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INSTITUTO DE FILOSOFIA E CIÊNCIAS HUMANAS

EDSON PEREIRA DE SOUZA LEÃO NETO

VERNACULAR FORMS-OF-LIVING: THINKING AFTER IVAN ILLICH

FORMAS-DE-VIVER VERNÁCULAS: PENSANDO A PARTIR DE IVAN ILLICH

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A thesis presented to the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences of the State University of Campinas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in the area of Social Aspects of Sustainability and Conservation.

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To the Word, to the Breath, and to the Flesh.

Man has defended himself, always, against other men, against nature. He has constantly violated nature. The result is a civilization built on force, power, fear, dependence. All our 'technical progress' has only provided us with comfort, a sort of standard. And instruments of violence for keeping power. We are like savages! We use the microscope like a cudgel! No, that's wrong… savages are more spiritual than us! As soon as we make a scientific breakthrough, we put it to use in the service of evil. And as for standard, some wise man once said that sin is that which is unnecessary. If that is so, then our entire civilization is built on sin, from beginning to end. We have acquired a dreadful disharmony and imbalance, if you will, between our material and our spiritual development. Our culture is defective. I mean, our civilization. Basically defective, my boy!

Excerpt from Andrei Tarkovsky's Sacrifice

No settled family or community has ever called its home place an 'environment.' None has ever called its feeling for its home place 'biocentric' or 'anthropocentric.' None has ever thought of its connection to its home place as 'ecological,' deep or shallow. The real names of the environment are the names of rivers and river valleys; creeks, ridges, and mountains; towns and cities; lakes, woodlands, lanes, roads, creatures, and people.

Wendell Berry

I hope nobody takes what I said for answers
Ivan Illich

ABSTRACT

Ivan Illich (1926-2002) became worldwide renown in the 1970s for books critical of such institutions as schools, medicine, transport, and professional services. Illich's acute insights into the present allowed him to foresee the ecological devastation and political impotence that is now obvious. Illich's specific diagnosis of the historical origins of the present came from confronting the unexamined assumptions on which contemporary societies rest. This thesis is elaborated following Illich's perspective on modern industrial society. Its main goals were to produce an Illichian diagnosis of the current social-ecological crises and an Illichian therapeutics for balancing society and nature. The first goal is reached in chapters one and two (Part One), while the second is attempted in chapters three and four (Part Two). The first part is dedicated to a thorough analysis of Illich's *oeuvre*, clearly highlighting three main concepts: conviviality, commons, and vernacular. The second part is devoted to thinking after Illich, whereby these three concepts become the source of two analytical tools coined for this work. These two concepts are vernacular forms-of-living and *regula vernaculum*. They refer to the ways of living of modern yet proportional societies, that is, to the political struggle for setting limits to the power of tools (conviviality), the regime of property (commons), and the monopoly of exchange value activities (vernacular) – all three scaled by the human body. I argue that without these three limits, any political effort toward social-ecological balance is sterile. Accordingly, the two main consequences of this work are: to offer a new analytical tool that helps researchers, especially those within the field of environment and society, to recognize the foundational conditions that generate social-ecological imbalances; and to argue that scholarly discourse must shift urgently to debate the question of limits. The fields of study concerned with an ecological balance must stop framing the goals for a social-ecological reconstruction based on how much the earth system supports and begin to frame it in terms of limits to tools, property, and scarcity.

Keywords: Ivan Illich; conviviality; vernacular; commons; forms-of-living; sustainability; ecology; environment and society; political ecology.

RESUMO

Ivan Illich (1926-2002) ganhou renome mundial na década de 1970 por uma série de livros críticos de instituições como escolas, medicina, transporte e serviços profissionais. As percepções agudas de Illich sobre o presente permitiram-lhe prever a devastação ecológica e a impotência política que agora são óbvias. O diagnóstico distinto de Illich das origens históricas do presente veio do confronto com os pressupostos não examinados sobre os quais as sociedades contemporâneas se baseiam. Esta tese foi elaborada a partir dessa perspectiva de Illich sobre a sociedade industrial moderna. Seus principais objetivos foram produzir tanto um diagnóstico illichiano das atuais crises socioecológicas quanto uma terapêutica illichiana para equilibrar sociedade e natureza. O primeiro objetivo é alcançado nos capítulos um e dois (Parte Um), enquanto o segundo é tentado nos capítulos três e quatro (Parte Dois). A primeira parte é dedicada a uma análise aprofundada da obra de Illich, colocando em foco três conceitos principais: convivialidade, comum e vernacular. A segunda parte é dedicada a pensar a partir de Illich, em que esses três conceitos se tornam a fonte de duas ferramentas analíticas cunhadas para os propósitos deste trabalho. Esses dois conceitos são formas-de-viver vernaculares e *regula vernaculum*. Referem-se aos modos de vida das sociedades modernas, porém proporcionais, ou seja, à luta política por estabelecer limites ao poder das ferramentas (convivialidade), ao regime de propriedade (comum) e ao monopólio das atividades de valor de troca (vernacular) – todos os três dimensionados pelo corpo humano. Argumento que sem esses três limites, qualquer esforço político em direção ao equilíbrio socioecológico é estéril. Nesse sentido, as duas principais consequências deste trabalho são: oferecer uma nova ferramenta analítica que ajude os pesquisadores, especialmente aqueles do campo de ambiente e sociedade, a reconhecerem as condições fundacionais que geram desequilíbrios socioecológicos; e argumentar que o discurso acadêmico deve mudar urgentemente para debater a questão dos limites. Os campos de estudo preocupados com o equilíbrio ecológico devem deixar de enquadrar os objetivos de uma reconstrução socioecológica com base no quanto o sistema Terra suporta e começar a enquadrá-lo em termos de limites às ferramentas, propriedade e escassez.

