



Pan-European democracy, social justice and environmental sustainability  
For a just, sustainable and happy society

## The 3 mutually-supporting pillars of the Society of Agreement

We build a **cooperative** for **deep social, economic and political transformation**, whereby we mean that:

- we deeply transform the economy, society and the political system;
- we operate as a cooperative, recognised at EU level under the statute of a [European Cooperative Society](#).

We unite the people that work and act together – that **cooperate** – in a **democratic** way, at the scale of the **European Union**, towards making our vision of a **just, sustainable and happy society** for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the [Society of Agreement](#), a reality.

The Society of Agreement is based upon **3 mutually-supporting pillars**:

1. **pan-European democracy**, in all public institutions and private organisations (agreement among humans on decisions);



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2. **social justice** and confidence in the future for all (agreement among humans on the allocation of resources);
3. **environmental sustainability**, with a prospect of sustaining human civilisation indefinitely and specifically: Greenhouse Gases emissions below net-zero (agreement of humans with the laws governing the geo-biosphere upon which we depend).

What are the 3 pillars of the Society of Agreement? Why are they inter-related and mutually supportive? Why should they be pursued in parallel? Each of these questions is answered in greater detail below.



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# 1 The 3 pillars of the Society of Agreement

The Society of Agreement is based upon **3 mutually-supporting pillars**:

1. **pan-European democracy**, in all public institutions and private organisations (agreement among humans on decisions);
2. **social justice** and confidence in the future for all (agreement among humans on the allocation of resources);
3. **environmental sustainability**, with a prospect of sustaining human civilisation indefinitely and specifically: Greenhouse Gases emissions below net-zero (agreement of humans with the laws governing the geo-biosphere upon which we depend).

We understand these concepts as follows.

## 1.1 Pan-European democracy

Democracy is a **value** in itself. It is the political system that embodies human **dignity** and **equality** in the decision-making process governing our collective future in public institutions and private organisations. It is because all humans are equal in their rights that they are equally legitimate to participate in taking collective decisions. Every person must be able to participate in the initiative of proposals regarding collective action or public policy, in their amendment and in their ranking in priority order. The deliberative democracy platform and the organisational model used by the CosmoPolitical Cooperative are in themselves an attempt to embody internal democracy in software code<sup>1</sup> and in human-based procedures.

Pan-European democracy is a democracy uniting citizens, and taking action, beyond national, linguistic and cultural boundaries, and where every citizen participates in decision-making at all scales, up to the one large enough to have an impact on the world order, that of the **European Union**. We believe it to be possible because what unites Europeans, and the common issues that they face, are greater than what separates them and because we believe that, despite all its weaknesses that we acknowledge, the European Union is the first existing trans-national democratic institution (more details on this § 4.5). We aim at implementing democracy in all private organisations and companies and at all scales of public institutions, from the municipality to the European Union.

## 1.2 Social justice

**Social justice** is a situation of **social security**, **cohesiveness**, **inclusiveness** and **equality**; where economic inequalities in income and in inherited wealth have been drastically reduced;

<sup>1</sup> By using the Free, *Libre* and Open Source deliberative democracy software called KuneAgi: <http://www.kuneagi.org/english/fonctionscharacteristiquesen/69-democratieinterneen> and LiquidFeedback <http://www.liquidfeedback.org> and the organisational model outlined at: <https://www.cOsmOpoliticalparty.org/OrgaModel>



where every citizen is assured to **live in dignity** from his / her **work**, for life, in a **stable employment** for those desiring it, feels and is **safe** and **confident** about his/her future and in that of his/her children, and thus willing and able to undergo important changes in his/her life.

### ***1.3 Environmental sustainability***

We understand **environmental sustainability** as follows. It is our duty to ensure every inhabitant of the planet **decent living conditions**, compatible with the **finite** nature of all biological, physical and geological **resources** necessary to a human civilisation, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same over an indefinitely long period of time. It is a production and consumption model where: (1) the climate is maintained in a stable state (below 1.5°C warming), compatible with the long-term preservation of the agricultural systems that feed humankind, and thus where net Greenhouse Gases emissions are below zero; (2) every renewable resource is used at or below the rate at which it can regenerate itself; (3) every non-renewable resource is used at or below the rate at which a renewable substitute can be developed; and (4) every pollution stream is emitted at or below the rate at which it can be absorbed or made harmless. We believe that a form of **improvement** in the quality of living conditions is possible, even under very stringent constraints on energy and material flows. This improvement is based on an increase in the **efficiency** in the usage of all resources (energy, raw materials, soil, water, human work, human capabilities) due to the accumulation and the maintenance of all forms of productive and cultural capital (natural regeneration and production capacities of the biosphere; human competencies; human culture; infrastructures, machinery and networks; scientific, technical and institutional knowledge; coordination capability; institutions, laws, regulation and standards).

