups, river clean-ups, managing a pandemic or rebuilding a post-war country, thereby relegating catastrophes to the status of an economic boon. As a final point, it completely ignores the depletion of non-renewable resources and just how much impact this has on our whole Earth system. Robert Kennedy² said “The GDP measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

In this regard, Matthieu Ricard³ warns us of our Earth system's limits. The concept of planetary boundaries allows us to understand how planetary systems rely on each other and to set clear boundaries. Scientists have identified 10 main factors linked to the processes which regulate our Earth system (for example, climate, the water cycle, the carbon cycle...). These processes are closely linked, interdependent and constantly interacting. Therefore, sustaining these processes has a total influence on the stability of the Earth system as we know it today. Half of these thresholds, such as the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere or the extinction rate of species, have already been crossed and others are in dire straits. Topic 3 further expands on this concept and sparks thought about crossing thresholds and tipping points.

Jane Goodall⁴ addresses the issue of limited resources from the perspective of ecological

3 ECOCIDE documentary: 15'35"

4 ECOCIDE documentary: 16'35"

5 <https://data.footprintnetwork.org>

footprints. This is an amazing tool for popularisation. We're all aware that all human activity consumes resources and produces waste. Since 2003, the Global Footprint

If everyone lived like a European, we would need 2.5 Earths, and even 4 Earths if we all lived like Belgians.

Network has quite accurately been calculating our global ecological footprint and comparing it to the Earth's biocapacity. The ecological footprint represents the area everyone on the planet needs to produce everything they consume

and to absorb everything that they discharge, directly or indirectly. This area is distributed across the globe (depending on where our products come from). It includes land, forest (for wood and emitted carbon sequestration), sea and built-up areas. In contrast, biocapacity is the actual capacity of a particular area to create organic matter that can be used by humans or to absorb what they emit. When we compare the ecological footprint (what we need) and biocapacity (what is actually available), it becomes clear that we're living well beyond our means. In the 2021 edition⁵, we saw that at global level, we were consuming 1.75 times more than what the Earth could actually produce. If everyone lived like a European, we would need 2.5 Earths, and even 4 Earths if we all lived like Belgians. On the other hand, if we all lived like Indians, it would be the opposite case, half of Earth's capacity would be enough to meet our needs! In other words, by 29th July 2021, we had already

The notion of “sustainable development” fits in well with the growth imperative, but doesn’t call into question the very core of the paradox.

used up all of the resources that the Earth can regenerate in an entire year. This Overshoot Day⁶ is calculated every year and we’re seeing that, as every year goes by, this day is coming increasingly earlier...

With this exceedance of our limits in mind, Jane Goodall draws our attention to our decline in wisdom and our trans-generational duty⁷. She makes reference to some indigenous peoples who would make decisions only after assessing the impact on no fewer than 7 future generations, whereas today, choices are only made in the short term, or at the end of an electoral cycle - typically lasting a few years. Led by an ethical principle of justice, she emphasises “the rights of future generations” which aim to protect the human family and other non-human beings.

When will happiness come into it?

Our current economic models forget to take general well-being into account. In the documentary, Satish

Kumar⁸ and Olivier de Schutter⁹ are among those who are advocating for a different model. Kumar explains that what we’re concerned with now, our frantic materialistic race, is merely “the icing on the cake”, and that we’re forgetting to measure what matters: our happiness, health, well-being and that of the world around us which we totally depend on. De Schutter adds that inequality is extremely toxic because it’s speeding up the collapse. They both agree that there’s an urgent need to add new indicators to our social models. The example Satish Kumar gives of the Kingdom of Bhutan is an interesting one. At the age of 16, when ascending to the throne in 1972, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the king of Bhutan, declared that a country’s growth should take all aspects of its development into consideration and not just economic factors, which is how GDP is measured.

The concept of GNH, Gross National Happiness, emerged. In Dzongkha, the language spoken in the kingdom, GNH means “global happiness”. Now enshrined in the Bhutanese constitution, GNH analyses living conditions across 9 different areas: psychological well-being, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards. For each of these variables, there is a threshold to be met, which also allows leaders to objectively focus their efforts on making sure that these conditions for happiness are met.

Matthieu Ricard¹⁰ pushes us to ask ourselves about the notion of “sustainable development” which fits in well with the growth imperative but which doesn’t call into question the very core of

the paradox. There is, indeed, a contradiction between the notion of “sustainability” and the inextricable quantitative growth caused by “development”. He suggests a more balanced term: “sustainable harmony”. For the sake of the survival of the human species, he invites us to build on better living standards by respecting our planet

The concept of GNH GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

and all of its inhabitants - humans and other living beings. In order to create and respect this harmony, he

6 www.overshootday.org
7 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°02’47”
8 ECOCIDE documentary: 20’41”
9 ECOCIDE documentary: 18’52”

10 ECOCIDE documentary: 15’35”



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Ecological footprint / *Footprint Network*
This free online calculator allows you to easily quantify your ecological footprint. It’s an amazing tool for popularising and raising awareness. Use it as often as you want! www.footprintcalculator.org

Jeu des chaises (Chair game) / *Iteco*
Want to raise awareness about inequality on our planet? This popular educational tool deserves a special mention! Free and fully downloadable, it allows groups (even large ones) to actively experience global inequality in an impactful way, through distribution of wealth (GDP), population and consumption (ecological footprint). Be warned, you’ll need to spend some time exchanging views after playing this game! www.iteco.be

Sois smart avec ton phone / *Laurent Geissmann*
A comprehensive educational tool (student and teacher booklet and portfolio) which helps investigate and understand the overall life cycle of our devices and their impact across many areas. Available as a free download on www.environnement.brussels

Climat Tic-Tac (Climate Tic-Tac)
Cooperative board game which also allows you to learn more about the risks, possible solutions and the latest on climate change.

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

Hidden Impact / *Babette Porcelijn*
Over three quarters of our ecological footprint are invisible: the hidden part of the iceberg! Discover the environmental impact that’s hidden behind our patterns of consumption. Everything you need to know to have a lighter footprint on Earth!

The Climate Book / *Esther Gonstalla*
The book will be of particular interest to teachers looking for reader-friendly data on climate change. With the help of 50 (great) infographics, she makes this complex, multi-faceted phenomenon accessible.

L’atlas du changement climatique / *Gallimard*
Jeunesse Editions
Everything can be found here: the causes, consequences and solutions to take action. Summed up in a clear, visual and current way.



TAKE ACTION

Would you like to be part of the change and discover other cultures?

► **Oxfam**
works towards social justice and promotes fair trade. Oxfam is involved in projects all over the world. www.oxfam.org

Would you like to get involved for a fairer world?

► **CNCD**
with a view to promoting a fair and sustainable world, the NGO CNCD works alongside 90 NGOs and gives you loads of opportunities to actively get involved. www.cncd.be

COMICS

Economix / *Michael Goodwin*
This comic / new type of document explores three centuries of economic practices. It talks about globalisation, great thinkers, the highs and lows, the impact of war, climate change as well as a shortage of resources.

PUBLICATIONS

World Inequality Report / *OXFAM NGO*
Updated and published annually at the “World Economic Forum” (the Davos Summit which brings together the richest individuals on the planet and decision-makers). In 2022, it pointed to the historic rise in wealth among billionaires but at the same time, a spike in poverty for those who were already struggling before the pandemic.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provides a wealth of scientific information related to the consequences of changes being exerted on ecosystems for human “well-being” as well as the possibilities of reacting to these changes: www.millenniumassessment.org

IS THE ANTHROPOCENE

Geological epoch characterised by the advent of man as the main force of change on Earth, overtaking geophysical forces.

DUE

TO HUMAN NATURE OR OUR CULTURE?

Human brain | polarized light microscopy © TAORAD

TOPIC 2

- Anthropocene
- Human enslavement
- Free will
- Technology ethics
- Human nature VS Human culture
- Politicising environmental crises
- Individual and universal responsibility

Today, all of the scientific, political and civil communities have widely acknowledged that human activity has a significant and detrimental impact on the functioning of Earth's system. They have observed a global decline in the Earth system since the end of the 18th century, and an exponential acceleration in indicators of change since 1945 and the start of the 30-year post-war boom. Our human influence is so intense that it is impacting all of the Earth's environment. To cope with these major changes, the scientific community which determines geological time-scales (the IUGS)¹ has defined an epoch change, propelling us from the Holocene (starting around 11,000 years ago) to the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch called "the Age of Man". Humanity has, therefore, become a geological force. Homo sapiens, also known as "modern man" is, however, the last living species representing the Homo genus which belonged to the primate order. The first fossils that were found of this species date

back to around 300,000 years ago² which raises a question: Why did Homo sapiens wait until the end of its 300,000 years to have an impact on the Earth system?

By using a product or service, you're supporting the entire system that produces it.

In the documentary, Vandana Shiva³ helps provide a few possible answers. She redirects our thinking to the West's view of the world. In the wake of the industrial revolution, Western man gradually dedicated his life to work, and to the demands of productivity and

consumption. Frantically drawing from the planet's resources and enslaving other humans in the process to achieve this, we move through the world around us with a view that was distorted through an economic, scientific and industrial lens. Therefore, the adjective "sapiens" is tinged with irony, if we note that in Latin, "sapiens" means "intelligence, wisdom, common sense and cautiousness". Our irreversible destruction of ecosystems shows, as Monica Gagliano⁴ reminds us, that we have almost completely lost our free will. In other words, our ability to choose and think freely by ourselves and without constraints. We're lacking in discernment, as highlighted by the lawyer on the defence team⁵ who maintains that technological progress only has one goal: to serve the well-being of humankind. But in his speech, he quickly demonstrates that his view is skewed and that he's confusing the notion of progress being used

for good with that of growth being used for the economic gain of a small minority. At the start of the 16th century, Rabelais, in *Pantagruel*, was already warning that "science without conscience is the soul's perdition". According to him, knowledge which isn't reflective is, essentially, useless and even dangerous, because it doesn't allow man to progress by calling his own acts into question. He had unwittingly laid the foundations for scientific ethics: it is not because we are able to do something that we necessarily have the right to do it...

In the same vein, Olivier de Schutter⁶ denounces the food industry which, under the guise of serving humanity, is causing biodiversity loss. And yet, as human beings, we form part of this biodiversity. We are deeply connected to it. We live, eat, and breathe thanks to our relationship with other plant and animal species. Without them, we would disappear.

De Schutter thus introduces the concept of interdependence (discussed in more depth in Topic 4) as well as the dangers of human beings being domesticated by other human beings through technoscience. In the 1936 film *Modern Times*, Charlie Chaplin was already alerting us to the dangers of transforming man into machine. In the documentary *Ecocide*, the image of a robot bee⁷ serves as an even starker depiction of this viewpoint. But Olivier de Schutter's comments also raise a new question: doesn't thinking that science will find all the answers serve as an escape, as a comfortable excuse for our economic system?

But where is our compass?

To continue this train of thought, the Dalai Lama⁸ addresses a major consideration. He points out that

1 International Union of Geological Sciences: www.iugs.org

2 Discovered at Jebel Irhoud: <https://journals.openedition.org/lettre-cdf/3932>

3 ECOCIDE documentary: 20'41"

4 ECOCIDE documentary: 22'22"

5 ECOCIDE documentary: 11'28"

6 ECOCIDE documentary: 07'49"

7 ECOCIDE documentary: 33'11"

8 ECOCIDE documentary: 1'05'47"

“nobody wants problems, and yet we create many of the problems ourselves”. He talks about our short-sightedness which forces us to act the way we do. To understand the reality of the situation, we are encouraged to take off our technocentric glasses and use our human intelligence to broaden our field of vision. Before going any further, he asks us to observe the situation from several angles in order to get a full picture of the situation. By broadening our perspective, we would be able to have a holistic view. But he also warns that this would mean letting go of our egocentric emotions and narrow-mindedness.

It is therefore not the human soul which is intrinsically “evil”, but rather our compass which is being sent into a frenzy through the prism of our current culture. To solely

condemn humanity would be to exonerate our socio-economic models.

The problems created by humans cannot miraculously be solved by external forces or technological advances alone.

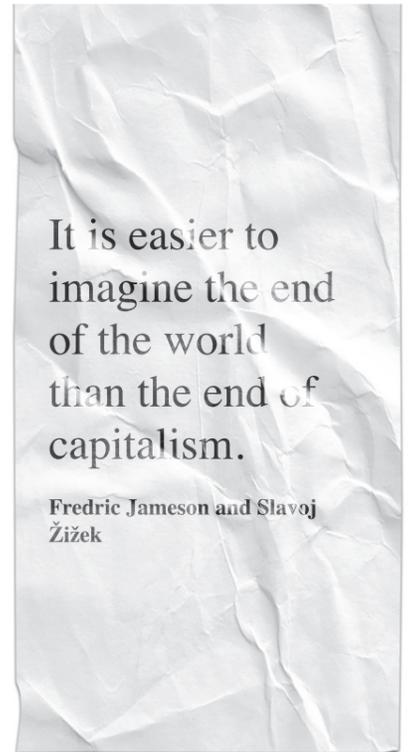
Faced with this significant growing awareness, it is clear that our leaders and their electorate are

suffering from akrasia, a weak will that is pushing us to act against the result we hoped for. All of the speakers in the documentary mention our policies and general models of organisation, production and consumption as being fully responsible for the current threats. They’re calling for more consistency between our words and thoughts, and the way we take action. To be clear: if you use a product or a service, you’re supporting the entire system that produces it. For example, it’s impossible to buy cheap cotton clothing without accepting the impact it has, as a whole, when purchasing it: the transport that was required, the use of energy and water resources needed to manufacture it, the exploitation of workers to allow for low prices, the impact of pesticides and fertilisers on the environment and on the

workers’ health, the use of land where the cotton was grown, the chemical dyes used which destroy rivers, etc. Each of us make our own choices, but these choices should be conscious and honest... Consumption is a political act!