Palavras-Chave: Ivan Illich; convivialidade; vernacular; comum; formas-de-viver; sustentabilidade; ecologia; ambiente e sociedade; ecologia política.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Preamble

The candle on the table

It was our last night in State College, Pennsylvania. My companion and I had traveled around the United States searching for Illich's friends and collaborators. We had almost no resources to sustain ourselves, but we found hospitality everywhere we went. We were sitting at Samar Farage and Sajay Samuel's table. Isabelle had set up her easel at the same place the night before. We had had two long conversations with Sajay, he allowed the presence of the lenses and was curious enough to relax under the gaze of Isabelle, who was painting his portrait while ideas were sprouting. Our last night was quite special. Samar was preparing exquisite Lebanese food, and the smell of spices was gradually filling the library.

The conversation reached a pivotal moment. Sajay was elaborating that after the book *Gender* (1982), Illich changed not only the course of his research and investigation but also his way of speaking and writing. How to say something and write about it became one of Illich's deeply felt longings. We had previously spoken about Illich's pamphlets and how they found their way into the public debate of their time. We spoke of Illich's negative theology, proposals for modern yet proportional societies, and ways of living within limits. "But," I asked Sajay, "what was Illich ultimately saying?" Quite abruptly, Sajay straightened his torso and pushed his back against the chair. He turned into a silent yet intimate spirit; his eyes were staring at my eyes as if they could touch me. No words. He alternated the direction of his gaze between Isabelle and me. No words. All of a sudden, he stood up, fetched a candle from one of his bookshelves, and lit it. He put the candle on the middle of the table and left. The flame of the candle remained as a silently alive presence.

Four days before the candle on the table, Isabelle and I had knocked on the door of two strangers. We both heard and read of Samar and Sajay, but we had never met before. A month before our encounter, we had written an email inviting ourselves into their home. We wrote about our desire to meet Illich's friends and students and of our little ritual – creating a space of trust where ideas and conversations can flow under the gaze of a painter and the lenses of a video maker (which we named after Gaze Project). They promptly accepted our proposal, and we set a date to meet. We arrived at their doorstep on the morning of July 2nd of the year 2018. Both answered the door. Samar showed such enthusiasm, which almost made us feel that that

was not an awkward moment. Sajay was more practical and yet tender. He helped us with our luggage, easel, backpacks, tripod, and camera case. We guessed he was surprised by all that stuff. At that very moment, Sajay unleashed his first joke: “judging by the amount and weight of your stuff, I hope you are not expecting to stay for a month!” We all laughed together, and the first minutes of tension began to vanish.

They invited us into a cozy and spacious living room. Fresh water and some snacks were sitting on the center table. After literally no more than two minutes of small talk about our trip and our ages – I later learned that Sajay is incapable of small talk – Sajay clapped his hands, suggesting that we were about to begin the big conversation, and addressed the two of us with directness and with genuine curiosity:

- “Well, it is time for you to tell us the story of how on earth you both have ended up, today, on our couch.”

Isabelle glanced at me; it was her usual signal that I should start talking.

- “It is a long story, but an interesting one.” I replied with a tone mingled with excitement and disquiet while fidgeting on the couch. The question was posed in a gentle yet serious way.

I find calmness and trust, aware that the couple in front of us were loving souls that took us in without anyone else’s reference by talking and telling stories. Samar and Sajay are good listeners, so I must have talked for roughly 15 minutes. Isabelle is much more observant than I am; she is not talkative and always careful with her words. So, I kept speaking about my experiences within the fishermen of Superagui, about my first encounter with Illich’s ideas and books, about how painting and filming are part of our way of being together with the others when, quite abruptly, Sajay interrupted me:

- “Neto, my dear, so far, the story has been very long, and you were right about it, but there is not much that is interesting yet!”