### ***1.4 Human rights, rule of law, education and peace***

In addition to these three main pillars, the features of the Society of Agreement that we strive for, in the European Union and globally, are the following:

1. **Human rights**, as described in the Universal Declaration of the United Nations<sup>2</sup>, which are **equally accessible to all humans** without discrimination (Art. 1 and 2) – but not to corporations –, and include **formal rights**, such as protection of life and of personal integrity (Art. 3, 4, 5), of privacy (Art. 12), the protection of law (Art.6 to 11) and of a nationality (Art. 13 and 15), freedom of movement within a State and right to asylum (Art. 13 and 14), right to marriage (Art. 16), to property within the limits of social cohesiveness and social justice (Art. 17) freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 18), of opinion (Art. 19), of association (Art. 20), right to democracy (Art. 21), and **social and economic rights**, such as social security (Art. 22), right to work, for a decent pay, and to join a trade union (Art. 23), to limitation in working hours and to periodic holidays with pay (Art. 24), to a decent standard of living (Art. 25), to education (Art. 26), to culture and science (Art. 27).

2 Downloadable in more than 500 languages at: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>



2. **Rule of law.** Law is the only tool available to the weak and to the poor to uphold their rights against the rich and the powerful. It must apply and be accessible equally to all. It must provide redress opportunities, legal security and the predictability of legal decisions, equally for all parties.
3. **Education.** We consider education as being the essential tool for humans to emancipate themselves from ignorance, from prejudice, from social and ethnic determinisms, and from oppression. Education provides the capabilities and knowledge for humans to evolve and adapt, individually and collectively – which will be of utmost importance in a century of massive, structural change. Education is also one's only truly unalienable asset.
4. **Peace,** between nations, between members of society and within ourselves. Peace can only last if justice and truth prevail.

## 2 The 3 pillars of the Society of Agreement mutually support each other

In our views, these three pillars of the Society of Agreement **support** each other and are intimately **inter-linked**.

- Neither social justice nor democracy are possible in environmentally unsustainable societies. In the short term, the first victims of environmental destruction are the poor, who are forced to live in the polluted, noisy, isolated and unhealthy places created by the unsustainable individual and collective consumption patterns of the rich and of the middle class. In the longer term, the shortages of food, fuel or other material goods brought by unsustainable life-styles destroy the livelihood of the whole population. At the end, such societies collapse in the dreadful chaos of a fight for bare survival<sup>3</sup>. Said differently and more brutally: no positive societal value such as social justice or democracy can exist if human society is destroyed.
- Reciprocally, as exposed in greater detail below (§ 3), no environmental sustainability agenda can be implemented in socially unjust societies. This is because inequalities and precariousness generate (1) social and political conflicts, (2) short-termism and (3) ostentatious consumption, the exact opposite of what is needed for a transition to sustainability. Our detailed argument is the following. First, the transition to an environmentally sustainable society is a fundamental transformation. It changes the way we produce and consume, it impacts our cultures and our even our dreams for the future. It demands to agree on the sharing of immense costs, benefits and risks, among all of us, all around the globe, in a very short time. Achieving this level of political agreement among good-willed people is a huge challenge in itself. It becomes impossible when anger, frustration and fear, created by inequalities and precariousness, put the very legitimacy of

3 Such disastrous scenarios of civilisational collapse have already taken place in the past, as demonstrated in Diamond, J. "[Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed](#)", Penguin books, 2011.



democratic institutions (whose purpose is to solve conflicts peacefully) in question. Second, for people living in precariousness, the future is very limited, sometimes for them it's even about finding food from one day to the next. Sustainability policies on the other hand develop over much longer time – often decades. Third, in unequal societies, many consume wastefully, and ostentatiously<sup>4</sup>. This is rational: it is an attempt to show to others that the person belongs to the rich and the powerful, in a society where only them (or those that make believe they are) are safe and secure, while the poor and the weak are being trampled upon. This ostentation is the opposite of the frugal consumption that we need for our societies to be environmentally sustainable.