To conclude, the Dalai Lama, Samdhong Rimpoché and Sofia Stril-Rever⁹ urge us to really examine the current critical situation. The Homo sapiens species is in danger and, in turn, so is the stability of the Earth system. The problems created by humans cannot miraculously be solved by external forces or technological advances alone. Only a brave sense of awareness in each and every one of us will allow us to face the current challenges... A call for universal responsibility!

9 ECOCIDE documentary: 56’44”



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Citymagine / Empreinte, non-profit organisation

This cooperative board game represents a town which is experiencing various urban issues. The players will travel to a new, more resilient town together. Far from adopting a guilt-inducing or catastrophic approach, this game allows us to get a glimpse of the changes by encouraging debate and reflection. www.empreintes.be/citymagine

The Story of Stuff

Several short video clips (with French subtitles) allowing for discussion on the integrity of our consumer choices. This tool immerses us into the life cycle of products (Story of Stuff + Story of Plastics) and into the shortcomings of consumerism (Story of Cap and Trade) A must-watch for analysis and discussion... www.storyofstuff.org

The Story of aPanty and of Those Who Make It / Stéphanne Prijot

A documentary which retraces the journey of a pair of panties, meeting all of the main players along the way... www.thestoryofapanty.com/fr/

Le jeu de la bobine / created by several organisations

Adapted version of the “string figure” game to make the most of the documentary “The Story of a Panty and of Those Who Make It”. It highlights how cotton fields and consumers are intertwined, with clothing manufacturers and multinationals in between, and doesn’t miss anyone out along the way. These paradigm shifts are taking another direction... www.cncd.be/le-jeu-de-la-bobine

The Fisherman and the Businessman

A must-read, thought-provoking Brazilian parable. Using humour, it illustrates that money is just another tool and that what really matters is elsewhere... Several versions of it can be found online, one of which is told by Paolo Coelho.

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

L’atlas de l’anthropocene / Gemenne and Rankovic

A must-read book to get a better understanding of the current crises, from climate change to loss of biodiversity, as well as overpopulation, urbanisation, pollution, natural disasters, industrial accidents, health crises, social movements, and international summits...

The construction of our servitudes / Roland Gori

This book explains the extent to which we are controlled and details how to come out of this spiral that enslaves individuals and populations for the sake of technical efficiency, happiness generated by algorithms and market globalisation...

Propaganda / Edward Bernays

Freud’s nephew fully stands by the observation: “the conscious manipulation of the masses is an important element in democratic society. The manipulation of this mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power.” This book gives a cynical, candid glimpse of the main principles of manipulation of the masses or “The Engineering of Consent”.

Don’t Even Think About It: / George Marshall

Why are our brains wired to ignore climate change? A book which addresses emotions, the irrational mind and our fundamental values along with some essential keys.

COMICS

La folle histoire de la mondialisation / Bensidoun and Jean

Globalisation sparks passionate debates: we are “for” a wide range of products and low prices, and we are “against” job loss and de-industrialisation, all of which overlap with interdependence and the environment... Since we’re living in a globalised world, we should get a better understanding of it before debating it.

PUBLICATIONS

IPCC Report / IPCC

Regularly updated, this report also comes in the form of a “Summary for Policymakers” which is a four-page, reader-friendly, illustrated version. The 2022 edition, containing observations and solutions, is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.

IPBES Report / IPBES

Regularly updated, operating in a similar way to the IPCC, this expert platform analyses biodiversity and ecosystem services. This report also has a “Summary for Policymakers” which is a reader-friendly, illustrated version. Much like the IPCC report, the 2022 edition containing observations and solutions is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.



TAKE ACTION

Change the system by locally investing in a volunteer network such as:

- ▶ Knowledge exchange network
 - ▶ Transition network
 - ▶ Repair Café
 - ▶ Group buying
- etc.

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

- ▶ Greenpeace
 - ▶ Oxfam
 - ▶ Quinoa
 - ▶ Rencontres des continents
 - ▶ Transparency International
- etc.

COULD AN ECOLOGICAL IMBALANCE LEAD TO IRREVERSIBLE CHANGE?

TOPIC 3

- Earth System
- Physical, biological and chemical destruction
- Planetary boundaries
- Tipping points
- Amplification phenomena
- Change or disappear

Aside from its inner core, planet Earth is made up of 3 outer layers. First, a solid outer part, the lithosphere, which is made up of the Earth's crust. Second, a surface which is made up of liquid water (hydrosphere) and solid water (cryosphere). And third, a layer of gas (the atmosphere) which separates it from space. Living organisms have made their homes here, thus creating the biosphere which encompasses all ecosystems.

Catalysed by these living organisms, all of these components interact, influence each other and generate environments with extremely complex relationships, including chemical transformations and material and energy flows. These interactions have very slowly evolved to their current dynamic equilibrium, and have gone through various natural cycles (such as carbon, nitrogen and phosphorous). The Earth system has remained relatively stable for the last 11,000 years, from the start of the Holocene epoch ending today

at the start of the Anthropocene (this concept is further explored in Topic 2).

The example of soil, detailed in the documentary by Lydia and Claude Bourguignon, as well as by Olivier de Schutter¹, illustrates the complexity of interdependence in these terrestrial habitats. But above all, this example demonstrates the vulnerability of the Earth system and the anthropisation of Nature (further explored in Topic 4). Since the beginning of the Anthropocene, under the cumulative effect of their chemical, physical and biological interactions, humans have affected all variables of the Earth system. The system thus finds itself in an unstable position and is looking for a new equilibrium by integrating the new “anthropic force” and its impacts. But there are two key factors when it comes to a balanced system. First of all, this balance is dependent on the fact that humans have managed to stabilise this “anthropic force”, thereby containing their interactions to a certain degree. Secondly,

the destructive nature of change will depend on the intensity of this force, in other words, how far humans will go before stabilising it.

Mathieu Ricard² talks about planetary boundaries³. The concept of planetary boundaries is an easy-to-use, comprehensive tool. It allows us to gauge the Earth system's limits, what it can withstand before changing, and to assess the maximum thresholds which would cause destabilisation if exceeded. The scientific community has identified 10 of the main interdependent processes which regulate our Earth system and fully influence the presence of life as we know it today, for example, the presence of hominids on its surface. Vandava Shiva⁴ refers to the loss of biodiversity, one of the 10 planetary boundaries, and talks about tipping points. As it stands, out of our 10 planetary boundaries, six thresholds have already been crossed. These thresholds include: 1. Loss of biodiversity (our system

can handle a maximum of 10 species extinctions /year/ million species, but, unfortunately, we have currently already reached 100 species extinctions/year/million - ten times more than the allowed limit); 2. Biogeochemical phosphorus cycle disruption (which has close ties to intensive farming, as previously mentioned by one of the speakers. Every year, we're releasing over twice as much of the maximum allowable threshold per year); 3. Biogeochemical nitrogen cycle disruption (which has close ties to intensive farming, the burning of fossil fuels and industrial activity. Every year, we're emitting over double the maximum allowable annual threshold); 4. Climate change (our current system can handle a CO2 concentration of no more than 350ppm in the atmosphere; in 2020, we were at 412 ppm, an all-time record in the last 3 million years⁵); 5. The anthropisation of soil (our system can handle a change in the use of these soils as long as at least

The solutions within our reach are both varied and complex, but they all have one thing in common: they require a deep and immediate shift in our mindset and culture.

75% of forestland is conserved. As it stands, we only have 62%). 6. The presence of new, unquantified entities in the biosphere, have just been declared as off-limits (among

1 ECOCIDE documentary: 7'49" to 11'25"

2 ECOCIDE documentary: 15'35"

3 See the “EDUCATIONAL TOOLS ...” section

4 ECOCIDE documentary: 22'50"

5 www.nationalgeographic.fr/environnement/2019/04/le-niveau-de-co2-dans-latmosphere-bat-un-record-vieux-de-3-millions-dannees

them, micro-plastics, nanoparticles and, especially, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), which are synthetic chemical substances resulting predominantly from industrial farming, and which pose a major risk worldwide because they're "persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic and, above all, they can travel very long ranges"). The 4 remaining ones are: 7. Ocean acidification (due to increasing CO2 levels in the atmosphere, acidification impacts exoskeleton growth for marine species and jeopardises food chains); 8. The anthropic use of water; 9. Stratospheric ozone; 10. Atmospheric aerosol loading: poses a serious health risk for humans, and aerosols also play a part in climate disruption).

So, shall we change or disappear?

Ilya Prigogine's⁶ work has really contributed to our understanding of these complex systems and their irreversible nature. Since then, discoveries have continued to be made, and the more we learn, the more we're realising how unpredictable certain mechanisms are. By crossing a threshold, we're irreparably drawing closer to breaking point. Even if some tipping points have been identified by the scientific community, the complexity of the Earth system makes the knock-on effects unpredictable. Using methane (CH4) as an example can help us understand

these phenomena which are amplifying each other and creating a kind of domino effect. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas. Its presence contributes to global warming. Since temperatures are rising, this causes part of the permafrost to thaw, a ground which has a temperature that remains below 0°C throughout the year. This thawing means that previously-frozen organic matter (leaves, branches...) will be exposed. This matter will then deteriorate and release methane. This means that the concentration of methane in the atmosphere is rising and exacerbating the global warming phenomenon which, in turn, causes the permafrost to thaw... However, it also exacerbates melting polar

ice which, in turn, disrupts ocean currents that regulate the habitability of our planet... This runaway system is discussed in the documentary by Sofia Stril-Rever⁷, as well as in the sequence of a collapsing tower⁸, or even through the butterfly effect metaphor.

Nowadays, as Vandana Shiva reveals⁹, the Western world is still not seeing the impact of these changes, whereas other humans living in less prosperous parts of the globe are often already having to deal with them. The solutions within our reach are both varied and complex, but they all have

one thing in common: they require a deep and immediate shift in our mindset and culture. Matthieu Ricard¹⁰ poses a difficult dilemma: what will come first: change or disappearance... or something else?

7 ECOCIDE documentary: 56'44"

8 ECOCIDE documentary: 23'25"

9 ECOCIDE documentary: 22'50"

10 ECOCIDE documentary: 15'35"

6 1977 Nobel Prize in Chemistry and numerous other awards



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Comment parler d'effondrement / Symbiose

127, Réseau IDée

Magazine for teachers and educators, special issue containing a wealth of information and tools to have a better understanding of the notion of collapse, and be able to talk about it and consider change. www.symbioses.be/consulteur/127

Les stratégies face aux effondrements

/ Mycellium

An organisation which supports social and environmental movements, they offer free prompt cards to foster debates around strategies to address the collapse. www.mycelium.cc

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

Les émotions du dérèglement climatique /

Massini and Pelissolo

By bringing many recent scientific studies to light, this book gives an overview of well-known mental disorders, as well as a reflection on how to individually and collectively deal with the changes that lie ahead in order to come up with future solutions.

Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed / Jared Diamond

This book examines the way in which societies choose to disappear or survive. It looks back at all of these extinct societies, such as Easter Island and the Vikings in Greenland, and identifies 5 factors to consider... Do we have a few of them in common?

Et si... le monde d'après ne ressemblait pas au monde d'avant / Various

60 intellectuals and artists come together to reinvent the world of tomorrow through drawings, fictional stories and concrete solutions.

COMICS

Sous terre / Mathieu Burniat (and Marc-André Sélosse)

This comic is an ode to understanding the concepts of living soil and interdependence. Definitely a book to devour!

L'âge d'eau / Benjamin Flao

A superb comic which anticipates some very current concerns... the water has risen and it will not be subsiding. People living on islands are surviving and having to deal with an authoritarian power that would like to maintain the sugar-coated world of yesterday by remaining in denial.

Saison brune / Philippe Squarzoni

Black-and-white comic which examines the future of our planet. In this scientifically well documented book, the author navigates between climate change and tipping points. It won a French Academy award in 2012.

MORE ON PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

Les limites planétaires, un socle pour repenser nos modèles de société / CERDD

(Sustainable Development Research Centre)

A highly educational, reader-friendly file to get to grips with this concept and discuss courses of action. Available as a free download on www.cerdd.org

Dominique Bourg (Faculty of Geosciences and Environment - Lausanne, Switzerland)

examines the planetary boundaries in two short clips:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCTJQ6JOD-A

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X28JwYwfl0c

PUBLICATIONS

IPCC Report / IPCC

Regularly updated, this report also comes in the form of a "Summary for Policymakers" which is a four-page, reader-friendly, illustrated version. The 2022 edition containing observations and solutions, is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.

IPBES Report / IPBES

Regularly updated, operating in a similar way to the IPCC, this expert platform analyses biodiversity and ecosystem services. This report also has a "Summary for Policymakers" which is a reader-friendly, illustrated version. Much like the IPCC report, the 2022 edition containing observations and solutions is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.

The Living Planet Report / WWF

Updated every two years, it provides an accurate overview of the state and evolution of the world's biodiversity. Its latest edition indicated that wildlife populations had plummeted by 68% since 1970! A must-read to stay up-to-date with the latest figures and understand future implications.



TAKE ACTION

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

- Extinction Rebellion
 - End Ecocide
 - Stop Ecocide
 - Greenpeace
- etc.

(...) verbs
are no longer
conjugated in the
future but in the
present.

Pablo Servigne
in *How Everything Can
Collapse*

WHICH FAMILY DO HUMANS THINK THEY BELONG TO?



TOPIC 4

- Hominid species
- Cartesian dualism Nature - Mind
- Domination and Exploitation
- Anthropocentrism
- Place of humans
- Interdependence
- Planetary family

Calling all members of the human community!