I laughed my head off; it had been a while since my last loud and exhilarating guffaw. I cannot say for others, but I could only feel that Sajay was inviting me into a special and intimate place of his way of living. One could consider it a risky joke, but creating trust is always risky. He had loosened the tightness hovering around us and opened a space for joyful sobriety. I began to take myself less seriously. At that very moment, I knew we would be great friends. Humor is one of my favorite languages of love, and I immediately felt what Sajay was doing.

We all sat for our first meal together with a much lighter spirit. Samar is a great cook, and Sajay makes very good drinks. We had spoken of Illich for a few hours before sitting at the table. I was thrilled by the beginning of our conversation, feeling that much more was ahead of

us. Sajay was introduced to Illich by Samar. They were both graduate students at Penn State University, where Illich was conducting, for six weeks, a yearly series of seminars on critical technology. Sajay became his student and lived under his instruction for more than ten years. He knew the man closely, but, most importantly, he has been committed to his ideas for several decades. The food was ready, Sajay lit a candle for the lunch table, a gesture of someone who was always open to more surprises, and we started eating.

We left State College four days later. Sajay came closer and told me that the candle would remain lighted in case of a third person knocked at their door. One year later, we arrived at the same doorsteps, this time to stay with friends and teachers. The candle remains on the table.

A path kept open

I started my journey with Illich in 2014. Adalmir Leonidio was my supervisor for my master's studies at USP [University of São Paulo]. He introduced me to Ivan Illich and *Tools for Conviviality* (1973). I wanted to investigate if there was a thread sewing correspondences between a certain stream within political ecology and romanticism – the 19th-century zeitgeist. I did not know of Illich. Leonidio generously encouraged me to read him, and the rest is history.

One day, after I finished my master's and was in my second year of doctoral studies, I asked Adalmir how he had come across Illich's books. I had never heard of Illich before meeting him, and the coin had finally dropped that Illich was relatively unknown in the 21st-century academy. He told me that he first read his name through the course syllabus of Professor Leila da Costa Ferreira from UNICAMP [State University of Campinas]. He was looking for political ecology references and found Leila's syllabus. For twenty years, Illich has been read in a course called Environmental Sociology for undergraduate students, and in another called Fundamentals of Environment and Society, for graduate students — both given by Leila.

Leila da Costa Ferreira developed a cutting-edge investigation on the origins of Environmental Sociology (see, for example, Ferreira, 2005). She traced it back to the ideas of Ivan Illich, to whom she has given the title of a radical ecologist. For twenty years, Leila has identified and opened a path for a radical political ecology. For twenty years, she has kept the flame of Illich burning inside the classrooms of UNICAMP. I never asked her why she kept the radical ecologists' spirit alive. Illich and many others have influenced her, but Ulrich Beck has inspired her the most. As far as I am concerned, no one ever really followed this path she had kept open (alongside Ivan Illich, to complete the list of thinkers whose strand Leila entitles as radical ecology, are André Gorz, Jean-Pierre Dupuy, and William Olphus).

I met Professor da Costa Ferreira at the encouragement of Rubia Gaissler, who had been her graduate student. After we spoke for thirty minutes, I presented Leila with the results of my latest research (my master's thesis) and spoke clearly of my eagerness to continue this journey. She invited me into her study group and told me she would gladly supervise my research. This dissertation could not have been conceptualized or written without her pioneering work at the intersection of ecology and sociology. Even though mainstream environmental sociology has taken quite a different epistemic road, she has kept this path open. I left our meeting inebriated with joy, feeling that she had her reasons to trust a stranger.

Leila was aware of the challenges I would encounter throughout this path. The lack of references, the lack of peers with whom to discuss Illich deeply and thoroughly, the difficulties of producing theoretical analysis while relating it to the fieldwork — above all because an Illichian perspective on climate change would be a novelty within environment and society research — and the call for political propositions that are beyond idealism were just some of the hurdles she knew I would have to cross.

From day one, under Leila's supervision, I was told to look for an international doctoral exchange. She impressed on me the importance of finding someone inside any university in the world who would be able to co-supervise my work, someone who knew Illich well, someone who was either a student of Illich, a collaborator, or a connoisseur of his thought. I had an experience of hospitality and friendship among Illich's friends in 2015 when I had remarkable encounters with David Schwartz, Peter Bohn, Mother Abbess David, and Mother Margaret Georgina. However, none of them were professional scholars, although good friends and excellent readers of Illich.

I came across the names of Sajay Samuel and Samar Farage through my Illichian friend Tollef Graff Hugo. He told me of Sajay's fast and analytical mind but, above all, his passion for Illich's ideas – they both met at a conference in Bremen, where Illich had kept many friends and students before the final act of his life (this is how Illich referred to the active dying). Although Tollef had told me that Sajay was a professor at the Pennsylvania State University, it never really crossed my mind, not even for a second, that an eventual encounter between us (most likely due to the Gaze Project[1]) could render a close friendship and, above all, six months of disciplined and rigorous studies of Ivan Illich.