- Finally (as exposed in greater detail in § 4), these two deep social and economic transformations, towards social justice and towards environmental sustainability, will (1) severely impact the concentrated wealth and power of multi-national corporations and of the rich and very rich global elite (the "1%"), and (2) require political compromises at large scale between very divergent and yet legitimate interests, which will be difficult even among good-willing partners. Overcoming the resistance of the global oligarchy is impossible with weak, fragmented political powers such as the European States separately. Only a strong, democratically legitimate and unitary European Union bears enough power to impose its decisions to multinational corporations and to the richest 1%. Only a truly trans-national democracy, of which the European Union is a prototype, can legitimate the political agreements at large scale necessary to successfully address the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For all these reasons, we build the three pillars of the Society of Agreement, i.e. pan-European democracy, social justice and environmental sustainability, **in parallel**, inseparably from one another.

### **3 Social justice is an absolute pre-requisite to agreeing on any long-term, cooperative solution to the global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

For the global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be successfully overcome, humankind needs to establish long-term, cooperative political agreements.

Humans must however be mentally and psychologically ready and able to engage in the discussions leading to such agreements. For this, specific conditions, which are amenable by public policy, must be met.

#### ***3.1 Humans subject to stress and fear are short-sighted, egoistic and aggressive***

The human species shares many features with other animal, mammal and primate species with

<sup>4</sup> e.g. by visibly displaying the luxury brands of their goods



which we also share part of our evolutionary history. Like other animals and mammals, we are subject to **stress** and **fear**, which releases a specific hormone, **cortisol**, in our brain. Cortisol has two effects: (1) in the short term, it raises awareness, increases the heart rhythm, stimulates the muscles, and in general makes the body ready for fast reactions (flight, combat) – but also switches off all functions that consume energy, such as our heavy, energy-hungry and specifically human brain (the neo-cortex, which consumes typically 25% of all energy we use); (2) in the longer term, permanent exposure to high levels of cortisol reduces intellectual capacity, and causes inflammatory diseases (hypertension, many cancers).

Such a permanent exposure to stress and fear modifies the behaviour and capacities of humans: they focus on the short term, their trust level in others diminish, they lose the capacity to engage in cooperative behaviour and they become more aggressive<sup>5</sup>.

### ***3.2 Social inequalities and precariousness are the main drivers of stress and fear at a collective scale***

Two social factors contribute massively to stress and fear in society: **social inequalities** and **precariousness**.

**Social inequalities** create stress and fear for two reasons:

1. they corrupt relations between persons, by creating power and money relationships among them: the richer and more powerful fears being requested to help or to supply money, the poorer and less powerful fears being despised, ridiculed and trampled upon.
2. they make the consequences of failure and weakness more dramatic. Unequal societies provide more support (better infrastructure and public services, including health and education, direct subsidies and tax breaks) to the rich and powerful, and less to the poor and weak. Therefore, any step down in the social ladder is doubly dramatic: (1) it has the direct effect of reducing one's living standards, as in any society; (2) it has the additional effect of reducing support received from society (e.g. worse health and education services), which cumulates with the first, direct effect to build a pressure downwards, with the risk of a downward spiral ending in homelessness and absolute poverty, for oneself or one's children.

As a result, people in unequal societies are in a permanent defensive mode towards others, permanently attempting to assert their social position and in the permanent fear of failure.

**Precariousness** is almost a synonym of stress and fear. When a person's income, and thus his/her economic and social future, is limited at very short time frames (tomorrow, next week, next month), or is subject to massive variations with no capacity for savings, that person is anxious and afraid. Despite all ideological discourse supporting "entrepreneurship" and self-employment (which too often translates into self-unemployment when sales don't take off) poor people massively shun

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5 K. Pickett, R. Wilkinson "[The spirit level – why equality is better for everyone](#)", Penguin books, 2010





risk and seek stable employment in large corporations or in civil service, for very good reasons<sup>6</sup>.

### ***3.3 Social justice is the only means to place humans in the trustful and confident situation where to achieve long-term, cooperative political agreements***

Humankind needs to reach comprehensive, long-term and cooperative political agreements to solve any of the very major global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If they are subject to stress and fear, and thus short-sighted, egoistic and aggressive, no progress whatsoever can be expected.

Reciprocally, in order to achieve these agreements, they need to trust each other, and be sufficiently confident about their long-term personal future to wait until then to reap the benefits of the compromises made today.

It is thus only by removing the collective sources of stress and fear, namely social inequalities and precariousness, that public policy can place humans in the confident and trustful situation that makes them amenable to discussing long-term political agreements with a reasonable probability of success.