Our council of all Beings, made up of all living and mineral things, is coming together once again. We have noticed, within your human species, the willingness from a small, but nevertheless largely dominant group, to try to circumvent the conditions of its true nature. It is high time we reacted and helped you improve your judgement. You're busy dragging the Earth system towards both irreversible and unpredictable changes. You are, therefore, in danger of extinction and are dragging some of us into your vicious spiral. On the other hand, even if some of you want to remain in denial, the most vulnerable (amongst humans and non-humans) have already gone into survival mode. We therefore hope to reverse your evolution process, and remind you of the unbreakable bonds that unite us and influence life on our planet.

Today, Homo sapiens don't question the fact that they're the

only human species populating the Earth. But would you find sharing the space with other hominid species conceivable? This question must seem deeply contradictory, at least for those who belong to the dominant monotheistic, creationist culture which believes in only one human line of descent, that of Adam and Eve... And yet, only 20,000 or 30,000 years ago, Homo sapiens coexisted with other human species, among them, the Neanderthals, Denisovans, Flores pygmies and Homo luzonensis. All of these other human species are now extinct.

Your perception of yourselves, humans, compared to others - other non-humans - has gradually evolved. In the documentary you made, Vandana Shiva¹ talks about how you have prioritised things in your mind. In a selfishly anthropocentric way, you unsuccessfully established orders and categories where everything had to be formally split from "I, the human". We can see how the premise of Greek philosophy has strongly influenced

1 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°15'24"

We find that we non-humans are no longer the source of your values.

your culture. But its development dates back to successive scientific breakthroughs from Galileo, Newton and Descartes onwards. Since then, we have no longer been viewed as Gaia, a super-organism of which you are a part, instead, we have become something which seeks to unravel mysteries and explain how they work by cutting them into increasingly smaller pieces in order to try to assert control or, as Descartes says, make ourselves "masters and possessors of nature."²

This is where you introduced the disparaging concept of Nature, non-humans, the other, that "thing" that we can control without owing it anything in return. Satish Kumar³ points out that this dualism, this vain attempt at a Cartesian separation of mind and nature, is part of the root cause of what you refer to as "YOUR environmental crisis", and what we refer to as the anthropisation of our Earth system, or the change to our living environment caused by your human activities (this idea is actually explored further in Topic 3). The first human interactions that affected us date back to the period known as the Palaeolithic, during which we saw a significant growth in the number of hominids along with the mass extinction of megafauna⁴. Back then, at the time of your mass settlement during the Neolithic period, you became your own food producers by intensifying farming and livestock breeding. But in the end, it is only with the recent advent of global trade that your

degradation excessively increased, right after your intra-species Second World War. This destruction now affects all of the Earth system's critical areas and has forced us to enter a complicated period where we're trying to find some sort of balance with species that will manage to readapt.

Sofia Stril-Rever⁵ also tries to explain that this dualistic split leads to your loss. That through your materialistic civilisation "which started in the West, then became global", you first tried to domesticate us. And now, blinded by your thirst for financial gain, you're even trying to dominate each other by exploiting each other, without realising that one part of your species is becoming enslaved to the other. We find that we non-humans are no longer the source of your values. Now you want to unilaterally impose your own values, based solely on the interests of your animal species (and last survivor of the genus), by

2 René Descartes in Discourse on Method, 1637

3 ECOCIDE documentary: 49'57"

4 Animal kingdom with an adult body weight of over 44 kg.

5 ECOCIDE documentary: 59'27"

enforcing the law of the strongest. But are you still aware of your place within our planetary family?

What do we say to the family?

Let's put the evolution of your Homo species genus into context. Matthieu Ricard⁶ reminds us of the importance of being aware of our interdependence with everything within the Earth system. He chooses the metaphor of a rainbow to (re)-explain that something can only exist thanks to its coexistence with many other things. For example, the presence of hominids was not at all necessary on Earth. It is purely the result of a complex coexistence; break this interdependence and you'll disappear like the rainbow. In order to properly grasp this notion, we invite you to examine your envelope of flesh. It is the result of several tens of thousands of billions of cells working together, each of which, in turn, were made up of many micro-organisms that are completely interdependent from your human species, like those that make up the essential "microbiota" of your intestines. These countless lives living in symbiosis make you a full-blown, multi-species colony. The existence of the Homo sapiens species, like those of all our other multi-cellular companions, is therefore purely conditional on the coemergence and coexistence of these intercellular bonds.

Your very concept of Nature is dismissive. Nature doesn't exist, you're not dissociated from it... You are Nature! Satish Kumar also tries to get that message across: "Nature and humans are not separate entities, we are not above Nature. We are Nature. And to say that we are Nature means that whatever we're doing to it out there, we're doing to ourselves".

He calls for us to start a revolution on the unity of life rather than a vain attempt at separation, but also to take care of each other because it's the only way of taking care of yourself as well. In the same vein and also in your documentary, Timothy Weekers⁷ asks you to completely shift your opinion to the concept of us as a whole and to see ourselves "not as a commodity we call upon whether we want to or not, but as an essential ally to our survival".

Some of you have recently looked for family ties with the living that have been built through what unites us rather than what divides us. For the first time, there's a fantastically interwoven system without hierarchies, without supremacy, but instead an immensely complex connection with each and every one of us and, at the root of this sprawling "phylogenetic network"⁸, the last universal common organism from which we all descend (which you've nicknamed LUCA).

Vandava Shiva⁹ actually reminds us that in all of your ancestral traditions, Nature is considered to be alive. She adds that your species is just one of many members of our enormous "planetary family", just like all the others. And as a member of this family, just as you do in your households, you have the duty to look after all of us.

Your very concept of Nature is dismissive. You're not dissociated from it... You are Nature!

It is clear that some of you have preserved or rediscovered Wisdom, which we also call "the awareness of our interdependence". The message from Claudine André¹⁰ could serve as a conclusion: "Everything is connected on Earth. When you set foot in one fight, you enter all the other fights". All of us are members of one big planetary family. So, instead of asking you what type of planet you want to leave for your children, it is time to ask what type of children you would like to leave for our planet...



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

[in]égalités mondiales

Teaching pack coordinated by the CNCD; 19 educational tools designed by around 15 associations to dismantle the mechanisms that create or reinforce global inequality with teenagers (aged 15+). The CNCD also offers different activities. www.cncd.be

Tous reliés, interdépendants / *Symbiose 133, Réseau IDée*

Magazine for teachers and educators, special issue containing a wealth of information and tools to have a better understanding of interdependence. Living beings are never alone, it's all about relationships. Available as a free download on www.symbioses.be/consulter/133

Renouer avec le vivant / *Special issue from Socialter magazine*

Is reconnecting with "nature" a matter of urgency? It is hard not to fall into the several traps of this somewhat naive idealisation experienced by a human race of city dwellers. And what if it were, in actual fact, time to do away with Nature in order to finally reconnect with... the Living?

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

Défaite des maîtres et possesseurs / *Vincent Message*

This book is a brilliant fable with Kafkaesque overtones. It is our world, more or less, but we're no longer the masters and possessors of nature. Newcomers let us know our fate that was previously reserved for animals.

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind / *Yuval Noah Harari*

This best-seller that's half historic, half philosophical gives us an overview of the last 7 million years of humanity which has seen the emergence of a dominant, overpowering, authoritarian species.

Earth is a living organism. The Gaia Hypothesis / *James Lovelock*

Even though it was published in 1989, it is still a beautiful approach to the interdependence of living systems on Earth forming a "whole", much like a self-regulating "organism".

COMICS

Sapiens / *illustrated by Daniel Casanave and written by Yuval Noah Harari and David Vandermeulen*

The comic version, in two volumes, has also enjoyed great success.



TAKE ACTION

Would you like to set your human concerns to the side and go into the Council of All Beings where the ancestral wisdom of all of these beings that came before us is expressed? This ritual comes from "Work that Reconnects". There are local associations in most countries and here are a few others:

- **Terr'Eveille non-profit organisation (BE)**
- **Events calendar (FR/BE/CH)**

www.ateliersdetravailquirelie.sitew.fr

Become a member or be part of the association

- **Planète-Vie**

The main aim of Planète-Vie is to rediscover the meaning of the relationship between animals, man and life in their natural and artificial environments. It mainly focuses on the interdependence of the living world. It seeks to raise awareness individually and collectively.

www.planetevie.be

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them that cover this topic:

- **Natagora**
- **Natura 2000**
- **WWF**
- **Extinction Rebellion**
- **End Ecocide**
- **Stop Ecocide**

6 ECOCIDE documentary: 1'03'28"

7 ECOCIDE documentary: 32'15"

8 Phylogenetic tree: see p.35

9 ECOCIDE documentary: 44'55"

10 ECOCIDE documentary: 25'08"

AFTER OUR TEENAGE REBELLION, DOES THE HOPE OF HARMONY FOLLOW?

TOPIC 5

- Pathological adolescence
- Westernisation
- Interdependence
- Our relationship with time
- Transhumanism
- Coexistence
- Developing consciousness
- Holistic revolution

In the documentary *Ecocide*, Monica Gagliano's¹ message is one of strong hope. She compares our civilisation's relationship with Earth to the different stages of development of a human being. For her, in human life, just like in our relationship with Earth, we go through different stages, going from being dependent children, to frantically searching for independence, which teenagers dream about, and then, finally reaching an awareness of interdependence, which is what adults should experience.

It sounds like an attractive proposal! Let's try to understand how our culture was able to perceive its relationship with the rest of Nature and compare it to the three stages of development that she suggested. The childhood period coincides with the appearance of the *Homo sapiens* species. Prevailing history tells us that at that moment, we were totally dependent on Nature and had no form of defence or protection. The human race struggled desperately

with its environment. It gradually built the necessary foundations in its quest for independence, by developing tools and protections and by learning how to produce food itself. The evolution of science and thought, which has significantly accelerated since the 17th century, represents the beginning of our adolescence and of our spirited race towards independence. Western societies have tried to unlock Nature's mysteries and master its laws, in order to become more independent. The Cartesian mindset creates a deeply anthropocentric culture by establishing a fundamental separation between the human species and the rest of Nature (this concept is explored further in Topics 4 and 6). As Sofia Stril-Rever² points out, this intellectual separation leads humans, on the one hand, to have a thirst for dominating Nature over time, but on the other hand, it pushes humans into a spiral of domination and exploitation of themselves. It is no coincidence that most societies and traditions that have cherished

1 *ECOCIDE* documentary: 52'57"

2 *ECOCIDE* documentary: 59'27'

Our race for independence forces us to stay in a state of pathological adolescence

and preserved this culture of Nature have been wiped out or culturally disrupted over the course of the past millennia. Western societies, blinded by values solely focused on their own interests and obsessed with the conviction of their "civilising" missions, have fought or transformed them, by hook or by crook, because they also presented a threat. As noted by Sofia Stril-Rever, Western societies have progressively westernised other cultures and imposed their own values that are deeply disconnected from Nature, dragging us,

in spite of ourselves, down a deep dark hole...

Today, the entire human race is in turmoil. In the face of shifts in the Earth system (a concept explored further in Topic 3), we are confronted with the reality: It is totally impossible to be independent from the system in which we live, whether from the rest of society or from the whole biosphere.

So, are we changing?

Isn't our quest for independence really just a pipe dream that's forcing us to stay, like sleepwalkers, in this pathological state of adolescence?

In any case, Monica Gagliano is detecting a positive sign in the critical and liminal phase we're going through: What if this period was our passage from adolescence into adulthood, which has now become quite simply morbid? The rite of passage is about re-learning

how to take care: Take care of our environment, take care of others and, of course, of ourselves. To do this, Monica Gagliano³ first invites us to "observe what bothers us rather than to bother what we're observing". Take the time to stop, listen and observe... Without a doubt, this approach confronts the society we currently live in. This fundamentally calls into question our relationship with time and the culture of immediacy which is being felt at global and digital level. Our digital relationship is further explored in Topic 9. To observe the living is to observe its entire cycle... this will also give rise to another characteristic of our adolescence: our fear of death, a taboo subject. For the moment we would rather take refuge in our quest for immortality by naively diving into transhumanism.

Let's move on to the next phase, to the "materialistic civilisation" of adulthood. For Sofia Stril-Rever, Nature should no longer be seen as this common resource deposit to

3 *ECOCIDE* documentary: 34'25"

We should call our culture of immediacy into question.

be exploited but as a unique oasis of life where a sacred process (which deserves some sacrifice) is at work. Throughout this rite of passage, we gradually regain awareness of that which binds us, rather than seeing what divides us. Fritjof Capra, a physicist specialising in

the theory of systems, demonstrates that “the major issues of our time (overpopulation, poverty, pollution, decreasing biodiversity, conflict, etc.) cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems which means that they are all interdependent. This common ground of hardship seems to stem from our fragmented perception of ourselves and the world. Ultimately, all of these problems should be viewed as different facets of the same crisis – which is, primarily, a crisis of perception.” In the documentary, Toni Frohoff⁴ explains that it is also becoming just as important to learn to coexist within our very own species as it is to learn to coexist

with other species. Our survival partially depends on this learning process. This requires us to reinvent our democracies, rebuild our institutions for them to be partners with the Earth system, educate our children and teenagers about harmony with Nature, strengthen their sense of wonder and collaborative spirit. In fact, there’s nothing dramatic about being interdependent. Perhaps this is the right time to move away from the question “what type of planet will we leave for our children?” and move towards “what type of children will we leave for our planet?”

Let's not forget that a passage represents a phase in itself. That's

why, for Monica Gagliano, we are simultaneously witnessing “the outburst of the teenager’s destructive behaviour” and new creative forces emerging. This passage takes us towards adulthood, the age of wisdom, in other words, an awareness of interdependence. As for defining the change needed to reach adulthood, we could borrow the term “holistic revolution” used by the Dalai Lama in the documentary. But most striking thing is the fact that all of the speakers have put their own spin on it: for our civilisation, becoming an adult and becoming aware of interdependence marks a great leap forward. As Gus Speth⁵ says, “I used to think the top environmental problems

were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy. and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And we scientists don’t know how to do that.” This transformation is our biggest, most immediate challenge...