[1] Gaze Project is how Isabelle and I made possible the encounter between her artistic work and my research. It is the searching for a way of living anchored by friendship through conversations, painting and filming. It has been a sojourn in foreign lands guided by the wish to experience the atmosphere of the Illich table. For more, see: https://www.gazeproject.com/.

The following words, which comprise the body of the text of my doctoral thesis, would not have been written without the trust of my supervisor, Leila da Costa Ferreira, and the trust of my co-supervisor, Sajay Samuel. Leila opened and kept a path onto which I would walk my own walk and explore it with responsible autonomy, while Sajay kept a candle on their table as a sign of openness to a stranger that eventually would knock on their door. I hope the next lines have honored your gestures. Hopefully, my prayer is that I might open a path for one and welcome another within the next twenty years. If this text carries this seed, only time will tell. In the meanwhile, a candle remains alight on our table.

General proposal

The overall goal of my doctoral work is to think after Ivan Illich. After presenting a thorough and rigorous analysis of his work, I extend his concepts and arguments to my questions, proposals, and analyses. Illich's writings and books have contributed to various academic fields and public discussions. His book *Deschooling Society* (1971) generated an open and long debate with Paulo Freire and continues to echo the liberation of pedagogy. *Limits to Medicine* (1975) engendered a series of discussions about iatrogenesis that later became a field of study and today continues to influence, for instance, the practices of palliatives. *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) was read worldwide when it was first published and remains, until today, an open path within environmental sociology, at least in UNICAMP. I could continue with many other examples of his prolific work and interdisciplinary impact.

There are two sections of this thesis. The first is dedicated to reviving Illich's contributions to the fields of Environment and Society and Political Ecology, and the second is dedicated to introducing an Illichian perspective into the scientific mainstream of academia and the public debate on climate change. His general theory of industrialization was never really discussed in Brazilian academia. I propose that Illich is a classic whose time of legibility has finally arrived (Agamben, 2017). I propose that his *oeuvre* relevant to Political Ecology comprises a triad of analytical concepts – which have been broadly ignored by the mainstream discussions on environment and society in Brazil – that undermine the three main pillars upholding the current and uninterrupted social-ecological crises: unlimited property, unlimited tools, and unlimited scarcity. His many contributions to a critical and radical rethinking of social conventions, combined with some of his specific propositions, must be integrated into the public debate on climate change, most importantly, into the studies addressing social-ecological degradation and its remedies.

I believe that many, if not most, of Illich's diagnoses of modern industrial society and his therapeutics, remain relevant and ever more urgent. Since the radical monopoly of industrial societies has achieved global scale, the world has entered the zone of permanent crisis. Hiroshima, Chornobyl, or Fukushima, the pollution of rivers and oceans, the degradation of soil and land, over-fishing, and extreme CO^2 emissions are examples of the ongoing planetary-scale catastrophe. The degradation of social limits and ecological thresholds is getting closer every day to its zenith, after which human life will become impractical on planet earth (Leila, 2017; Marques, 2020). Illich is not the strain of a thinker who embarks on a mission to save the planet. Thus, following Illich's footsteps, this work has not framed any solution for planetary catastrophes. Instead, it opens a path towards celebrating living together within well-defined and bodily recognized limits, as communities and as collectives. The time urges for reconciliation with proportionality and bodily scaled limits. However, paradoxically, ignoring planetary boundaries for bodily scaled limits may be the best-unintended solution to the socio-ecological crisis.

The thesis has been divided into two parts to present the main goal of this research. Part one comprises chapters one and two, respectively, *How to read Ivan Illich?* and *Why to read Ivan Illich in the 21st century?* Part two contains chapters three and four: *Thinking after Ivan Illich* and *Celebrating vernacular forms-of-living*. Part one is dedicated to the structural analysis of Ivan Illich's *oeuvre,* while part two is dedicated to my questions and propositions that emerged from thinking after Ivan Illich.

In chapter one, I propose a structured reading of Ivan Illich's body of work. I argue that three lines of force crisscross throughout his texts and meet at the author's standpoint. Illich's texts weave together the personal, practical, and theological lines and meet where Illich stood, with one foot in this world and the other out of it. Identifying and grasping these three lines of force within the Illich texts are fundamental for a thorough and rigorous understanding of his arguments and way of living, which, ultimately, in his case, are inseparable.

The practical line is related to Illich's correspondence with people and their milieu. It is a line of force that unearths Illich's engagement with practical stances of living together, that is, the foot on the world. Illich could be understood as a militant intellectual, for instance, when he left Princeton University to live among Puerto Ricans on the outskirts of Manhattan or stood in silence in the streets of Bremen, refusing to address the world against mass destruction weapons (nuclear energy and bombs).