### ***3.4 Social justice is in addition a pre-requisite for the frugal consumption necessary to achieve environmental sustainability***

In unequal societies, it is of vital importance to appear as belonging to the class of the rich and the powerful. Belonging to this class is indeed the only means to be respected and protected, in the absence of regulation, or when regulation and administrative, police and legal procedures are biased in favour of those having the financial means to pay for costly and complex trials.

In large, mainly urban, communities where the greatest share of contemporary population lives, and where people don't know each other personally, the only means to display one's belonging to the class of the rich and the powerful is through **ostentatious consumption**. The purchase and display of grossly branded luxury consumer goods, spending holidays in expensive hotels in remote overseas resorts, or living in oversized and over-furnished homes in low-density neighbourhoods are all means to show to others that one belongs to the dominant class – and to reassure oneself about it. This is a powerful engine of over-consumption, way beyond any form of reasonable "needs".

The advantages of over-consumption in unequal societies are so large that large shares of the population even pretend that their income is higher than what it actually is – thereby generating an additional layer of stress and fear by contracting disproportionate personal credit liabilities.

In an equal society, this engine of over-consumption vanishes. There is neither the motivation, nor the possibility (because of the equality of income), to appear socially superior to others by one's consumption. It is only then that a **frugal** way of life becomes possible for the whole population.

<sup>6</sup> A.Banerjee, E. Duflo "Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty", PublicAffairs, 2011. ISBN 978-1-58648-798-0



This frugality is an absolute pre-requisite for humankind to adapt its consumption level to the resources made available by the biosphere, and thus to overcome the first of the global issues that we identified.

Concluding long-term, cooperative political agreements, and consuming frugally are two pre-requisites to overcome collectively the global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both of them are only possible with **social justice**, i.e. with an equal and secure society for all, where all humans have an absolute confidence in their personal future and in that of their children, and where social relations between equals are relaxed, polite and friendly. This is why **social justice** is the **second pillar** of the Society of Agreement, to be reached in **2040**.

## **4 Only Pan-European democracy has the political power and legitimacy to implement the large-scale agreements made necessary by the global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

### ***4.1 The rise in the scale of political decision-making is an historical trend, related to the rise in the scale of the issues to solve and the need to avoid free-riding***

The rise in the **scale** of **political decision-making** is an **historical trend** that started with the small groups of hunters-gatherers we all originate from.

The first reason for this is to **avoid violence** in the resolution of conflicts, in order to rely on the fairer and more predictable **rule of law**. These conflicts happen whenever sovereign entities (individuals, tribes, Greek polities, feudal principalities, modern nation-states) gather to solve common problems or issues. On the one hand, every entity wants to remain free from any obligation and of any prohibition, and wants to maintain its rights, liberties and honour intact. On the other hand, generalising this behaviour to all entities means that they exert unrestricted **violence** against each other. Peace is a fragile state, permanently threatened by the smallest provocation, and only painfully restored after exhausting and bloody cycles of vendettas and revenges<sup>7</sup>. Generally after painful and protracted conflicts, entities of smaller size have relinquished part of their sovereignty to entities of larger size, where their rights, obligations and prohibitions are protected and enforced by the **rule of law**, and not by the brutality of what classical European philosophers called the "state of nature". The penultimate occasion when this happened in Europe was at the end of the Thirty Years war (1618 – 1648), which had costed 5 million lives in Germany alone. The resulting peace treaties, known as the Westphalian Treaties, established the order of sovereign nation-states and under which we continue to live.

The second reason for the rise in the scale of political decision-making is the general rule that, for **political action** (i.e. regulation, taxation or public spending) to be **effective** at managing a collective issue, it must act at the **geographical scale** at which the underlying **phenomena**

<sup>7</sup> Diamond, J.: "The World Until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies?", Viking books, New York, 2012 - [http://www.jareddiamond.org/Jared\\_Diamond/The\\_World\\_Until\\_Yesterday.html](http://www.jareddiamond.org/Jared_Diamond/The_World_Until_Yesterday.html)



operate, e.g. at the scale of an urban area to manage its sewage system, of a regional labour market to manage its vocational education curricula, of a linguistic area to support literature, theatre and cinema, of a monetary union to manage interest rates and macro-economic balances, of the whole world to manage global public goods such as the climate, financial stability, the Internet and peace.

If the geographic scale of political action is smaller than that of the issue, no political entity can act on it effectively. The private players that the political entities attempt to regulate or to tax separately play these political entities against each other, in a race to the bottom. Political entities play **free-riding** tactics against each other when public spending is needed or common obligations must be fulfilled, each of them expecting the others to make the effort, the result being that none is made, or too little, too late.