4 ECOCIDE documentary: 24’30”

5 James Gustave Speth, environmental law expert, 13th February 2015



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

- Tous reliés, interdépendants** / *Symbiose 133, Réseau IDée*
Magazine for teachers and educators, special issue containing a wealth of information and tools to have a better understanding of interdependence. Living beings are never alone, it's all about relationships. Available as a free download on www.symbioses.be/consulter/133
- Petite histoire commentée du rapport de l’Homme à la nature** / *FI EW (Inter-environmental Wallonia Federation)*
Document looking into the ways in which we interact with the rest of the living world. The “dynamic spiral” reviews the different stages of evolution of the world and human beings throughout civilisations. Available as a free download on www.iew.be

EVENTS

- Several environmental initiation centres offer great quality events, training courses and workshops. Have a look to find one near you!
- Réseau IDÉE (Belgium)**
- Réseau FRENE (FRENE Network)**
- GRAINES local networks (France)**
are key players that focus on environmental education and gather educational tools and offers.

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

- Ways of Being Alive** / *Baptiste Morizot*
A great read. This book is about getting reacquainted by approaching the Earth's inhabitants, including humans, as ten million different ways of being alive. In this ode to interdependence, he comes up with solutions...
- La fabrique des pandémies** / *M-M Robin*
An essay about the many links between biodiversity and our health. The long list of emerging diseases ranging from Ebola to COVID-19 points to overwhelming evidence: the primary cause of these epidemics is the destruction of ecosystems. And the clear conclusion? The only antidote is to address our relationship with living things.
- Nature and the Human Soul** / *Bill Plotkin*
Superb book which describes in wonderful detail the different stages of human development from the perspective of an ecocentric society.
- The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems** / *Fritjof Capra*
Taking an eminently systemic approach to our problems, he connects the dots between interdependence and the coexisting living being.
- Mutual Aid: the Other Law of Ari the Jungle** / *Gauthier Chapelle and Pablo Servigne*
The authors show how rich collaborative relationships can be and demonstrate how mutual aid is an integral pillar of evolution.

COMICS

- Le droit du sol** / *Étienne Davodeau*
This graphic novel is a wonderful examination of our relationship with soil, all along a hiking path that takes in everything from cave paintings to radioactive waste.

PUBLICATIONS

- IPBES Report** / *IPBES*
Regularly updated, operating in a similar way to the IPCC, this expert platform analyses biodiversity and ecosystem services. This report also has a “Summary for Policymakers” which is a reader-friendly, illustrated version. Much like the IPCC report, the 2022 edition containing observations and solutions is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.
- The Living Planet Report** / *WWF*
Updated annually, it provides an accurate overview of the state and evolution of the world’s biodiversity. A must-read to stay up-to-date with the latest figures and understand future implications.



TAKE ACTION

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

- ▶ **Jane Goodall Institute**
- ▶ **Roots and Shoots**
- ▶ **Natagora**
- ▶ **WWF**
- ▶ **Greenpeace**

The following networks post job offers and volunteering positions. Go visit them now!

- ▶ **Réseau IDÉE (Belgium)**
- ▶ **Réseau FRENE (France)**
- ▶ **Réseaux locaux GRAINES (France)**

I FEEL, THEREFORE I AM? EVOLUTION OF NEW IDEAS, FROM DESCARTES TO THE PRESENT DAY



Jellyfish

TOPIC 6

- Cartesian approach
- Animal machine theory
- Evolution of thought and science
- Anthropocentrism and other points of view
- Shared fundamental interests
- Human ethics
- Sentient beings

In the documentary, Peter Singer¹ reveals that nowadays “modern science’s point of view is... that many non-human animals have consciousness.” And Jonathan Balcombe² expands on this by noting that human beings’ perception of the animal world also greatly varies from one culture to another. He refers to several Eastern traditions, among them, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, which include animals in the cycles of reincarnation. While they are sacred to these cultures, animals are simply viewed as food in Western culture. To understand how philosophical and scientific thought has evolved in the Western world, let’s go back in time.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) is one of the first to take on a naturalist and unified approach. He felt that all living beings possessed a soul. In his text *History of Animals*³, he actually distinguishes 3 types of souls: “nutritive” for plants, “sensible” for the animal kingdom, and “rational” specifically for

Humans. A very special being capable of performing impressive feats, and yet just a simple animal

humans. Representations have evolved, but it was the 16th and 17th centuries that saw a major turning point. Scientists had increasingly powerful instruments that could allow them to develop their observations of life. There was a slew of discoveries and revolutions, from Copernicus (1473-1543) to Galileo (1564-1642) to Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes introduced a major concept which would guide thinking for several centuries. Cartesian dualism differentiates between two core substances: the mind and body.

1 ECOCIDE documentary: 45’39”

2 ECOCIDE documentary: 42’27”

3 Aristotle, *History of Animals*, around 10 volumes 350 BC

What we used to think was specific to humanity can now be highlighted in animal nature

The mind, which is indivisible, is the seat of thought, while the body is “governed by the laws of mechanics”. Descartes establishes a clear separation between humans and other animals. Humans are the only ones with a mind, allowing them to access thought and language and they possess a soul and reason, whereas animals don’t: they don’t have thoughts, they have a reflex action, like a sophisticated machine. It is this animal machine that Peter Singer refers to in the documentary. The famous “I think, therefore I am” gives humans

a status that’s “closer to God than animals”. In his *Discourse on the Method*⁴ of Rightly Conducting one’s Reason and of Seeking the Truth, Descartes encourages his contemporaries to develop their scientific knowledge and make themselves “masters and possessors of nature... in order to the invention of an infinity of arts, by which we might be enabled to enjoy without any trouble the fruits of the earth, and all its comforts, but also and especially for the preservation of health”.

From that point on, as Sofia Stril-Rever⁵ highlights, this mechanist movement would seep into Western culture. Even if this animal-machine theory was consequently widely criticised, its evolution can be followed through 3 scientific disciplines. Firstly, since the 18th century, several scholars, including Galvani and Bell, have been investigating the cause of this reflex behaviour. They would soon discover the phenomena of electrical brain stimulation.

Physiology was born, and it would evolve with countless scientific works (including Ivan Pavlov and his famous conditioned reflex) that would lead to the current world of neuroscience. Secondly, animal behaviour (and its evolution) is studied through the lens of the environment of the animal. The wave of behaviourists interpreted behaviour as, essentially, being conditioned either by reflexes or interactions with one’s environment through reward and punishment. This approach would contribute to the emergence and evolution of psychology movements. Thirdly, in line with Darwin (1809-1882) and Buffon (1707-1788), naturalists would benchmark themselves against behaviourists and study the behaviour of animals within their own environments. With pioneers such as Konrad Lorenz⁶, this movement continued to develop in the 20th century and became ethology, the study of the behaviour and habits of animals within their environment. It has now become widespread and Jane

4 René Descartes in 1637

5 ECOCIDE documentary: 59’27”

6 Nobel Prize in Physiology / Medicine in 1973, died in 1989

Goodall and the great Frans de Waal⁷, who make several appearances throughout the documentary, should get a mention for their remarkable work.

I feel, therefore, am I?

Post-Cartesian constructions have, therefore, been chipped away by all of the other disciplines and their discoveries. Current science shows that what we used to think was specific to humanity can now be highlighted in animal nature (for example, self-awareness, tool production, symbolic thought, communication, mutual aid, societal culture...). In the documentary, Toni Frohoff⁸ refers to, for example, complex cultures among cetaceans, with their highly-sophisticated communication methods, emotions and traditions. In fact, in 2012, the Cambridge Declaration (which came after a series of conferences on animal consciousness) concluded that animals other than humans have a consciousness akin to those of human animals. Animals have now joined the ranks of sentient beings, meaning they are sensitive, intelligent and conscious living beings.

And yet, Corine Pelluchon⁹ still uses the present tense to categorise “the culture of death” we have with animals. She encourages us to deeply rethink our relationship with others for a “new humanism”. This reawakening is also addressed in the documentary by Matthieu Ricard who quotes Lamartine¹⁰: “We don’t have two hearts, one for animals and one for humans. We either have a heart or we don’t.” Jonathan Balcombe¹¹ also reminds us that we share three of the same fundamental interests with other animals: we’re all looking to

minimise pain, maximise pleasure and avoid death. Today, these several realisations force us to face the very essence of our human ethics. Who should the beneficiaries of our morals be? To determine them, four positions consider these different stages of the living world: Anthropocentrism, still deeply embedded in our Western cultures, which only takes humans into account; pathocentrism, which extends its circle to animals that are able to feel pain, zoocentrism, which includes the animal world; biocentrism (or ecocentrism), finally, takes the entirety of the Earth system into account...

As well as the legal side which is explored further in Topic 8, Corine Pelluchon¹² brings us back to the question: Does “experiencing in the first person” make a difference? This seemingly simple question provokes a deep paradox: this sentience, the capacity to subjectively experience things, to feel pain, emotions and be aware of them... is the very concept that was used in the 17th century to distinguish a human’s capacity from that of an animal’s. Perhaps, in the end, we are neither the same nor different... both a very special being capable of performing impressive feats, and yet just a simple animal like the others?

⁷ Professor at Emory University (Atlanta, USA) and Director of the Living Links Center

⁸ ECOCIDE documentary: 36’17’’

⁹ ECOCIDE documentary: 06’32’’

¹⁰ Alphonse de Lamartine, 1790-1869

¹¹ ECOCIDE documentary: 42’27’’

¹² ECOCIDE documentary: 46’23’’



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Esprit critique / *Canopé, Scérén*

An educational kit to develop students’ critical thinking. Tools and methods using 20 very detailed, turnkey training sessions about cross-cutting issues (analyse, check, debate, reason, challenge...).

Etre ou ne pas être le nombril du monde / *INFOR’IDée 3/2021*

Réseau IDée : There are no lack of words to describe our overwhelming power. There’s us and then there’s everyone else. We wholeheartedly throw ourselves into anthropocentrism. It’s reassuring. But the cracks are starting to appear... www.reseau-idee.be/sites/default/files/InforIDee/Infor-3-2021.pdf

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

Un Tanguy chez les hyènes / *François Verheggen*

This book takes us away from our anthropocentric vision. With thirty ethological stories packed with anecdotes, it explores animal behaviour and points out its close ties with human behaviour... In the end, are we really that different?

Disobey for the sake of animals / *Les désobéissants” collection*

The exploitation of animals has not always been as harsh as it is today, even though everything points to the fact that they are essential to the balance of ecosystems and sentient beings. This 62-page booklet provides data to improve understanding, arguments to discuss, and practical advice to oppose these ideas.

You Shall Know Them / *Vercors*

This novel plunges us into the search for the missing link. Extraordinary satire at the crossroads of humanity and justice which raises the serious question around what we “human beings” have become: are we just unnatural animals?



TAKE ACTION

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

- ▶ **French League for the Protection of Birds**
- ▶ **WWF**
- ▶ **Gaia Association**
- ▶ **L214**
- ▶ **Wolf Eyes**
- ▶ **Végétik**
- ▶ **Friends of Bonobos (ABC)**

ARE WE FREE TO CHANGE THE PARADIGM OR ARE WE SLAVES TO THE SYSTEM?

Buttress roots | tropical forest, Wooroonooran National Park - North Queensland (Australia)

TOPIC 7

- Culture
- Conformity and submission
- Competition
- Educational system
- Collaboration and mutual aid
- Ecocentric views
- Regenerative economy
- Paradigm shift

In the documentary, Samdhong Rinpoché¹ gives us a picture of the dominant models in our societies, essentially based on economic growth. Before going any further, let's try to determine the way in which a group of individuals creates their business model. In order to establish yourself and survive, all types of groups or organisations need a solid common culture to allow its participants to integrate into it (or conform to it), but also to maintain this group and make it prosper. Here the notion of culture within a group encompasses everything that is socially transmitted and that comes from acquisition. It therefore revolves around all of the acquired knowledge transmitted either through experimentation, belief or reflection. We therefore need to exclude species-specific innate and genetic heritage to which the individual belongs. On the other hand, it is not stuck in time because it evolves with the group which nourishes it through exchange and discovery. But if we look at it on a short-term timescale,

it represents a kind of common mental programming that binds individuals in a group together. Currently, as Samdhong Rinpoché highlights, a large portion of our culture relies on competition. This competitive culture is fiercely "cultivated" across every area of our society such as sport, scientific research, the technology race, weapons, entertainment, art, competitiveness in our business world and educational systems. The challenge isn't to allow ourselves to advance our talents but to push some people to be better than others.

Brainwashing

Satish Kumar² points out the irony by saying that "most of our problems are created by people who have graduated from the top universities." He denounces how

we brainwash our children during their formative years, during their 15 years of education, to become key players in our system. Satish Kumar implies that our thoughts are not freely constructed but that they are actually created, without our knowledge, by the collective psyche. In the 1950s, socio-psychological experiments were already being carried out by Solomon Asch. He observed the power of conformism on the decisions of an individual within a group. These experiments demonstrated that, faced with a situation with no grey areas, over a third of participants under observation preferred to give an answer which they knew full well was wrong and contradicted reality rather than be the only dissident or opposing voice in the group. To refine his observations, Asch introduced an accomplice in the group who gave the right answers, unlike the rest of the group. In those cases, when there was no unanimity within the group, the results showed that there was a very significant decrease in conformity (only 5%).

The individual reasserted his free will and expressed different points of view. On the other hand, if this accomplice was removed, the participant would once again find himself alone to face the group and conformity would come back in a similar way. Since then, these experiments have been repeated several times around the world and have confirmed the findings.