The theological line is related to Illich's rootedness in the Christic tradition, above all the 12th-century philosophy. His analysis of modernity can only be fully grasped if attuned to its theological line. I do not mean that Illich wrote as a theologian like Leonardo Boff. I also believe that one can read Illich without concern for his theological perspective. However, since this line reveals Illich's foot out of this world, a reading that ignores his theological rootedness is always incomplete.

The personal line is related to Illich's way of living. In the age of professional scholars, one is used to separate the work from the life of an author. This is the norm. In Illich's case, such an approach would produce a superficial analysis. He was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church who, in the early 1970s, was told to leave and never come back; he lived among friends while avoiding formal institutions, and he lived by his faith. I demonstrate, through his writings and life events, that this mode of living in the world and not of it is fundamental to a proper reading of Illich.

In chapter two, I answer the question of why reading Ivan Illich in the 21st century. Though there are many possible reasons for reading a classic, for the scope of this work, I argue that Illich's critical understanding of modern industrial society, as well as his radical propositions, are fundamental to enriching and, eventually, shifting the public debate on climate change from how much the earth system earth can endure of human exploitation (mainstream environmentalism) to setting social limits that prevent crossing ecological thresholds.

Ivan Illich's *oeuvre* comprises a triad of concepts: conviviality, commons, and vernacular. These concepts emerged from Illich's devotion to living with communities and peoples who lived within socially agreed-upon limits. Commons is the concept that contrasts the regime of property, whether public or private, against communal arrangements of use without the need for ownership. Conviviality is the concept that contrast tools that are modern, efficient, and yet proportional to the form of the body against tools that are high quanta energy-dependent and counterproductive. Vernacular is a concept that contrasts any kind of exchange value activity to activities outside the net of money and demands the relative self-sufficiency of individuals and persons.

In chapter three, the beginning of part two, I argue that this triad of Illich's concepts can serve as analytical tools to frame limits to property (commons), limits to tools (conviviality), and limits to scarcity (vernacular). I argue that climate change and social-ecological degradation are ultimately the results of decades of Progress and Development, which are now morphed into Sustainable Development or simply Sustainability. Floating on the presumption of

unlimited property, tools, and scarcity, the planet is unlikely to sustain the depredations of sustainability development.

Instead, I propose the concept of *vernacular forms-of-living* as an analytical tool grounded in the concepts of the commons, conviviality, and the vernacular, as the horizon of the world to come. Vernacular forms-of-living are characterized by what I call *regula vernaculum*, social-political arrangements that are based on limits to property, tools, and scarcity scaled by the body. I call for vernacular forms-of-living, which celebrate living within well-defined and recognized social limits that, unintendedly, rarely cross ecological thresholds.

In chapter four, I offer an example of vernacular forms-of-living to show that it is neither pure theoretical analysis nor a utopian proposition. Instead, vernacular forms-of-living is the most radical social-political arrangements – they are modern yet proportional and therefore a source of hope – for the coming community. This chapter is an immersion into *Comunidade do Marujá*, a fisher's village in *Ilha do Cardoso – São Paulo* state, Brazil. The village exemplifies a case study of the *regula vernaculum*, when limits are celebrated as the source of abundance.

These four chapters, divided into two parts, encompass the first thesis written in Brazil, entirely dedicated to a thorough analysis of Ivan Illich's *oeuvre*. It is also the first work within the Brazilian academia that proposes an Illichian way of understanding and confronting the social-ecological crises of our time. Any flaws in this work are fully my responsibility.

Chapter 1: How to read Ivan Illich (Part 1)

> "*The only successful prophet is an ineffectual one, one whose warnings fail to materialize. All good prophets are false prophets, undoing their own utterances in the very act of producing them*."
>
> Terry Eagleton

1.1 Preamble

1.1.1 My old man and his sea

In February 2014, accompanied by a dear friend Jan Gudme, I was on my way to *Superagui*, an island north of the coast of Paraná State, close to *Ilha do Cardoso*, itself on the south coast of São Paulo, Brazil. We had enough stuff to go camping for a week. The boat, which had departed from *Paranaguá* port, slowly cut through the dark waters of the *Paraná* Sea for five and a half choppy hours.

We finally arrived at the remote island. A colleague recommended we stay with a fisherman who went by the name Sr. Posidoni. At the beach pier, searching for the man named for the Greek maritime god, we were told to walk to the ends of the beach.

A leisurely joy-filled walk along the coastline found us, at its very end, at Sr. Posidoni's hut. A remarkably short toothless gentleman came out full of smiles to welcome us. He spoke warmly and comfortingly; each sentence elaborated with the dance of hands and expressive eyes. Despite his age, his grip was solid and firm. His skin was wrinkled by the sun. We never saw him with a shirt for the entire week of our stay together.