#### ***4.2 Nation-states, inherited from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, act at a scale too small to be effective***

The political institutions with which we collectively operate have remained essentially **unchanged** since the Westphalian Treaties of 1648 that ended the Thirty Years War. The basic entity is that of the **sovereign nation-state**, theorised by Thomas Hobbes in his "Leviathan" (1651, revised 1668). The very few notable exceptions are supra-national institutions set up after the bloodbaths of the two world wars 1914 – 1945: the European Union, which we will discuss later (p.14), and the much weaker international legal system of the United Nations.

In the system of the sovereign nation-state, each nation-state has an exclusive authority over its own people and territory, and organises its decision-making processes internally, sometimes democratically, too often not. The nation-state was the privileged framework and scale to establish the well-functioning political and social democracies of the 1950s and 1960s in Western Europe. It was the scale at which the (strong) regulation of economic players, as well as the (massive) solidarity, redistribution and economic transfers between regions and social classes, were established.

Unfortunately, as we have seen above, the **scale of the issues** valid for the 21<sup>st</sup> century has **irreversibly** risen far **above that of the nation-state**, because of the **global inter-dependencies** based on technological and scientific developments taking place since the 1960s, and described above.

As a result of the general rule mentioned above (p.10), **nation-states** have become **ineffective** when they attempt to act on phenomena that happen at a scale greater than their constituencies, such as the global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This **mismatch** between the current geographic scale of political action and of democracy (the nation-state), and that at which the underlying phenomena happen (at continental or global scale) has led to a general (and often justified) feeling of **political dis-empowerment**. People feel that they have **lost the control** of the decisions that determine their **collective future**.

This feeling is reinforced by the fact that the stop-gap solution that nation-states have used to



tackle these large-scale issues, while attempting to keep their national sovereignty intact, namely that of **inter-governmental negotiations**, is the **negation of democracy**. This negation of democracy is specifically problematic in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, a time when the **rise in education levels** increases the demand for political participation, and makes **democracy** the only **legitimate** mode of **political decision-making** – at least in Europe.

### ***4.3 Sovereign nation-states bargaining in secret inter-governmental negotiations are the negation of democracy***

As we have seen above, issues beyond the scale of the nation-state are managed (if at all) by **inter-governmental negotiations**, i.e. by the secret inter-action of official representatives of these nation-states (e.g. in the framework of the United Nations). In these inter-governmental negotiations, no party bears a global responsibility for the collective good. All have the narrow mandate to bargain for their constituency, and for it only. Because national sovereignty is considered as an absolute, decision-making is plagued by **unanimity** rules, and enforcement of decisions is essentially based on the **pressure of peers** and of public opinion (with the assumption that this public opinion is free from political oppression and from corporate manipulation). This results in **opacity**, **powerlessness** and **lack of accountability**. If "democracy" means "the power of the people", then **inter-governmental negotiation** is the **negation of democracy**: it has no power, and the little power it has is beyond the control of the people. This could be acceptable at times when the issues to be discussed were the dynastic disputes between members of royal families. It isn't any more when the geographic scale of almost all issues has risen beyond the boundaries of nation-states, and where decisions being taken that have the greatest impact are precisely those taken in these secret inter-governmental negotiations.

Within the nation-state, democracy can exist, despite the predictions of many conservative political theorists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it only could operate at the scale at which it had previously been experimented, namely that of the Greek polity in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The fact that each individual nation-state engaged in an inter-governmental negotiation is democratically elected does not mean, however, that the inter-governmental negotiation itself is democratic. The flaws of opacity, powerlessness and lack of accountability remain – as the discussions of the European Council, gathering the heads of State and of Government of the EU to define "general political directions" but with no legislative powers<sup>8</sup>, and of the less-publicised Council of the European Union, gathering ministers at technical level to take decisions on policies in dialogue with the European Parliament, painfully remind us every quarter.

### ***4.4 Democracy at a crossroads: trans-national democracy or nationalistic dictatorship***

We can summarise the current situation in a 2x2 matrix.