Our thoughts are are unwittingly modelled on the collective imagination

Stanley Milgram carried out another experiment in the 1960s to try to measure the level of obedience to an authority figure who completely went against their personal conscience. The results

were frightening, with two thirds of participants opting to torture someone rather than disobey an authority figure asking them to do it. Another interesting observation was that the participants didn't take responsibility for their actions and claimed they were following orders from their superiors (in other words, "I'm just doing my job"). Over the years, these experiments were also repeated many times around the world and they showed a growing submission to authority (80%) in spite of our moral conscience and the impact of our actions. In the same vein, in 2010, a (fake) reality show "The Game of Death" carried out a similar experiment, but replaced a scientific authority figure with a TV presenter. The results were staggering, with 81% following orders to carry out torture. While these experiences demonstrate both the conformism and submissiveness of an individual, they also show how peer pressure can reaffirm those beliefs. The concepts of disobedience and peer pressure are further explored in Topic 10.

1 ECOCIDE documentary: 57'30"

2 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°05'05"



Greta Thunberg 2019

So, how do we change?

One question comes up: With the existential challenges humanity is facing, how can we freely call our founding cultures, collective imagination and business models into question? To help us prepare for this massive task, the Dalai Lama³ uses short-sightedness as a metaphor in the documentary. He uses it to explain that our perception of reality is crippled by our egocentric emotions. These types of emotions reduce our vision to the very short term and distance us from what truly matters. When we have to deal with an issue, he asks that, every time, we take several steps back and observe it from various angles in order to systematically get a full overview of the situation. To follow on this same thought process, Satish Kumar⁴ suggests trying to read reality by changing a single letter and going from ego to eco. What would we observe in the operating systems of the living if, rather than starting from “I” which separates us from the rest of Nature, we looked at it through an eco lens, “oikos” meaning “nature” and “home” in Greek? What if, rather than being anthropocentric, our perspective

on reality became ecocentric (also known as biocentric)?

Our perception of reality is crippled by our egocentric emotions

The collective imagination based on the “survival of the fittest” adage has been largely responsible for competition culture. However, it was a distorted, and therefore reductive view of what’s going on in the living world. In their book, *Mutual Aid: The Other Law of the Jungle*, Gauthier Chapelle and Pablo Servigne extensively document what scientists agree on today: A careful look at the spectrum of living beings - from bacteria in human societies to plants and animals - reveals that mutual aid is not only everywhere, but it has been present since the dawn of time. It’s simple: all living beings are involved in mutual aid relationships. All of them. Mutual aid isn’t a simple news item, it is a principle of life. It is even an

evolutionary mechanism for living beings: organisms that have the best survival rate in harsh conditions aren’t the strongest, they are those that can cooperate⁵. They explain that it is not about denying that competition exists in nature but that most animals and organisms minimise it because they have far too much to lose since it is exhausting and dangerous. All of these socio-psychological experiments show that “competition in its extreme form doesn’t encourage bonding, instead, it often pushes others to cheat and turn away from the common good. It often creates several losers for the sake of a few winners... On this topic, Matthieu Ricard⁶ and Olivier de Schutter⁷ show that inequality is becoming increasingly blatant and exacerbated, in spite of the abundance of goods produced and consumed in our materialistic societies. It is “poverty in the midst of abundance”.

The speakers in the documentary are well aware that a simple wave of the wand won’t solve our current challenges. They’re encouraging us to make further changes and, to shed some light, they suggest what they consider to be key markers. The Dalai Lama³ advocates for an educational system that centres around what the human soul is

looking for, peace and happiness. Further explored in Topic 9, these new educational principles are based on compassion and emotional hygiene, in other words, the ability to identify, understand, use, express and live peacefully with your own emotions as well as those of others. Samdhong Rinpoché (as per footnote 1 previous page) talks about a system based on a culture of cooperation, which also takes into account different types of intelligence in a group and favours mutual aid. Monica Gagliano⁸ and Sofia Stril-Rever⁹ have added the need for free will in our education in order to become conscious, responsible citizens... There are several alternative approaches and processes that can revolutionise our current governance models. Several of them, like sociocracy, are based on practices like sitting in circles and horizontality, as used by many indigenous peoples. All of the individuals present are involved in the discussions and decision-making. In the same way, we can see what brings us closer together. Thus, sociocracy offers a system where objections can be overcome (therefore, getting everyone’s input) by collaboratively building something rather than imposing a restrictive view of for or against.

In the documentary, several speakers¹⁰ express that changing our economic models has become an urgent matter! In the same vein, we can start from a basic principle: the new types of economics should not simply settle on decreasing pollution and destruction but should aim to stop all aggression

“The top environmental issues are selfishness, greed and apathy.”¹²

against the biosphere and, more importantly, to start repairing the damage. This principle is found, for example, in the regenerative economy model, further discussed by Guibert Del Marmol¹¹. He suggests that we hold back on mining and quarrying activities and turn towards regeneration, that we abandon competition for cooperation, that we think about the collective well-being rather than the individual one, all inspired by the operating systems of other

species. Because it is clear that nowadays, (which has not always been the case), we are the only living species producing waste that is not a source of raw material or energy for another species.

To conclude this train of thought, we can note that all of the speakers in the documentary agree with this warning. “The top environmental problems are no longer biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation”¹². This transformation is the biggest, most immediate crisis... but also the most incredible opportunity.



3 ECOCIDE documentary: 1’05’47”

4 ECOCIDE documentary: 17’13”

5 Book by Gauthier Chapelle and Pablo Servigne, “Mutual Aid: The Other Law of the Jungle”

6 ECOCIDE documentary: 15’35”

7 ECOCIDE documentary: 18’52”

8 ECOCIDE documentary: 22’22”

9 ECOCIDE documentary: 56’44”

10 Olivier de Schutter, Samdhong Rinpoché and Satish Kumar

11 <https://guibertdelmarmol.com/>

12 James Gustave Speth, 13/02/2015, environmental law expert



GIVE IT A GO

👉 **Le jeu de la ficelle** / *Quinoa and Rencontre des continents*

Group game which gives us the opportunity to take a more systemic approach to our consumption choices. Paradigm shifts are seen through the filter of our interdependence... Feel free to give it a go and don't hold back! www.jeudelaficelle.net

👉 **Ogrenco** / *CPCP (Permanent Citizenship and Participation Centre)*

A cooperation game about food waste and our natural resources. Informative, useful and fun! www.reseau-idee.be/fr/ogrenco

📖 **Coopérons !** / *Symbiose 115, Réseau IDée*

Magazine for teachers and educators, special issue containing a wealth of knowledge and tools to have a better understanding of the notion of cooperation.

Download on <https://symbioses.be/consulter/115>

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY VIDEOS

📺 **Le jeu de la mort** / *France 2 documentary - 2010, 1h30*

Emotions and questions revolving around submission to authority figures. Be warned, after viewing, a lively debate is likely to ensue.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4vL89T4ep

📺 **Obedience to Authority** / *Stanley Milgram - 1960, 7'*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ultMPCxZV4

📺 **Asch Conformity Experiment** / *Solomon Asch - 1951, 4'*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AyM2PH3_Qk

📺 **Conformity Waiting Room** / *Brain Games, National Geographic - 2017, 5'*

This short clip gives an updated version of Asch's experiment. It's easy to watch and it raises some brilliant questions...

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV5r_z-6uOw

📺 **La fabrique des imposteurs** / *Roland Gori - 2014, 1h40'*

A very accessible conference detailing how our society's norms create imposters. A wonderful critique which gives you food for thought...

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FEtiA18IZU

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

📖 **Enseignant trappeur, pourquoi pas !** / *Philippe Nicolas*

The author invites us to rekindle an enthusiasm for school through multisensory learning.

📖 **Think Like a Commoner. A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons** / *David Bollier*

This essay shines a light on the different barriers that surround us and presents alternatives.

📖 **Mutual Aid: The Other Law of the Jungle** / *Gauthier Chapelle and Pablo Servigne*

The authors show how rich collaborative relationships can be and demonstrate how mutual aid is an integral pillar of evolution.

📖 **Advocacy for Altruism** / *Matthieu Ricard*

A gripping essay at the intersection of psychology, neuroscience, the economy and ecology.



TAKE ACTION

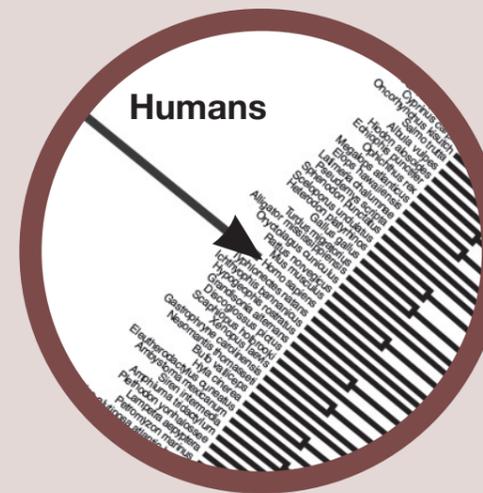
What if you put a sociocratic, participatory style of governance in place in your class or any other body?

Develop a small business in your school or your educational institution.

In most countries, local associations facilitate the implementation process and train you according to your needs... Go search online for local addresses!

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

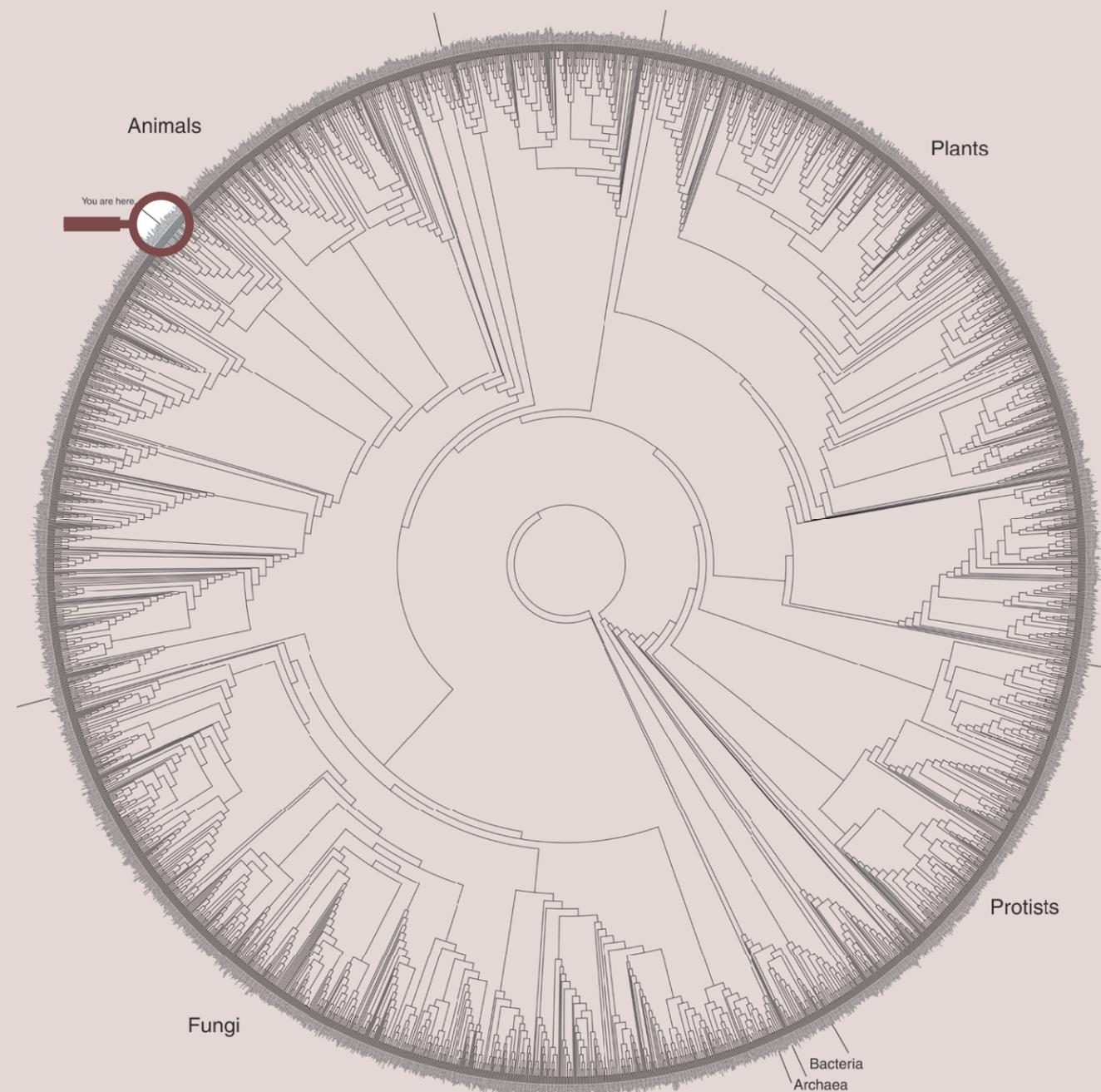
- ▶ **Le mouvement Colibri (The Colibri Movement)**
- ▶ **Quinoa**
- ▶ **Rencontres des continents (Meeting of Continents)**



The phylogenetic tree of the living world

shows the close ties between living beings.

This concept is explored further in Topic 4, p.18





WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS TODAY?

TOPIC 8

- Destruction
- Justice and rights
- Non-human legal person
- Rights of Nature
- Comparison to genocide
- Crime of ecocide

Today, anthropic activity deeply affects all ecosystems, thrusting the planet into a new geological period called the “Anthropocene” (covered in greater depth in Topic 2). As a result, the relationship between living species increasingly depends on the way in which the environments they’ve evolved in have been anthropised. Multiple expert reports¹ unanimously point to those responsible for it; they are very explicit about the ongoing disasters, interdependence between species, which no longer needs to be proven, nor does the fact that we all belong to a large planetary family (see Topic 4). All of this implies that we humans are “fully aware of the consequences of our actions”.