We set up our tent and made our home. As expected of two city kids on vacation, we quickly plunged into the sea and spent most of the afternoon in the clean salty waters. We returned to the corner generously offered to us and found Posidoni returning from a fishing trip. His youngest son accompanied him. Judging by their flushed cheeks and straining arms, the big basket they were holding must have been hefty. It was filled to the brim with at least five kilos of shrimp. They asked if we were interested in buying the load at R$15. We were flabbergasted. When we expressed our surprise and asked if he was sure about the price, he replied, "These pieces of paper arrived here five years ago and corrupted our community; the less of them, the better."

That was an astonishing comment, and not only because it seems incredible that money would have reached this community as late as 2009. The comment was intriguing also because

of Posidonis' insight into the radical change that this new exchange relationship had brought to the community.

Be that as it may, we paid for all the shrimp and offered to cook dinner – a celebratory meal – for his family. He accepted, smiling as usual. To work! We cleaned two shrimp baskets and cooked up three large pans of shrimp rice on a beautiful clay stove.

Naively, we thought we would have leftovers. It was not to be. About eight o'clock under an explosively starry night, we were joined by nephews, grandchildren, uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, and at least three dogs, to my recollection. We sat down to dinner. The three pans were hardly enough. The mood was one of harmony but also of curiosity. We, city boys, were peppering our hosts with questions one after the other. About life, fishing, the weather, the jaguar – are there any around? – hunting, language, indigenous, sea, love... A few answers. They told us about *mutirão*[2], *fandango*[3], island life, and other interesting stories. Contrary to the rest of the group, Sr. Posidoni was silent. He did not answer any questions or join in any conversations. He did not seem sad, though. His gaze carried a sense of awareness, brighter than the stars in the sky. It was filled with a feeling of grace but not of *saudade*. Yes, he was smiling the smile of one comfortable in his skin, on one who dwells in his place, integrated to and at home in his surroundings.

And there was a lull in the conversation, a silence. Not a forced silence or one caused by the exhaustion from too much chatter. It was a spontaneous quiet that happens when the spirit is light and feels safe to be still. Sr. Posidoni's voice broke this mysterious and contemplative silence. It was the first time he had said a word in almost two hours. I will never forget his question. Suddenly, I was being questioned; it was my turn to answer an inquiry. His voice resonates in my ears with clarity as if that gentleman were still in front of me: "Boy, you didn't fall for this talk of the earth spinning, right?"

Time suddenly stopped. I was baffled into silence. Everyone was watching me. How to answer what seemed like a question posed as a challenge. After all, I could repeat what every schoolchild knows since Copernicus that the earth moves around the sun. Was this not obvious and as taken for granted as the existence of God was in the not-so-distant past? What could I reply as an answer? How could I answer my host? By asking if I 'fell for it, my host Sr. Posidoni

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[2] Sort of collective mobilization based on mutual help. In the case of *Superagui*, we were told about this practice for cleaning the beach and for the time of the soil, when fishermen let the sea rest and cultivate and harvest. This ritual was finished, as we were told, following the custom of the ancients, that is, in celebrational feast, under the sounds of *fandango*.

[3] Typical music from the south coast of São Paulo and north of Panará states, which mixes dance and singing. It has a fast and happy pace. The fandango's most popular instrument is the fiddle, which looks like a popular, handcrafted version of the violin.

implied that my understanding of things was not only very different from his perceptions of them but also misguided. I could not possibly refuse to answer for fear of being ungracious. Why could not the question be the city, the weather, or even shrimp? How to answer a question of the earth's orbit spinning on its axis to a host who was not shaped by science but by the correspondence with his milieu?

My answer was somewhat honest and resulted from a well-established technique of avoiding uncomfortable questions. In response, I asked another question – "I don't know, what say you?" I could not correctly explain the earth's orbit or how and why it spins on its axis. I could perhaps repeat just those sentences I remembered from school but no more. I cannot demonstrate it, I cannot explain it, nor could I remember the name of the scientists who formulated this theory and proved it. My honesty lay in realizing that I did not know. I took as true what I could not explain or experience. As Hannah Arendt has pointed out, since Copernicus, the slow conquest of space has come at the cost of diminishing man's stature. We are asked to believe we can experience that which can only be seen from the moon.

Sr. Posidoni was entirely honest in his response. He spoke about the most beautiful ideas from an imagination that had not been institutionalized. He told us of the sun, the moon, and its love relationship with the sea, of the stars and the seasons. He invited us to dance so we could feel that, yes, everything is movement, motion, and dance. Everything was holy, everything was divine, everything was grace. I dedicate this chapter to the spirit of Posidoni, which roams the four corners of our country and certainly this vast planet, rotated or not. I found my old man and his sea, which put into question my entire imaginary space shaped by industrial society and sparked my research. The nerve of this chapter is contained in this little fisherman's story. Beware, it is a fisherman's story.

