

The Earth Is the Common Home of All Inhabitants

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The first vast work of “worldwide” occupation and predation of the Earth and its inhabitants was that begun in the sixteenth century by a number of European states (Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, England and France). After the First World War, new actors – no less conquerors and predators than the former (in particular, the United States, Soviet Union, Japan and Germany) – extended and intensified the work of occupation and exploitation of the planet and the world.

Today, “thanks” also to China, India, Korea, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other “minor” actors (South Africa, Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Egypt, etc.), we can say that the work of conquest and of predation is truly “global”, planetary. Even the space that unites the Earth with the rest of the solar system and beyond does not escape this work, well foreseen (I hope I’m wrong) by Asimov, Matrix and Stars Wars.

The new wave of land (and water) grabbing – certainly the most striking form of current occupation and predation – is no longer based solely on processes of violent conquest and the force of arms, but is more profound and pernicious because appropriation takes place above all through legal means of high value insofar as “legitimated” – claim those who dominate – by science! I am referring to patents on the living.

For the first time in human history, since 1980 and following a unilateral decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, the right of private intellectual property on the living for profit has been declared legitimate. Despite the strong opposition of many citizens, in 1998 the European Union also approved a directive that legalised the private patentability of the living.

In the space of a few years, the world of business and finance has succeeded in obtaining the recognition of several tens of thousands of patents on cells, molecules, bacteria, genes (also human), plant species, animals and microorganisms. The financial holdings of large industrial and commercial multinational agricultural, seed, chemical, pharmaceutical, energy, mining companies have become the effective owners/masters of the living of the Earth.

The Earth has never been a “common home”. Today, it is even less so. Yet the possibilities of building the Earth as a “common home” are greater than before. Why?

The “common home” that can exist

The gap between the two “homes” is only apparently paradoxical. The “common home that does not exist” is a strong reality because the predatory capacities of the dominant social groups are actually enormous, based on political legitimacy, given by elected representatives, and juridical legitimacy, acquired thanks to the rules set by the dominant

themselves.

On the other hand, the possibilities of building the “common home that can exist” have become considerable because three new collective consciences have been shaped and strengthened in recent years.

The first lies in the fact that, beyond the differences which are also essential and manifold existing between among human beings and between them and the other inhabitants of the Earth (animal, plant and microbial species), human beings think, perceive and have learned – thanks also to the progress made by cellular and molecular biology and other fields of knowledge – that they are an integral part of the great evolution which, over millennia, has united all the inhabitants of the Earth in a global community of life of the Earth.

The second is the realisation that the life of the Earth must not be safeguarded and cured mainly to guarantee and improve the safety of the existence of the human species but of the whole of the global community of life.

Example: it is right and true to affirm that human beings (like the other living species) have a right to the quantity of good water necessary and sufficient for life. But it is also true and right, for the vast majority of today’s human beings, to affirm that water as such has the right to an existence in a good ecological state appropriate for allowing bodies and water systems to regenerate themselves.

Pollution and contamination of water are acts of violence against life. Human right to safe water, but also the right of water to life. This is the principle which, for the first time in human history, gave the legal basis for recognition in 2017 of five rivers as juridical persons holding rights and duties.

This comes in the context of strong trends over the past two decades in favour of the “rights of nature”, the “rights of animals”, the “rights of plants”, the right of genes to integrity, and so on.

The third is represented by the observation that of all the living species inhabiting the Earth human beings are the only ones who have become capable of destroying life on the planet we know. Therefore they are also the only ones able to cure, protect and safeguard life on Earth and of the Earth, and to perpetuate it.

From here, the planetary responsibility for life is in the hands of Humanity, that is of the consciousness of human beings as inhabitants of the Earth in the name of all the other inhabitants of the Earth.

How to build the common home?

First of all by de-constructing the alleged pertinence and legality given to structural factors (conceptions, visions, choices, policies, mechanisms, institutions, etc.) that prevent humanity from working towards construction of the common home.

Of these, the factors that stand out above all are theses elaborated and imposed by the dominant groups on the naturalness (and therefore inevitability) of the processes of destruction of life, such as: war, domination, exclusion, rejection of the other, impoverishment, inequality.

They have convinced peoples that both war and impoverishment/poverty are “natural” phenomena/processes inherent in human nature and can in no way ever be eliminated from human history. The overwhelming majority has been convinced that peace can only be a temporary and local absence of war and that lasting and universal peace would be pure illusion, a “utopia”, they say, that is “unrealisable”.

The same applies to “poverty”: poverty has always “existed”, there is poverty and there will always be poverty. The only realistic thing possible is to try to reduce the drama of the state of poverty, reduce its diffusion and the number of poor people. It is useless, they say, to try to eradicate the causes because they are found in human nature.

Elsewhere (see books like “A New Narrative of the World” or “In the Name of Humanity”) and for a long time I have demonstrated the falsity and mystification of these theses and of corresponding collective social practices, highlighting instead the nature of social construction of the phenomena and of the processes of war and impoverishment by unjust societies. So much so that today in particular, war has become above all a great planetary business and impoverishment of the many – compared with enrichment of the few – is considered the inevitable sacrifice to be paid by the weakest, by the least “adaptable” and by the least profitable on the altar of economic growth and monetary wealth.