However, in 2020, the European Union² warned of “the failure of environmental law” to sufficiently protect Nature. The report is very clear: law and justice in its current form cannot prevent the mass destruction of ecosystems. Corine Pelluchon³ stresses the importance

of the notion of justice. Justice is a higher moral entity which refers to our ideals, our expression of values, what we think is fair, and our morals. While the law serves as a useful tool to limit the actions of humans, it is the whole set of rules that keeps our societies in check. This goes back to the thought process, addressed in Topic 6 p.26, on who the beneficiaries of our morals should be. Up until now, our approach to justice has been anthropocentric, only taking humans into account. But this stance eclipses a pretty outrageous reality: human rights are fiercely interdependent with the Earth system’s right to exist and the right all of its inhabitants to exist. It is time to make things right: We can’t keep guaranteeing basic rights to humans (food, housing, water, health...) when their very living environment is being threatened.

Justice could be dealt with in a much better way by taking on a different stance. For example, a

zoocentric one to expand the circle to the whole animal kingdom. Or a biocentric (or ecocentric) stance, to expand it to the entirety of the Earth system, thus including the inescapable interdependence between the living and non-living. Some initiatives have already started to take root around the world, but their impact is still limited. Here are a few of them. At the forefront, we find South America, with Ecuador adapting its Constitution in 2008: “Nature... has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions...”⁴. Bolivia followed suit in 2010. Native American nations adapted their tribal constitution (Ho-Chunk 2016, Ponca 2017). India, Bangladesh, Colombia and New Zealand granted glaciers, mountains, forests or rivers legal personhood... But it is Uganda, in particular, that in 2019 became the first country to legally recognise that “Nature has the right to exist,

persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution”.⁵

With regard to the rights of non-human animals, Jean-Pierre Marguénaud⁶ points out that in most legal systems around the world, they are seen as res nullius (ownerless property), in other words, a thing belonging to nobody but is, however, acquirable by appropriation, much like goods. On the other hand, Jean-Pierre Marguénaud explains that this situation is changing. Animals, still viewed as goods, are starting to take up a particular space in civil codes because they are becoming increasingly recognised as sentient beings, able to feel emotions in the first person singular (France 2015, European Union 2016, United Kingdom 2021, Belgium 2021, Spain 2022...). Non-human animals are therefore starting to be recognised as sentient beings, but they still don’t have legal

Human rights are fiercely interdependent with the Earth system’s right to exist and the rights of all of its inhabitants to exist.

personhood status for now. In the documentary, Peter Singer⁷ is offended by this paradox. He quotes John Lock (17th century) who defines the term “person” as a being that has a consciousness of his existence as an independent entity with a past and a future. He therefore makes a distinction between the term “person” and “human”. For that matter, he points out that even corporations have a

1 Especially the IPCC, IPBES, etc.
 2 The 2020 Economic and Social Committee Report www.eesc.europa.eu
 3 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°07’50”

4 Article 71 of the Ecuadorian constitution, 2008
 5 Article 4 of the “new National Environment Act, 2019”
 6 ECOCIDE documentary: 52°20” +1°16’02”
 7 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°12’44”

“moral person” status. And Jean-Pierre Marguénau insists that “it is absolutely essential to give animals legal personhood status, otherwise they are legally dead”.

The notion of justice discussed by Corine Pelluchon makes perfect sense here: “Imagining a society, [...] talking about justice for animals, is revolutionising the way we think about cohabiting with other living beings. This would require us to truly acknowledge that we are not alone in the world and that we share this planet⁸ and its resources with other living beings... Their existence forces us to fundamentally change the foundations of our ethics and political organisations.” Furthermore, she broadened the debate to the rest of the living and the Earth system as a whole. Recognising living beings as a “legal person” would result in new relationships between living species but also with the environments in which they evolve.

What exactly is ecocide?

Around the world, people are calling for our laws to be adapted, especially around the notion of ecocide. Throughout the documentary, Jojo Mehta⁹ clarifies what it means and its implications. Ecocide literally means “destroying the house”. This term was first used - but not endorsed - in Stockholm in 1972, during the famous United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. It discussed the mass and irreversible destruction of the ecosystem caused by Americans using agent orange during the Vietnam War. In its current definition, the crime of ecocide is described as “any unlawful or arbitrary act perpetrated in the knowledge that it is highly likely to cause serious, extensive or lasting damage to the environment¹⁰”.

The crime of ecocide doesn't yet exist as such in national legislations (or very marginally so) and is not internationally recognised.

Nowadays, those responsible for behaviour which could result in ecocide are simply slapped with a fine which is already included in their expense budget. “Truly protecting ecosystems by changing attitudes” requires “the adoption of legislation on ecocide at international level”, ideally at International Criminal Court (ICC) level. For now, the ICC has only included environmental damage within the framework of war, and in such a rigid way that it is not applicable. This gap could easily be filled by the ICC's Assembly of States Parties (ASP) by recognising “the crime of Ecocide as a fifth crime alongside war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression. Most legal experts insist on the importance of linking this crime to the ICC's Article 30 which targets someone who “is aware that it [the consequence] will occur in the ordinary course of events”

Interest in establishing criminal liability is twofold. Firstly, it is about providing a clearer framework for

“Ecocide: any unlawful or arbitrary act perpetrated in the knowledge that it is highly likely to cause serious, extensive or lasting damage to the environment.”

business executives and government leaders to know what they can and can't do, and to set boundaries that they cannot violate without the risk of prison sentences. Secondly, and this is very important, this gives leaders the power to oppose policy makers or lobbyists who would

only be driven by greed. The very fact that an international recognition process is underway could be discouraging - marking the importance of this documentary which represents a fictional first-time trial for a crime of ecocide. The aim of this international recognition is to universally protect the Earth system (which, in passing, is vital to the survival of the human race). We have lost count of examples of mass deforestation, oil spills, damage to the sea floor, land and water contamination, air pollution, all caused by mining, fracking, oil sands production, certain agricultural, industrial fishing or textile industry techniques (a list of some presumed cases of ecocide is available on the Stop Ecocide¹¹ website).

To conclude, Matthieu Ricard¹² and Jojo Mehta place ecocide on the same level as genocide. The ICC's definition states: “genocide is characterised by the specific intent to destroy in whole or in part a... group... or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part...”.

For our two speakers, the very same definition applies, except for the fact that it's not only one group that's targeted but all living things, including humanity...

8 Reference to speech by Native American Chief Seattle in 1854 in response to the President of the United States

9 ECOCIDE documentary: 03°35' + 48°40' + 1°19'36"

10 www.stop-ecocide.fr/definition-legale (English translation available)

11 www.stop-ecocide.fr/ecocide

12 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°19'18"



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Éduquer aux communs / *Symbiose 125, Réseau IDée*
A magazine for teachers and educators. Special edition on the (common) goods that are (natural) resources collectively managed by a community. Available to download on <https://symbioses.be/consulter/125>

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

We May Be Brothers After All / *Native American Chief Seattle*
Speech by Native American Chief Seattle in 1854 in response to the President of the United States A short and sweet collection of stories!

Je est un nous / *Jean-Philippe Pierron*
A survey among ecological philosophers and thinkers on our interdependence with the living.

COMICS

Letters from Animals: To Those Who Think They're Just Beasts / *Frédéric Brémaud - Glenat*
If animals could talk, what would they say? Superbly written and illustrated, made up of several thought-provoking short stories.

Les droits des animaux en questions / *Dominic Hofbauer*
Overview of animal rights. Humorous illustrations and easy to read.

Les droits des animaux : ça me concerne / *Florence Pinaud and Amélie Fontaine*
Geared towards a younger audience, this illustrated book does a great job of tackling the importance of sentience (explained simply), animal rights and the implications this has with regard to our relationship with animals.

PUBLICATIONS

The Living Planet Report / *WWF*
Updated every two years, it provides an accurate overview of the state and evolution of the world's biodiversity. Its latest edition indicated that wildlife populations had plummeted by 68% since 1970! A must-read to stay up-to-date with the latest figures and understand future implications.

IPCC Report / *IPCC*
This report is regularly updated, and also comes in the form of a “Summary for Policymakers” which is a four-page, reader-friendly, illustrated version. The 2022 edition, containing observations and solutions, is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.

IPBES Report / *IPBES*
Regularly updated, operating in a similar way to the IPCC, this expert platform analyses biodiversity and ecosystem services. This report also has a “Summary for Policymakers” which is a reader-friendly, illustrated version. Much like the IPCC report, the 2022 edition containing observations and solutions is every bit as informative as it is overwhelming.



TAKE ACTION

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

- ▶ **Stop Ecocide**
- ▶ **End Ecocide**
- ▶ **Fondation européenne pour le droit du vivant (European Foundation for the Rights of Living Organisms)**
- ▶ **Extinction Rebellion**
- ▶ **Planète-Vie (Planet Life)**
- ▶ **Rise for climate**
- ▶ **WWF**

IS OUR SOCIETY HYPER-CONNECTED OR COMPLETELY DISCONNECTED?

TOPIC 9

- Hyper-(dis)connected society
- Solastalgia - Eco-anxiety
- Becoming more connected with oneself and the world
- Emotions
- Compassion
- Wisdom (awareness of interdependence)
- Mindfulness and meditation
- Reconnecting

For the first time since the dawn of time, we're living in a hyper-connected society. Around 5,000 active satellites¹ allow for this fantastic communication exchange. Let's not count the 9,800 tonnes of space debris right now which was caused in order to reach this technological milestone (a weight heavier than the Eiffel Tower). An unbelievable amount of antennas and interconnected objects enable this transfer of information, thereby immersing the planet in an electromagnetic bath. All of this is for the comfort of humans and is intended to be planetary. In Western civilisations, "being connected" has become the norm, whereas "not being connected" needs justification. Within the mainstream, nobody should be stopped from reaping the full benefits of this hyper-connectivity: objects in our homes are anticipating our needs thanks to home automation, doctors are able to save patients located thousands of miles away, machines are becoming "smart" and allowing for increased performance and productivity without

human intervention, our social relationships are becoming virtual allowing us to overcome distances. Even during the pandemic, we were able to see each other on screen even though movement around the globe was very limited. Technological advances have been exponential and seem so unlimited, that it has allowed us to focus on, among other things, our personal pleasure. Thanks to the Metaverse pledge, even though the real world is heading towards an environmental and social abomination, we will soon be able to find refuge in a much more pleasant parallel virtual world. We're reaching Heaven... Without physically leaving our houses, through our avatars, we can have fun with friends' avatars, chat, go shopping to dress up our avatars or have things physically delivered, travel to all the replicated or imaginary worlds, teleport our avatars instantaneously from one virtual place to another, or even go to work. But aren't these promises superficial and isn't there a danger of them slowly diluting our self-awareness and our awareness

of others? Are we not currently becoming engulfed in this idealistic, self-fulfilling prophecy in which we believe that by connecting online, we are becoming entirely independent from the laws of Nature and we can indulge to our heart's content? With a few short video clips called Dopamine, the ARTE channel² warns of the dangers of this fantasy digital world and details how all of these technological models are based on addiction, fleeting self-satisfaction and, all to the exclusive benefit of the economy.

With the advent of our hedonistic consumption patterns, our relationship with the rest of Nature and our sensitivity towards it has therefore worsened, leading to the deterioration of our interdependence awareness with other living organisms. (Topic 4 explores the notion of interdependence in further detail.) And yet we're bombarded with distress signals from real world news which should bring up a lot of emotions and reactions in

the human race. So why are we paralysed by the demons of akrasia which push us to act against the result we expect?

We're stifling feedback as well as suffocating the possibility of an appropriate response.

As an initial attempt to answer the question, let's take a look at what the Dalai Lama³ had to say in the documentary. He encourages us to explore our relationship with

our emotions. Indeed, there is very little education on emotions in Western cultures. This prompts us to suppress part of our emotions, the part which we interpret as irrational or even dysfunctional. In our collective culture, these emotions could provoke an unpleasant state to be in, they could make us lose control, feel down about our powerlessness, hurt others, make us look inadequate, break down with regard to the situation, blame ourselves for our contradictions... It thus becomes much easier to look away, deny reality and offset our anxiety with materialistic obsessions. However, cognitive science shows that the purpose of our emotions is to serve as a warning signal to allow us to respond appropriately. The issue therefore lies in suppressing them, not in feeling them! By trying to suppress this warning signal, we're stifling feedback as well as suffocating the possibility of an appropriate response. How strange: by (unsuccessfully) trying to inhibit them, we're cutting ourselves off

1 According to the European Space Agency on 5th January 2022

2 www.arte.tv/fr/videos/RC-017841/dopamine

3 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°05'47"



Meditation
is not an escape
but a peaceful meeting
with reality.

Thich Nath Hanh

from ourselves and from the actual situation and responding in a way that doesn't give the desired result. Nobody is exempt from feeling their emotions. For example, the suffering we feel for the Earth is increasingly palpable in our societies. Eco-anxiety is on the rise in the human race and the fields of psychology and medicine refer to this new syndrome as "solastalgia". Sadly, we're currently relegating "solastalgia" to the ranks of a condition that needs to be fought rather than seeing it as a warning signal that allows us to respond appropriately to its triggers. If we were to unpack this suffering a little bit, we would realise that it is an expression of our psyche reflecting how distressed we are about the ecosystems. Solastalgia is a sort of pre-traumatic stress, telling us to move on towards desirable futures.