1.1.2 The waters leading me to Ivan Illich

After this cathartic experience with Posidoni, I returned to the big city. I decided to research romanticism. Somehow, the event on the coast triggered inchoate reflections about romanticism, the environment, and how to grasp the meanings of modern industrial society correctly. I presented some roughly framed ideas in a text to Professor Dr. Adalmir Leonidio, from the Luiz de Queiroz College of Agriculture (Esalq), at the University of São Paulo (USP). At the end of a relatively quick conversation, Prof. Leonidio recommended me to an author I had never heard of before: Ivan Illich – whom I only knew as a fictional character from the novel of Tolstoy. Yet, Leonidio's suggestion came after hearing my scattered reflections. I am still amazed at how, despite my stuttering explanations, he was so accurately able to point me

to an author who dealt with the issues that bothered me so much. Leonidio told me that when he came across *Tools for Conviviality* by Ivan Illich, he was motivated to explore Illich's work and life, a project he had not found time to complete. The waters led me to Leonidio, and Leonidio led me to Illich. In a gesture of profound generosity, Prof. Leonidio offered the tools of his previous research and pointed me in a possible direction to answer my concerns. He was precise and accurate and bestowed me with a life-altering encounter with his gesture.

1.2 Introduction

This research was born out of two questions: Can Illich be considered the twentieth-century romantic? Can Illich's intellectual *oeuvre* and political engagement be regarded as political ecology *avant la lettre*? Although these two questions oriented the research at the beginning, the path to answering them required answering an even more fundamental question. The effort to read Illich chronologically confronted me with the question of how to read Illich. To which category of scholarship does his writing belong? Under what genre of study can Illich be classified?

I believe there is no obvious answer to this question, only one that can emerge from the texts. His corpus of writings exhibits an enormous range of learning, from philosophy to public housing. His concerns traverse centuries, from church history of the ninth century to Brazilian politics of the twentieth. His personal life and experiences are rich and varied, including being the founder of the Puerto Rican festival in New York to fighting the Kennedy administration's effort to develop Latin America. Illich cannot be slotted into any academic category within the humanities. Though certified as a philosopher, his writings do not constitute a philosophy – whether systematic as in Kant and Hegel or aphoristic as in Nietzsche – nor are they directly about traditional philosophical topics: metaphysics, logic, etc. Though he received a doctorate in history, his writings are not of a historian, although many essays and books claim a historical approach. Nor do his writings neatly fit among the social sciences – economics, sociology, anthropology – though many of the questions raised by them are economic, sociological, and anthropological. Even if he died an ordained priest, he did not write as a theologian as did, for instance, Jacques Maritan, Gustavo Gutiérrez, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Lee Hoinacki, in the *The Challenges of Ivan Illich*, suggests that Illich has contributed to many academic fields but that he cannot be confined by any of them.

Therefore, it seemed necessary to suspend all prejudices – pre-judgments – when reading the texts by Ivan Illich. It seemed essential to allow the author to speak to the reader and approach reading Illich by listening carefully to what he wants to say. Even a casual reader

of Illich cannot avoid noticing the tenor and topic of his writings reveal the urgency of a man confronting concrete and specific situations. It alerts the reader to approach the text not simply as intellectual productions but as thoughts crafted to illuminate and clarify lived experience.

This chapter offers a way for the reader to walk through the vineyard of Illich's texts. My proposition on how to read Ivan Illich, or should I say how to listen to his words, also discloses a possible approach to the method which guided Illich's writings.

1.3 How Ivan Illich writes

Ivan Illich writes with blood. As Nietzsche's Zarathustra says, "Of all that is written I love only that which one writes with his blood. Write with blood, and you will experience that blood is spirit". Every paragraph I read from Illich feels like taking a journey through his veins. His first writings, which sprout from Latin American soil, suggest a man with open veins. The words rarely seem unfitting or misplaced. The tone is quite often one of radical critique mingled with foolish hope. A careful reader will find pages deeply rooted in the Western tradition, disciplined by rigorous thinking where critical insights alternate with concrete proposals for how to live. Above all, Illich's written words expose the depth of spirit that inflames him.

Not only is life and thought inextricably connected in Illich, but Illich's writings cannot be read as a "text" in the strict sense, even though it conforms to the structure of a text. The first Illich book I carefully read made me feel like he was conversing with me like he was speaking to me as if the pages carried the breath of the spoken word[4]. This impression was later confirmed by his commentary on St. Victor's *Didascalicon*, namely *In the Vineyard of the Text* (1993). What he says of a page in Hugh of St. Victor applies as much to his writings: "the reader [should] expose himself to the light emanating from the page so that he may recognize himself, acknowledge himself. In the light of wisdom that brings the page to glow, the reader's self will catch fire, and in its light, the reader will recognize himself."