<sup>8</sup> Treaty on the European Union, accessible at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT&from=EN> , Art. 15.1



Locus of power / Scale of action	Concentrated power: oligarchy	Distributed power: democracy
Larger than nation-state	<b>2</b> - Global oligarchy: unaccountable inter-governmental negotiations + multinational corporations + the very rich	<b>4</b> - Trans-national democracy
Nation-state and below	<b>3</b> - Nationalistic dictatorship	<b>1</b> - National democracy of the 1960s

The last 50 years brought us from square 1, the **national democracy of the 1960s**, with a strong regulation and generous redistribution at national scale, of which many keep the nostalgia, increasingly towards square 2, the **global oligarchy**, where a small group of people and players act above the law, evade their responsibilities and duties, and take decisions outside of any accountability, public scrutiny, or democratic control: State representatives in inter-governmental negotiations, Board members in multinational corporations, members of some "technical" bodies whose decisions have a huge influence on the economic and financial system (e.g. the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision<sup>9</sup>, the International Accounting Standards Board<sup>10</sup>), the very rich (the notorious "1%") and the obscenely rich (the billionaires).

Our societies seem to have progressively become aware of this evolution, often referred to as "globalisation".

They seem now to hesitate between two possibilities<sup>11</sup>.

One potential evolution is towards square 3, the **nationalistic dictatorship**, in a desperate attempt to **revert to the national sovereignty of the 1960s**, under the authoritarian rule of a phallogocratic leader, at the price of any democratic freedom. This attempt is a disastrous **political and moral regression**. It is also a blatant **lie**: the multinational corporations that currently shape the political decisions act even more easily than before when all the democratic institutions that control governmental action have been dismantled. One dictator and his/her clique is easier to corrupt behind closed doors than a whole democratic political system open to public scrutiny. The immense fortune of all dictators is a testimony that any discourse on being "clean" by sheer personal virtue is a lie, when not strongly supported by democratic institutions, and by the rule of law. Nationalistic dictatorship is also technically **doomed to fail** in its claim to recover sovereignty: the global inter-dependencies outlined above will not disappear by the force of human will, and the underlying flows can be cut at places, but not eradicated. In addition, national governments, however "strong" the person (most often a man) at their head, remain fatally weak against blackmail by multinational corporations threatening to relocate elsewhere if their demands for less

9 <https://www.bis.org/bcbs/>

10 <https://www.iasplus.com/en/resources/ifrs/ifrs-iasb-ifs-ic/iasb>

11 This analysis is coherent with the concept of the "Trilemma of world economics" by Harvard economist Dani Rodrick, according to which it is impossible to have simultaneously economic integration, democracy and national sovereignty: [http://rodrik.typepad.com/dani\\_rodriks\\_weblog/2007/06/the-inescapable.html](http://rodrik.typepad.com/dani_rodriks_weblog/2007/06/the-inescapable.html)



corporate taxation and less regulation are not met. Finally, nationalistic dictatorships promise prosperity for the people. They end up in **destructive wars**, under which the first to suffer is the very people that they claim to protect – as humankind bitterly experienced in the dark 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The other possible evolution is to create a democracy at a scale larger than that of the nation-state, the **trans-national democracy** of square 4.

A trans-national democracy **unites citizens**, and takes action, **beyond national, linguistic and cultural boundaries**. Its institutions are **democratic**, and built at a **supra-national scale**. Elected officials have the mandate to act in the interest of the whole community of citizens being administered, independently from their nationality, language or culture. Democratic debates oppose different political views, not cultural or national differences. They result in political agreements and decisions at a scale large enough for public policies to be effective, and with sufficient **political power and legitimacy** to overcome the resistance of vested economic interests by multi-national corporations or by the oligarchy of the global rich and super-rich. The decisions taken are **legitimate**, and **enforced** by the power of **law**. Trans-national democracy thus overcomes the weaknesses, inefficiencies and illegitimacy of inter-governmental negotiations, and the powerlessness of single nation-states, which we outlined above.

The [institutions of the European Union](#), and specifically the [European Commission](#) and the [European Parliament](#), despite all their weaknesses, are to date the most advanced and developed prototypes of a trans-national democracy, at the scale of a single continent.

#### ***4.5 The European Union is the most advanced prototype of trans-national democracy***

As of 2018, only one trans-national democratic institution exists, with a capacity to take and enforce decisions taken collectively by nation-states: the **European Union**. It is the only locus where **trans-national democracy** has started to emerge.