Emotions allow us to constructively respond to the way we feel about a situation. But they also allow us to develop and nurture the link we have with ourselves and the world in which we live. In this sense, the Dalai Lama encourages us to teach our children about this emotional hygiene and to cultivate compassion. He believes that it is crucial for us to (re)acquaint ourselves with the ability to recognise, understand, express, use and live peacefully with our own emotions as well as those of others. Accepting feelings of pain for the world also allows us to perceive the rest of Nature, whether human or non-human, as a partner with whom we are united in solidarity. This state of mind brings compassion: we become aware of needs other than our own and feel the sincere desire to help. We thus cultivate this connection with the world which, in turn, cultivates our compassion and so on... "The well-being of an individual depends on the well-being of the community" in the broad sense.

Could the environmental crisis primarily be seen as a crisis in our relationship with the rest of Nature?

It is probably time to renew our sacred bond with other humans. That which is sacred is worthy of sacrifice, is worth committing to, or even fighting for. Joanna Macy⁴ suggests a more concrete approach which allows people to (re)gain awareness of this sacred bond. Through the spiral of "Work That Reconnects", the workshops allow you to seamlessly experience four fundamental stages which are cited at various times in the Ecocide documentary and this press file. They include: (1) anchoring oneself in gratitude, marvelling at and joyfully rediscovering our interdependence with the rest of Nature, (2) in order to recognise how bad we feel for the world, peacefully experience our emotions and use them appropriately. This step is fundamental in order to allow us to (3) change our attitude and broaden possibilities. The final objective (4) is to go forward and implement the changes that seem the most legitimate to us.

Another approach, which Sofia Stril-Rever⁵ shares with us, consists of re-establishing harmony between the mind and body through the practice of meditation. Meditation is deeply rooted in most Eastern and ancestral traditions, but our modern Western societies have remained quite closed off to this practice for a long time. However, it has now caught the eye of the scientific world. Let's start off by stating that the meditation we're referring to here is completely secular and apolitical.

Christophe André is a psychiatrist who has been using meditation since 2004 in therapeutic settings. He gives us a definition of it: "Pausing and observing what is going on within (our breathing, bodily sensations, constant flow of thoughts) and around us (sounds, smells...). Simply observing, without judgement, without any expectation, without blocking any thoughts but also without holding onto anything. That's it. It's simple. It's mindfulness meditation. And it is far more effective than it may seem to minds that are in a hurry or that strive to 'control' themselves". A complementary description is given in a scientific article in the Science & Vie magazine⁶: "Letting your mind become calm and feeling like you're slowly reaching a state of acute awareness of your own emotions, thoughts and perceptions, to the point of being able to observe them in a detached way, like a tide flowing out and then reaching a state of serenity, of well-being. Before coming back to the world, renewed from within..." The same article talks about the appeal of meditation in neuroscience. Matthieu Ricard, along with other meditation experts with at least 10,000 hours of practice, have been helping with the research since the turn of the millennium. Thanks to "brain imagery, neuroscientists were able to shine a light on three main effects linked to mindfulness meditation: 1- Enhanced attentional control thanks to the activation of the anterior cingulate cortex which plays the role of a referee with respect to the multitude of information reaching the brain; 2- Improved emotion regulation: when an emotion arises, it has a tendency to demand much of our attention. Instead of focusing on these emotions alone, mindfulness promotes a disconnect between perception and psychological interpretation, thus releasing pressure from the amygdala, our emotional seat; 3- Access to metacognition, because this internal detached

4 Joanna Macy, "Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World".

5 ECOCIDE documentary: 59'27"

6 Science & Vie, March 2018

approach is developed, we can question our own reasoning.” It is therefore about being aware of the now, about focusing our attention on the present moment without reacting or dwelling on it, but simply observing and feeling it.

From childhood, we learn about personal hygiene from the youngest age. In the same vein, education around emotions, compassion and mindfulness are necessary to appropriately respond to stimuli from the real world and move

towards a more harmonious life. Could this be the key for us to progress towards wisdom?



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

📖 Mille et une valeurs

Card game to address values and allow for better understanding and acceptance of yourself and others. This is a cross-disciplinary animation tool which makes room for any topic to be addressed. One for the tool box!

📖 Le langage des émotions / PCPPF

86 cards (including 7 animation tracks) to discover the range of our emotions in order to promote self-awareness and an awareness of others by understanding emotions in all their nuances.

📖 Quelle place pour les émotions ?

/ Symbiose 115, Réseau Idée

Magazine for teachers and educators, in this special issue, *Symbiose* covers everything from enjoying nature to the fear of climate change: how can we take emotions into account and what tools can we use? Available to download on <https://symbioses.be/consulter/120>

📖 L'éducation émotionnelle et sociale

/ Michel Claeys-Bouaert

Practical guide for a comprehensive approach to learning processes linked to emotional intelligence. It's all in there to create a more peaceful climate, facilitate the work of the teacher/educator/parent and increase confidence.

📖 Renouer avec le vivant / Special issue of Socialter

magazine

Is reconnecting with “nature” a matter of urgency? It is hard not to fall into the many traps of this somewhat naive idealisation experienced by a human race of city dwellers. And what if it were, in actual fact, time to do away with Nature in order to finally reconnect with... the Living?



BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

📖 Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World / Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown

A bible on ecology, filled with techniques that can be used every day both personally and professionally. This book is a safe bet and essential reading!

📖 Notre façon d'être adulte fait-elle sens et envie pour les jeunes ? / Thomas d'Ansembourg

The author breaks down the anti-happiness traps that unwittingly weasel their way among us and gives us the keys to a lighter, deeper and richer life.

📖 Comment ne pas finir comme tes parents / Anaël Assier and

Soizic Michelot

Survival guide to not end up stressed, worried, narrow-minded, frustrated... Meditation for 15-25 year-olds; Audio included.

📖 Mindfulness for all: the wisdom to transform the world / Jon Kabat-Zinn

This scientist has brought mindfulness into the mainstream and shares how it can also be a political tool.

📖 The Mindful School / Patricia Jennings

This book includes many practical tools to learn (and teach with) emotional balance, attention and empathy.

📖 Happy Teachers Change the World / Thich Nhat Hanh

An essential guide for teachers, educators, but also for anyone who thinks that a mindful, kind education can change the world.

COMICS

📖 Hyper-Capitalism / Tim Kasser

This cartoon guide explains how the modern economy got carried away and puts how to transform it into perspective. Well-being, voluntary simplicity and governance are at the heart of the debate...

VIDEO CLIPS

📺 Dopamine / ARTE, video clips (6 min.)

Dopamine breaks down app addiction and allows us to understand why and how we have become addicted to apps. Several themes ranging from Snapchat to Instagram, as well as Uber, Twitter and YouTube.

Watch it, meditate on it and spread the word!

www.arte.tv/fr/videos/RC-017841/dopamine



TAKE ACTION

Do you feel the need to reconnect with your values, with Nature and come up with reasons to move forward?

▸ The Work That Reconnects

Developed by Joanna Macy, these workshops are wonderful for the soul. They allow us to reconnect to what's essential by becoming aware of interdependence and compassion. There are local associations in most countries. Here are some of them:

▸ Terr'Eveille non-profit organisation (BE)

and an events calendar for France-Belgium-Switzerland on

www.ateliersdetravailquirelie.sitew.fr

Would you like to host workshops, follow training courses or sessions on mindfulness?

Many local associations as well as meditation centres are here to help you.

You will need to do some research to find the ones that feel right for you, but here are some of them:

▸ Être, au présent (BE)

▸ Émergences (BE)

▸ Le village des pruniers (FR)

▸ Academy for Mindful Teaching (INT)

CAN WE BREAK THE RULES IF A LAW IS ILLEGITIMATE?

TOPIC 10

- Legality
- Legitimacy
- Opposition
- Non-violence
- Civil disobedience
- Non-Violent Direct Action
- Being part of the change
- Strength in numbers

A few minutes into the documentary, Lyllou Chevalier¹ questions our ethics by opposing the terms legitimacy and legality. Let's start by clarifying these two concepts. Legality is defined as anything that is in accordance with the current law, as what is authorised by the rules applicable in a given area. Legitimacy is defined as something that is deemed fair, it refers to what is consistent with morals, truth and justice. Further explored in Topic 8, this comparison is reminiscent of comments made by Corine Pelluchon² with regard to law and justice for animals. Getting back to the concepts of legitimacy and legality, it seems ethically necessary that both are in keeping with each other. But what happens if that's not the case? Is a subordinate relationship then created between legitimacy and legality?

In 1690, John Locke³ wrote: "... whenever the legislators endeavour

to take away, and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people, who are thereupon absolved from any farther obedience." One hundred years later, the United States Declaration of Independence⁴ stated that "...when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them [citizens] under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security." Thus, the concept of legality doesn't hold as much weight if legitimacy is contested. Lyllou Chevalier, therefore, reminds us that in terms of hierarchy, moral conscience ranks higher than official laws. Unlike the early essays of Montaigne⁵ or Pascal⁶ on the "mystical foundation of the authority of laws", the force

of law isn't about being a law, but about being legitimate. And if laws no longer apply or the lines between legality and legitimacy are too blurred, resistance therefore becomes a moral duty! The challenge now lies in identifying the safeguards to improve (or reinvent) our democracies without destroying them or plunging into social chaos...

We can identify at least three complementary axes of resistance: 1- Legality: try to seek dialogue with the powers that be by using all available legal avenues. The idea is to add pressure through petitions, taking action, litigation, media coverage, protests or authorised strikes... 2- Self-sufficiency: break off dialogue with the authorities by creating small communities or informal groups. The idea is to implement change in a self-sufficient way and to make others want to change, for example, through buying groups, community vegetable gardens, shared housing, networks of exchange, autonomous communities... 3- Non-violent civil disobedience: legitimate,

In terms of hierarchy, moral conscience ranks higher than official laws.

albeit illegal resistance while continuing talks with the authorities. This type of resistance takes on the role of a counter-weight by shining a light on wrongdoings and forcing change. As for types of illegal resistance that use violence in their fight against democratic or anti-democratic powers, we have chosen not to delve deeper into it, even though there are countless examples of them and they deserve an in-depth analysis.

Let's try to identify some of the conditions that could justify civil

disobedience and make it legitimate. First of all, it is important to mark out the framework. It is certainly not about taking action based on your own self-interest or about imposing your desires on others. Disobedience should aim to establish honourable justice based on reason, on collective well-being and on the common good, otherwise, we run the risk of adding one injustice to another or responding to one arbitrary law with another arbitrary law. Disobedience isn't a gateway to chaos. Gandhi⁷ said that disobedience had to be constructive, in other words, that it should offer several, concrete, sustainable, suitable alternatives. Disobedience may be a duty, but it should be guided by noble intentions and remain constructive. It should improve or reinvent our democracies, but without destroying them.

However, civil disobedience can't take on just any old form. Over the last century, many people have used the illegitimacy of a law to promote the need for change. Among them are Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Rosa

1 ECOCIDE documentary: 7'23"

2 ECOCIDE documentary: 1°07'50"

3 John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, 1690

4 The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America, 4th July 1776

5 Michel de Montaigne, Essays, Book 3, Chapter 13, around 1580

6 Blaise Pascal, Penseés, 1669

7 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Parks and Martin Luther King. In fact, in this documentary, Satish Kumar⁸ and Samdhong Rinpoché⁹ both reference Gandhi who said: “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” With this seemingly simple phrase, Gandhi wanted to convince us that we can’t expect the answer to problems to come from something external, such as companies, politicians or NGOs, but above all there must be an internal shift of our own perception of the problem. Most of us see conflict as an opposition between good and evil. Gandhi encourages us to break away from that duality of our consciousness and understand that we ourselves are full of contradictions. Simply put, there is no “other”, no wrong-doer, no enemy or external evil versus “I” representing innate truth and goodness. Conflict is simply a representation of what is within each and every one of us. It is therefore important to first understand your own weaknesses, limits, contradictions, and suffering in order to accept them in both yourself and others. This allows us to seek a kind of symbiosis and to promote collective change rather than condemn others or judge them. This step towards reconciliation with yourself and others is fundamental.

This implies that civil disobedience must maintain two avenues in order to take positive steps towards consciousness and what’s right. First of all, it highlights that there’s strength in numbers. Taking action together and trusting each other is believing that change is possible and encouraging change in others. Secondly, it is based on the same principle of non-violence advocated by all of the big names in the civil disobedience movement, starting with Martin Luther King who supported aspects of it: 1- Non-violence is true active resistance. There’s a strength in being spiritually and emotionally active from within and shows your opponent that they’re on the wrong path. 2- It seeks to mend fences, is



done in a respectful manner without humiliating your opponent, and tries to make them sympathetic to your cause. 3- The fight is directed at the conflict itself rather than the people working on this conflict, because it is the conflict that we want to stamp out. 4- The non-violent resistance fighter is willing to put up with violence without retaliating. This acceptance also attracts more collective participation (even for the opponents) to the cause. 5- Non-violence is also an inner quest based on love. It consists of finding human brotherhood again by breaking the vicious circles of violence and hate. Whoever hurts me, hurts himself first.

Conflict is simply a representation of what is within each and every one of us.

As Lylou Chevalier explains, one of the courses of action of the Extinction Rebellion movement is to collectively respond to an illegitimate law with non-violent direct action. The aim is to show authorities that they’re promoting the interests of a small (powerful) group in society to the detriment of the common good. These direct illegal actions play the role of a counterforce, but are not, however, criminal. In order to be meaningful, these direct actions of civil disobedience must meet a few criteria: Aside from the collective nature, non-violent tactics and constructive aspect that were already discussed, we should add: - that the illegal aspect temporarily eludes the law; - that public action is taken to garner as much attention as possible; - that taking action is a complementary addition to the already legal route of holding talks and putting pressure on authorities; - and that the opposition is aware of and willing to assume the risk of being sanctioned, thereby testifying to their commitment to the law, even if they’re denouncing one particular law.

