THE TRANSITIONS² CALL FOR COMMITTMENT

Challenge

We are calling on you to help unite these two major contemporary transitions, into one irresistible force: Transitions²

Language of your contribution : English   Attached resources language : French

CALL FOR COMMITTMENT

The ecological transition is our horizon and our imperative, but the fact of continued environmental degradation compels us to admit that even if the goal is clear, the path to reaching it is not. The digital transition is our everyday; it is the biggest transformative force of our time, yet does not seek to further any specific collective goal. One transition has a goal and no path, the other is a pathway with no goal: each of these transitions needs the other! Yet they, and their actors, interact rarely and poorly, without harnessing the power their convergence would produce.

We come from both the digital and the environmental spheres, and call upon thse who are not satisfied with their disjunction. We call together those who think, act, strive, invent and create at the intersection of digital technology and the ecology, and beyond these, anyone motivated by the desire to reinvent our ways of life in a more sustainable, inclusive world.

Against the backdrop of COP21, we wish to begin what we hope will be an ongoing collaborative exploration of the convergence between the digital and ecological transitions. This is an opportunity for us to lay the foundations for a creative, sustainable, shared commitment among actors from these two worlds. Above and beyond the negotiations between States, there are a multitude of novel possibilities waiting to be explored–and brought to life.

Shared analyses

Given the climate emergency we currently face–only one of the several "planetary boundaries"

(ocean acidification, biodiversity loss, etc.) that humanity has crossed or is about to cross–we need to rethink our models.

The convergence of the ecological and digital transitions cannot be limited to purely technical solutions in terms of optimization, efficiency or even resource substitution. While clearly necessary, such measures are grossly inadequate in light of the level of ambition our situation demands ("factor 4"), vulnerable as they are to "rebound effects". The dramatic scale of the shifts our planet needs calls for real systemic transformation: an ecological transition away from current patterns of consumption, production and lifestyle toward more frugal economies.

This ecological transition will not take place without the participation of every actor in society, the economy, and the public sphere.

We hope to witness the adoption of an ambitious, universally-binding agreement in Paris in 2015. Even though this step is crucial, the history of conferences past has shown us that caution is needed, especially as regards States' respect for prior agreements. And, of course, governments cannot meet the ecological challenge alone. The commitment, cooperation and vigilance of cities and regions, large and small businesses, NGOs and citizens is also required.

In support of an ecological transition we would all be part of, "digital" stands for much more than mere technical tools.

It powers new ways for us to work, think, know and take action. It equips and supports innovative and powerful forms of participation, mobilisation and collective action. It enables unprecedented forms of collaboration, new forms of exchange and sharing, the production and management of new "commons", and more agile interactions between local and global scales. It facilitates the transition from an idea to its realisation, the emergence of concrete alternatives, and the sharing of lessons learned from both positive and negative experiences.

The ecological transition is also a new frontier for the digital world.

Clearly, "unsustainable" digital practices contribute to models for unsustainable growth, for example by accelerating product renewal, or by supporting new and old forms of power and wealth concentration. To serve the ecological transition, digital technologies would not only have to reduce their own environmental footprint; they would need to integrate the ecological transition into every developmental prospect, and deliberately seek to accelerate ecological transformation in every sector and system they equip. Thus, the digital world can and should help measure wealth differently, as well as the "externalities" of human activities; organise the sharing and pooling of resources; reorganise entire sectors around renewable resources, and shortened or "closed" loops; and develop narratives other than one of consumption…

Shared values

Solidarity among generations

We share the original "sustainable development" values that were outlined by the Brundtland Report in 1987: "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." On a planet of 9 billion people, these values require us to overcome a consumerist lifestyle and a development model based exclusively on economic growth.

Openness, collaboration and mutualisation

We believe that sharing and collaboration are decisive factors that contribute both to the ecological transition and the digital transition. Only if we mobilise collective intelligence at every level will it be possible to invent and establish the new patterns of production, consumption, mobility, learning, etc. that we need to accomplish the ecological transition. In turn, many of these models will be based on the sharing and pooling of not only information, but also material resources, objects, tools, infrastructures and locations. The convergence of the digital and ecological transitions creates a kind of "economy of contribution". Digital technology provides support for most of the above types of sharing and collaboration–provided, of course, that its tools are deployed in an open, transparent and collaborative way.

Shared knowledge and research collaboration

The role of knowledge dissemination in the fight against climate change is well established: the observation of these phenomena and their modeling was supported by the exchange and sharing practices that are the backbone of scientific communities. We promote an ecosystemic approach to knowledge by and for all, particularly through open access to scientific publications and the data on which these are based.