This institution has many weaknesses, and is far from being perfect. In our views, its much criticised lack of transparency and accountability is mainly located in one of its law-making institutions, and one only: the [Council of the European Union](#), i.e. the inter-governmental gathering of Member States at ministerial level. This institution reproduces and perpetuates the undemocratic flaws of inter-governmental negotiations seen above<sup>12</sup>. The fact that most of its decisions (those under the “ordinary” legislative procedure where the Council acts on a par with the Parliament) are taken by qualified majority overcomes the traditional weakness of inter-governmental negotiation, namely the need for unanimity, and the resulting veto right by any participating nation-state. However, unanimous approval remains necessary for some essential decisions: some aspects of

12 As highlighted by Transparency International <https://transparency.eu/space-egg/> “The Council remains the least transparent of EU institutions. [...] We know little of who says what on behalf of which government. [...] The Council is a black hole in EU decision-making and lags way behind the other institutions on transparency, accountability and openness. Until the final vote, when all deals are done, you cannot see which governments are promoting or blocking which issues. There are few public meetings and no voting records.” and by the enquiry launched in March 2017 by the official European Ombudsman on “transparency of Council legislative work”: <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/caseopened.faces/en/75850/html.bookmark>



social policy (collective bargaining between trade unions and employers, social security, social protection<sup>13</sup>), taxation (environmental taxation<sup>14</sup>, indirect taxation<sup>15</sup>, the resources feeding the budget of the Union<sup>16</sup>), some aspects of trade (in services, Intellectual Property, Foreign Direct Investment, cultural and audiovisual goods, social education and health services<sup>17</sup>). Similarly, some essential elements of harmonisation between Member States are explicitly excluded from the Treaties: “*fiscal provisions, [...] those relating to the free movement of persons [and] those relating to the rights and interests of employed persons*<sup>18</sup>”.

The much-publicised [European Council](#), gathering the heads of State and of government in regular “European summits”, and having the role of proposing the President of the Commission after the European elections (who then must be approved by the newly-elected Parliament) and of defining “*general political directions and priorities*” of the development of the Union, with institutional but no legislative powers<sup>19</sup>, shares the same features of opacity and weakness caused by veto right by any Member State. This veto is either explicit, when unanimity is required by the Treaties, or implicit, because its decisions are taken by “*consensus*”<sup>20</sup>, with no clear rule for overcoming opposition by one or a few Member States.

Despite these weaknesses, the institutions of the European Union bear remarkable features of **trans-national democracy**: (1) they implement the essential elements of bicameral parliamentary democracy, and (2) this democracy is in many respects trans-national.

The European Union operates in a fashion very similar to a **bicameral parliamentary democracy**. Its vocabulary however may be confusing, and deserves being clarified in the following table that gives the equivalents of institutions of the European Union in national parliamentary democracies.

13 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, accessible at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN> Art. 21.3, and 153.2

14 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 192.2 and 194.3

15 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 113

16 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 311

17 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 207.4

18 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 114.2

19 Treaty on the European Union, accessible at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT&from=EN> Art. 15.1

20 Treaty on the European Union, Art. 15.4



Nature of the institution	Examples in national parliamentary democracies	Name given in the institutions of the European Union
Head of State	President, Monarch	The European Council, gathering the national Heads of State or of Government
Head of Government	Prime Minister, Chancellor	President of the European Commission
Government, managing the executive power	Government	European Commission
Parliamentary Lower House, representing directly the people	National Assembly, <i>Bundestag</i> , Chamber of Deputies	European Parliament
Parliamentary Upper House, representing the territories constituting the full polity	Senate, <i>Bundesrat</i>	Council of the European Union, gathering the national Ministers
Legislation	Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulations (directly applicable to all Member States)</li> <li>• Directives (which must be transposed into national law by Member States)</li> </ul>

Bearing this vocabulary in mind, the European Union operates, very much like a **bicameral parliamentary democracy**:

- The Head of Government (the President of the European Commission) is proposed by the Head of State (the European Council), following the result of the elections to the Lower House of Parliament (the European Parliament), and must be then approved by this recently elected Lower House of Parliament<sup>21</sup>. The recent practice, inaugurated by the Juncker Commission elected in 2014, has deepened this democratic logic: the President of the Commission nominated by the European Council was the candidate supported by the largest political group in the Parliament following the election, under a system known in Germany as *Spitzenkandidat*<sup>22</sup>.
- The Head of the Government (the President of the Commission) then builds his/her team, the full Government (European Commission)<sup>23</sup>. The full Government must then obtain a vote of confidence by the Lower House of the Parliament (the European Parliament)<sup>24</sup>.

21 Treaty on the European Union, Art. 14

22 This happened because the European Parliament (including the other political groups than the one having won the largest number of seats) made it very clear to the European Council that it would accept no other candidate to the position of President of the European Commission than the *Spitzenkandidat* of the winning political group.