These falsehoods must be fought against urgently and decisively in all fields, with the contribution in particular of artists, young people, women, peasants, workers and the world of education (teachers). The world of media, of religions and of businesses has largely contributed to the development and diffusion of such theses. Today a minority is trying to dissociate itself.

The Earth is not a large mine of natural resources (such as human resources or energy resources) and artificial tangible and intangible resources (such as medicines, robots, drones and artificial intelligence) to be exploited in order to extract the highest financial value for the owners of the available capital invested.

For the entire class of those who dominate it makes no sense to talk about the Earth and its “resources” in terms of “common home”. For them, the Earth has to be seen as a source of wealth, free of competition and rivalry among all its inhabitants (humans) in access and hoarding and in the capacity for extraction.

In this context we need to delegitimise the profound culture inspired by the American ruling classes since the end of the 18th century, which have attributed value supremacy to the principle of freedom of conquest and private property with respect to the principle of social justice which is considered of low value. It is necessary to debunk the mystifying myth of the universal model America, of the liberating America, of the America that creates the future of a better world, a mystification common to all American leaders except those who are black.

Second, by building the foundations and supporting pillars. Among the foundations, three principles have to be re-invented (re-enchant the world):

- the principle of equality among all human beings with respect to universal human rights, a principle which has been denied over the last three decades by those who dominate who affirm instead that rights have to be deserved and that rights entail access to “economic” goods and services, the costs of which must be paid individually by “consumers” or users;

- the principle of fraternity among all human beings translated into respect and empathy towards the other inhabitant members of the global community of life. Every human being participates in human history and in the history of the Earth as an inhabitant. Inhabiting makes the experience of the other and of living together an expression of the human condition and the foundation of human communities.

One learns, even if with difficulty, to recognise in the other (an increasingly enlarged reality with the passing of the centuries) a living person with whom one must learn to live together.

It is in this context that we forge our individual, and above all collective, identity; the inhabitant learns to become fraternal and build the common home, first locally then gradually, and in this day and age, at the level of the global common home. The inhabitant is a vast reality that manifests itself at all levels of human organisation from the local/village to the Earth/planet level.

Historically, the citizen has given a specific identity to the inhabitant, starting from the city/polis, then the peculiarities, as well as the rights and duties, have been circumscribed. A delimitation that became closure at the time of nation-states, to the extent that the non-national citizen was considered stateless and treated as a second-class being. The “cosmopolitan” has no juridical recognition either at the level of the city or of the Earth. Even today, the citizen encloses the inhabitant in the “local house” (village or city, region) or in the national house with all the derivations we know.

- the principle of global responsibility of human beings with respect to life, in the name of the other inhabitants of the Earth. Today, globalisation of the human condition has facilitated the recognition of the Earth as a place of global life, which has paved the way for a reevaluation of the concept of the inhabitant of the Earth and the awareness of the responsibility for the life for all human beings and other inhabitants of the Earth by humanity.

The inhabitant of the Earth can be the source of a great positive process of building the citizen as a resident of the global common home. No longer a citizen extractor and consumer of the resources of the planet in rivalry with other citizens on global markets in order to ensure their survival and their power. But a citizen respectful of the security of all the expressions of life of the global city-Earth.

On this basis, among the pillars we propose “support” for:

a) a new vision and practice of the processes of generating rights and responsibilities.

In 2018, the year in which the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is being celebrated, it is indispensable to rethink the vision of rights in a perspective of collective, community, shared and participated rights extended to all inhabitants of the Earth.

The UDHR is fundamentally centred on individual rights, it consecrates the right of private ownership of the resources of the Earth, its culture has a Western orientation, it is subjected to a “national” oligarchy that excludes non-nationals and fragments citizens, it does not clearly define duties, it does not specify the role of citizen participation in the protection, control and defence of rights, and it is deeply anthropocentric.

A considerable effort that is constructive, participatory and cooperative remains to be made

in the coming years and decades. There must be no lack of audacity;

b) in close connection with the foregoing, promotion of the security and protection and care of the world's common public goods.

The first pillar is structurally destined to be fragile and therefore insecure in the absence of the promotion and protection of a set of global common public goods, in particular (to start the processes of construction of the common home) water, seeds and knowledge. The choice of these three global common goods is dictated by the fact that they are, together with the sun and the air, the crucial non-replacable goods for the life of the Earth and its inhabitants.

In this sense, the pillar of common goods means that the principle of the private ownership of the living and of artificial intelligence and the principle of the monetisation of nature are unacceptable for creation of the common home, just as it is not possible to maintain the principle of absolute and warlike national sovereignty over the Earth's resources.

International and inter-governmental multilateralism will not allow good progress on the path of building humanity and the common home because it will not prevent "national" security wars for resources, the hoarding of resources, or competitiveness over/exclusion from the resources of the Earth.

Also in this field, there can be no lack of audacity.

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