Collective and individual empowerment

The ecological transition will not take hold without more and more citizens and communities being in a position to confront their own issues, take charge of their own affairs, or become entrepreneurs. We share the vision of a digital world in which individuals become increasingly self-reliant and also more connected, and in which the systems that govern us are rendered more intelligible, auditable and transformable.

Innovation

To achieve a transition of this magnitude–individual, systemic, economic, social, technological and political–we need new ways to perceive, produce, consume, act, share... In short, we need innovation. The term 'innovation' should be understood in its broadest sense: scientific; technological; of use and usage; and of business, organizational or social models. Finally, innovation must be inclusive, that is to say, put forward and discussed among all of society's actors: businesses of course, but also the public sector, NGOs and private citizens.

Shared challenges

The digital footprint

The ecological footprint made by digital technologies is already massive, and growing fast. The Internet, the web and their infrastructures already emit as much CO2 as the air transport sector. But digital technologies contribute to the ecological crisis in many other ways, from the depletion of scarce raw materials for device manufacture to the steady increase of e-waste. A constant and measurable effort should be made to drastically reduce the ecological footprint of the entire "lifecycle" of digital products and services (cumbersome programs, massive data processing, etc.).

New forms of value creation

Our developmental indices, whether at an organisational or a national level, regard the environmental and social impacts of our activities as "externalities", which pushes these issues into the background, even when reporting requirements exist. Given this fact, we believe that nations and organisations need new ways to measure wealth and value, and evaluate projects and activities from an environmental and social standpoint from the very beginning. Such methods should be designed to replace current standards, rather than add to them. For example, South African listed companies must produce an "integrated report" which simultaneously outlines financial, social, environmental and governance performance.

Commons

The original concept of "common goods" stems from the management of limited resources. From an ecological perspective, the idea of treating certain natural resources as commons to be shared, either globally or locally, is cropping up more and more frequently. In recent decades, the digital world has revived the notion of the commons, by developing new, so-called "intangible" commons (free and open source software, open hardware, open networks...) and informational commons (Wikipedia, open data...), by facilitating the governance of shared resources, as well as encouraging the creation of new shared workplaces, plants, repair shops, etc. We see a huge potential in this convergence of intentions and actions, and intend to further its exploration.

Scaling

Digital technologies can breathe new life into the "Think globally, act locally" slogan that has been at the heart of the ecological movement since its inception. Local ecological initiatives do not require digital technologies, but linking them with each other, and associating them with other systems, infrastructures, resources and shared places does... Digital technologies are the medium of new decentralized coordination mechanisms, which organize the flow of a circular economy, manage alternative currencies, or enable a more distributed system of production, storage and distribution of energy (an "Internet of energy"). Combining and reconciling a systemic ecological approach with the agility and diversity needed for innovation is an both an essential and an extremely difficult challenge.

Citizen involvement

The ecological transition cannot be achieved without the inclusion and commitment of every one of us. Digital technologies can enable wider and deeper citizen engagement in the transition, whether by altering individual practices, fostering collective or entrepreneurial projects, or shifting the balance of power. Far from relying on guilt or paternalistic incentives, digital technologies can help each of us link our individual growth with collective transformation. Utilizing digital technologies as the means to achieve this goal appears as a prerequisite to reaching new milestones in the ecological transition, including influencing future international negotiations.

Collective narratives

The source of the digital revolution stems as much from our imaginations as it does from technology and economics. Since at least the 1970s, it has been sustained by richly powerful narratives that seeks to connect the aspirations of the times with a desirable future. The imperative presented by the ecological transition, on the other hand, requires words characterised by reason and necessity. Such language has a more difficult time interacting with our private, individual and collective aspirations, let alone our dreams. If we want to reconnect the goal with the path, we need to work simultaneously with our realities, and our imaginations.

**The Transitions2 call for commitments was initiated by
the French Digital Council(Conseil National du numérique) and Transitions² program partners
Fing, Coalition Climat 21, Les Petits Débrouillards,
OuiShare, POC21, Terra Eco, Without Model, Place to B et l'IDDRI
and sponsored by Numa**

The Transitions² is sponsored by The french Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, the French Agency for the Environment and Energy Management (ADEME) and France Stratégie

If you wish to heed the Transitions² call, what can you do?

We have decided to refrain from asking you to sign yet another document. On the other hand, we propose the following:

- Take a look at the "challenges" raised in conjunction with the Transitions2 program and participate in their articulation: propose new challenges, or contribute to the existing ones ("ActLocal", "Ecology by Design", "Active Mobilities", "Open Models for Sustainability", "Breathe your City") ;
- Contribute to the "catalog" of actors, projects, knowledge, tools, methods and imaginings that lie at the intersection between the ecological and the digital transitions, on www.transitions2.net.