23 Under strong – and unfortunate – constraints regarding the nationality of the Members of the Commission (Treaty on the European Union, Art. 17.5 and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 244).

24 Treaty on the European Union, Art. 17.7





- The Lower House of Parliament (the European Parliament) controls the Government (the Commission), and can demote it via a motion of censure<sup>25</sup>.
- The Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament (resp. the Council and the European Parliament) define and control the budget<sup>26</sup>.
- Most laws (Regulations and Directives) are adopted by agreement between the Upper and Lower House of Parliament (resp. the Council working at qualified majority and the European Parliament)<sup>27</sup>.

This bicameral parliamentary democracy operates in many respects **trans-nationally**:

- the European Commission is mandated to act for the **common good of the whole Union** (its "*general interest*")<sup>28</sup>. Commissioners are explicitly prohibited from seeking or taking instructions from their national government<sup>29</sup>.
- the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are grouped, and vote<sup>30</sup>, according to their **political preferences and interests**<sup>31</sup>, and not to their nationality<sup>32</sup>.
- **Member States** are subject to the **rule of law**, and to the judiciary power of the European Court of Justice<sup>33</sup>, like any legal or physical person. They are not the absolute, independent sovereigns that they would be in the international system of nation-states inherited from the 17<sup>th</sup> century Westphalian treaties.

For all these reasons, we support the views that the European Union is the first and most developed **prototype of trans-national democracy**.

### ***4.6 Pan-European democracy is the first pillar of the Society of Agreement***

The task that humankind is confronted with is to reach the many political agreements required by

25 Treaty on the European Union, Art. 17.8

26 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 311 to 319.

27 Under the "ordinary legislative procedure", described in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 294. The other laws, in the limited but important fields described earlier, are adopted under a "special legislative procedure" where the Council decides alone, by unanimity.

28 Treaty on the European Union, Art. 17.1

29 Treaty on the European Union, Art. 17.3

30 D.Frantescu "Values topple nationality in the European Parliament", European View, June 2015, Volume 14, Issue 1, pp 101–110, accessible at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12290-015-0349-3/fulltext.html>

31 Rules of procedure of the European Parliament, Art. 32.2, accessible at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+RULES-EP+20170116+RULE-032+DOC+XML+V0//EN&navigationBar=YES>

32 This development is not complete, though. Because elections in the European Parliament are performed at a national scale, and because, until the foundation of the CosmoPolitical Cooperative, no political organisation existed at the scale of the whole European Union, MEPs are elected as members of their national political party. As a result, the political groups in the Parliament so far are coalitions of national parties rather than the expression of a single, EU-wide political organisation. One of the ambitions of the CosmoPolitical Cooperative is precisely to build a political group in the European Parliament, with unprecedented cohesiveness stemming from its unity of decision-making at EU scale.

33 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 258 to 260



the global and high-stake issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in a **legitimate**, i.e. **democratic**, process, ultimately at the unprecedented scale of the whole world.

We are fully aware of the difficulty of this endeavour, because it means that agreements must be reached between stakeholders that are: (1) subject to enormous inter- and intra-national **inequalities** in terms of income, wealth, education, health, political empowerment and access to resources and to communication networks, (2) separated by national, linguistic and cultural **boundaries**, (3) separated in **time**, between us and future generations and (4) separated in **rights**, between humans and non-human entities (e.g. the biosphere).

Overcoming social inequalities is the purpose of the second pillar of the Society of Agreement (cf. § 3). The CosmoPolitical Cooperative has its own reflection and policy regarding linguistic differences. Advocating for non-human entities or unborn humans is already the purpose of very active and effective political actors and NGOs. This is why we believe that the difficulties in implementing trans-national democracy, although important, can be overcome.

In our views, a **trans-national democracy**, i.e. a democracy transcending national boundaries, is the only way for collective decisions to be taken at the scale made necessary by the evolutions of scientific knowledge regarding our planet, and of technical networks connecting humans. It is the only way for institutions to ensure that justice be given to the legitimate claims of all. It is the only way to reach the legitimate political agreements necessary to overcome the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to implement them, even against the will of powerful economic and financial powers. **It is the only way forward.**

This agenda is extremely ambitious.

We thus believe that trans-national democracy must first develop where it is already most advanced: in the **European Union**. This explains why **pan-European democracy**, i.e. trans-national democracy at the scale of the European Union, is the **first pillar** of the Society of Agreement, to be reached in **2030**.