Collective resistance

We shouldn’t expect a paradigm shift to come from political awakenings, sudden corporate awareness, a unique, eminently enlightened figure, nor any kind of magic. These changes will come from dynamic groups and citizens who, in turn, will raise awareness among politicians and large companies. However, first and foremost, this requires an awakening of individual consciousness, and by joining forces and pooling our different kinds of intelligence, we will be able to catalyse change for the common good and sustain it. The collective can galvanise individuals: it can unleash their full power!

The most famous example is still probably the Salt March, started by Gandhi on 12th March 1930. Joined by only 79 companions, he set out to reach the ocean by foot as an act of disobedience and to collect water from the sea to illegally make salt, which was usually taxed by the British. All along the 390-km stretch that separated them from the ocean, they were gradually joined by tens

of thousands of Indians. Remaining loyal to Gandhi’s guidance, this movement remained non-violent. Gandhi and 60,000 other Indians were arrested by the British. Gandhi was finally released after nine months in prison. This act would contribute to the fall of the British colonial regime in India.

Is our current crisis not being exacerbated by civil obedience rather than by resistance?

Today, there’s a feeling of mistrust among citizens on all fronts. The Zones to Defend (ZAD in French) are cropping up in every country and becoming symbols of resistance. Many initiatives are bringing about change or inspiring a collective movement. For example, Cédric Herrou was helping migrants, Carola Rackete was saving people in the Mediterranean and docking ships in spite of the ban, José

Bové was involved in uprooting GM crops, Greta Thunberg encouraged students to skip school to condemn environmental crises, whistle-blowers have risked their lives by exposing the truth... To conclude, it doesn’t really matter if these acts of resistance are legal, illegal, collective or individual. To be at one with yourself, others and the rest of Nature, everyone should be part of the change that they feel is legitimate, in order to become a responsible, active, critical and supportive citizen. However, safeguards should be maintained to avoid our democracies being destroyed or being plunged into social chaos...



⁸ ECOCIDE documentary: 1’05’05”
⁹ ECOCIDE documentary: 57’30”



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

global [in]equality

Teaching pack coordinated by the CNCD; 19 educational tools designed by 15 associations to deconstruct the mechanisms that create or reinforce global inequality with teenagers (aged 15+). The CNCD also offers different activities. www.cncd.be

DEZOBEDI

Game and educational guide created by the non-profit organisation Quinoa in 2018. This game uses the participants' experiences to help get to the heart of what drives and inspires them, all the while leaving room for discussion and action. Debate toolkit on request: www.quinoa.be

Potentia

Game co-produced by Quinoa-Oxfam-RDC in 2016. Also called La puissance du collectif (Strength in Numbers), this game strengthens understanding of citizen-led initiatives and makes them more tangible. Wonderful... Debate toolkit on request: www.quinoa.be

Esprit critique (Critical Thinking) / Canopé - Scérén

An educational kit to develop students' critical thinking. Tools and methods using 20 very detailed, turnkey training sessions about cross-cutting issues (analyse, check, debate, reason, challenge...)

Résister et apprendre / Symbiose 110, Réseau Idée

Symbiose, a magazine for teachers and educators, features a world that's being torn apart and a downtrodden democracy, but environmental resistance is cropping up all over the place. Explore the concepts with lots of educational tools. Available to download on <https://symbioses.be/consulter/110>

La politique ? Marre de s'en foutre !

Educational kit by Oxfam (2018). Seeks to empower young people to discover the power of their actions and constructively change their schools from within. www.oxfammagasinsdumonde.be

Désobéissance civile / "Annoncer la couleur" programme

This file encourages you to address the topic of civil disobedience with people aged 16+. Available to download on www.annoncerlacouleur.be

La désobéissance civile pour (re)trouver le chemin de la démocratie / Barricade, non-profit organisation

In-depth overview on disobedience as a tool for (positive) change. Available to download on www.barricades.be

Éduquer : dossier spécial désobéissance, n°13 / La Ligue de l'enseignement (The Education League)

Understanding why, when and how civil disobedience has taken steps to achieve democracy. Available to download on www.ligue-enseignement.be

BOOKS TO FEED THE MIND

Cinq discours pour désobéir / Philippe Godard

These Five Speeches by Chief Joseph, De Gaulle, Gandhi, Thoreau and La Boétie come from very different times and contexts, but they have one thing in common: they opt for disobedience to try to escape injustice.

Résistance ! / Antoine Peillon

Rejecting populism as well as the dictatorship of the market, this new civic resistance is sought and built up in the Zones to Defend, alternative organic workshops and communities... The aim of this essay is to intellectually nurture a spontaneous movement amongst outraged citizens in order to re-align resistance with hope.

The Path to Hope / Stéphane Hessel and Edgar Morin

In this work, these two great thinkers and former resistance fighters invite us to form a citizen movement and an uprising of consciousness. Lots of hope!

The Roots of Heaven / Romain Gary

Probably one of the first adventure novels to deal with ecology in an exceptional way. We join Morel, a former resistance fighter, on a frantic struggle for the survival of elephants. A must-read masterpiece!



TAKE ACTION

Would you like to learn more about civil disobedience?

In most countries, there are associations that provide training and information. Here are some of them:

- Agir pour la paix (BE)
- Collectif des désobéissants (FR)

Depending on your interests and level of commitment, many organisations are looking for volunteers, campaigners and activists. Here are some of them:

- CNCD
- Friends of the Earth
- Extinction Rebellion
- Stop Ecocide
- Greenpeace
- Amnesty International
- WWF
- Natagora
- Doctors Without Borders
- ATTAC
- Transparency International
- and so many others...

COMICS

Animal Castle #1 / Xavier Dorison

This utopia, based on Orwell's dystopian Animal Farm, shows us that non-violent actions allow for cooperative and participatory power to be established. A fantastic, captivating read.

Plogoff / Delphine Le Lay

A nuclear power plant is being set up in the small Breton village of Plogoff. Inhabitants rally together, but this is just the beginning of a long struggle. A great little guide about resistance in all its forms.

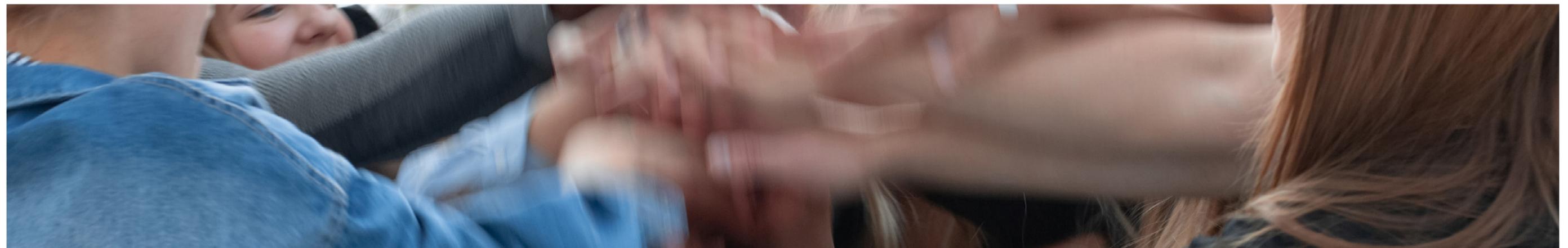
SEVERAL MAGNIFICENT FILMS ILLUSTRATING THE STRUGGLES THAT HEROES OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE WENT THROUGH.

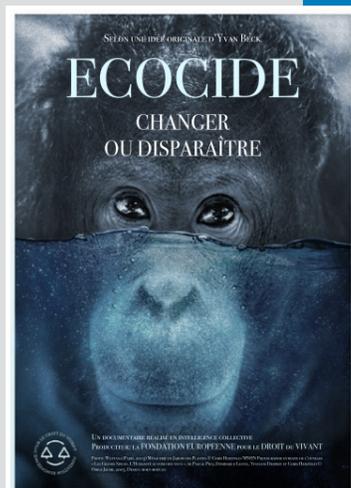
Leader-sheep / Christian Rouaud

This documentary tells the story of the struggle between some farmers in the Lazard Plateau against the State to save their land. A resolute, joyful, but sometimes also gruelling and risky struggle.

Plus:

- Gandhi
- Invictus (Mandela)
- Selma (Martin Luther King)





ORIGINS OF ECOCIDE, CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR

In 2010, LoveMEATender opened the door to a three-part documentary. It aimed to offer an in-depth reflection on intensive farming and the food industry which was in the process of overtaking the traditional, sustainable, more extensive and environmentally-friendly, family model. This documentary won the Magritte Award for Best Documentary that year. Thanks to this experience, we have been working on the second part since 2016 by expanding our thinking to interdependence as the basic law that governs the living world.

In 2016, the non-profit organisation Planète-Vie organised a symposium on interdependence, splitting it into four themes: 1. Science and philosophy, 2. Driving development, 3. Global solidarity, 4. Reinventing our societies. This event, which actually foreshadowed the current documentary, welcomed a host of key figures including Jane Goodall, Matthieu Ricard, Monica Gagliano, Toni Frohoff, Jean-Pierre Marguénaud and Olivier de Schutter.

Preparation for this documentary ran into two big obstacles which turned out to be two great opportunities. The first was needing to find a common ground with the production company. We finally decided to work with our partner associations around the world. The second was a full-blown pandemic outbreak plunging the world into a state of inertia. We had to do interviews via videoconference and opt for video footage from the symposium which allowed us to minimise our greenhouse gas emissions.

DIRECTORIAL DECISIONS

We wanted this documentary to be a creation of collective intelligence: a non-profit project that showed solidarity, was freely available, was almost net zero, and crowdfunded. All of these choices explain the flaws in the documentary, which, in turn, highlight these choices.

Revolving around the fictional storyline of an “ecocide” trial performed by young amateur student actors, this documentary restores forgotten bonds. It explores the spiritual and scientific dimensions of the living world. It challenges us with key questions: Who are we? Who are they? What are we together?

This approach presents us with two ways of looking at the world: through dualism, separating humans from the rest of Nature, and holistically, in which man (re)gains his place within the living world. The film highlights things that connect us rather than divide us, it reminds us just how essential each life form is to the survival of us all and confronts us with shifts in consciousness that are key to adequately transforming our societies.

We made the choice not to offer blissful hope, but rather the hope that another world is still possible if we are action-oriented and focus on transforming both individually and collectively.

Jose Javier Paniagua and Yvan Beck

SPEAKERS

in alphabetical order



Claudine André

Founder of Lola ya Bonobo and environmental activist



Peter Gabriel

Author-composer-singer and producer



Corine Pelluchon

Philosopher and author



Jonathan Balcombe

Professor of Ethology at the University of Tennessee and author



Monica Gagliano

Research Associate Professor in Evolutionary Ecology and research fellow



Matthieu Ricard

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Documentary press file

ECOCIDE, CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR

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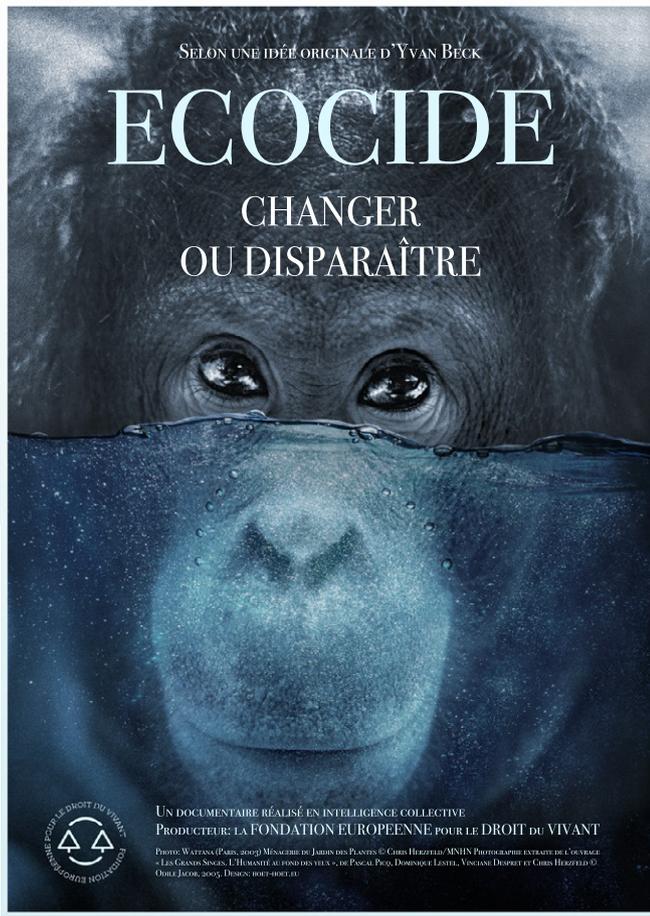
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Laurent



educ-ecocide

Press file for the film
ECOCIDE, CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR



We wanted the documentary, ECOCIDE CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR, to be a creation of collective intelligence: a non-profit project that showed solidarity, was freely available, was almost net zero, and crowdfunded. All of these choices explain the flaws in the documentary, which, in turn, highlight these choices.

Revolving around the fictional storyline of an “ecocide” trial performed by young amateur student actors, this documentary restores forgotten bonds. It explores the spiritual and scientific dimensions of the living world. It challenges us with key questions: Who are we? Who are they? What are we together?

This approach presents us with two ways of looking at the world: through dualism, separating humans from the rest of Nature, and holistically, in which man (re)gains his place within the living world. The film highlights things that connect us rather than divide us, it reminds us just how essential each life form is to the survival of us all and confronts us with shifts in consciousness that are key to adequately transforming our societies.

We made the choice not to offer blissful hope, but rather the hope that another world is still possible if we are action-oriented and focus on transforming both individually and collectively.

Jose Javier Paniagua and Yvan Beck

This press file is free to browse and available for free download on

www.educ-ecocide.com