In this chapter, I seek to answer the fundamental question of how to read Ivan Illich. In doing so, I am fully aware of the dangers of "a reading that objectifies Illich's books, isolating them from myself, from where I am, from the way I live, [which] begins as a performance in dilettantism and ends as a feeble exercise in futility" (Hoinacki; Mitcham, 2002). I have tried

[4] From this vivid experience of reading Illich, my gut was tingled by something calling me to engage with a pilgrimage in search for his friends, collaborators, and students. I started this journey in 2015, and now [2022] together with my companion and her artistic gift, we continue as pilgrims in a quest: how do we read Ivan Illich? We have been calling this journey the Gaze Project. For more, access here: https://www.gazeproject.com.

to stay close to these words of Lee Hoinacki, which are less a suggestion for an honest reading of Illich and more a warning.

I propose to grasp Illich's writings as composed of three intersecting and intertwined lines of force that emerge from the traversal reading of his texts. What appears in a traversal reading is more than what is explicitly written. Though it does not search for what might be hidden between the lines, a traversal reading identifies the lines of force that animate what is written. This does not mean that such lines of force are obscure or invented by the reader. Instead, they can be shown by careful exegesis of the texts. I suggest that to read Illich well, the reader must be tuned to the three lines of force that interweave[5] and be alert to the knots where the three lines combine to reveal the standpoint of the writer himself; as one who faithfully consigned himself to the hands of God, what Thomas Aquinas understood as a contingency.[6] The purpose of this chapter is to make plausible these claims.

The theological line is the first of the forces animating the writings of Illich. To properly grasp the written words of Illich, the reader cannot be deaf to the significance of the Word that became flesh, as explained in Christian theology. The pages in Illich are to be taken as a sojourn into the vineyard of the text, where one savors the words. The second line of force is the personal, which has to do with his stance or attitude. He was a man who lived in hope and tried to avoid expectations; he was in the world and not of it. He suffered this paradox, aware that it could never be solved, until the day he died. In a world increasingly reshaped by man into a technological womb, Illich tried to live in a way that allowed for the gratuitous experience of freedom. The third line of force that animated much of Illich's writings is the practical. Illich wanted to influence his readers, so he wrote public texts. He engaged with the historically specific conditions of his time, acting as a public intellectual and even a militant thinker. Widely lauded and decried as a savage social critic, Illich's pages are public documents animated by the purpose of awakening people to their lived conditions. The knots that tie together these three lines of force appear in such sentences as "I want to celebrate my faith for no purpose at all."[7]

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[5] I owe to Sajay Samuel the clarity of this proposition of how to read Illich. After reading my first draft of this chapter, Sajay was able to see the potential within my arguments and helped me to clarify them by suggesting the structure of the three lines of force. He saw what was implicit and scattered throughout the text and helped me to find a better way to construct the argument. The quality of its construction and presentation is my responsibility.

[6] For more on contingency in Illich see: *Guarding the eye in the age of show* (1995), footnote number 55, and *The Rivers North of the Future*, the chapters three and four, respectively titled *Contingency, Part 1: A World in the Hands of God* and *Contingency, Part 2: The Origin of technology*. One can also find references to contingency in *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1988), above all chapter six, *Untruth and Narration*, pages 86 and 91. The reflection upon what is both absolute and necessary, therefore which has no antecedent, abetted Aquinas' coining of the concept of contingency.

[7] Illich's final words on his article *The Powerless Church*. The relation I see between Illich's purposeless faith and contingency comes from his footnote in the *Guarding the Eye in the Age of Show*: "the world considered as

It is a statement that not only indicates the personal stance of a theologically cultured person. It exposes the theological and personal lines of force that traverse Illich's writings. The sentence also has a practical orientation insofar as it is an implicit call to action written in a published essay addressed to both the Church and the laity.

1.3.1 The theological Line

The incarnation of the verb is at the heart of the revelation of the Christian gospel. Unlike the reverence of a distant and unreachable god, the incarnate verb could be loved in the flesh. In the first epistle of St. John, the evangelist makes this claim in a beautiful testimony: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness...)".

The theological line of force must be separated from the notion of religiosity. I believe Illich was a man of faith as he described himself to David Cayley in *The Rivers North of the Future*: "faith is a mode of knowledge which does not base itself on either my worldly experience or the resources of my intelligence. It founds certainty on the word of someone whom I trust and makes this knowledge which is based on trust more fundamental than anything I can know by reason". This, of course, as Illich continues, "is a possibility only when I believe that God's word can reach me" (Cayley, 2005, p. 57).

For Illich, the spoken word is carnal and expresses the flesh. Thus, the verb that once became flesh is put back into time as the spoken word, the conversation, the discourse, the *aula*, which as a public event is potentially a political event. It is for this reason that Illich is both deeply attentive to how he writes and to how he speaks. For example, his hesitance in front of the microphone or other amplifying devices cannot be understood except as the outgrowth of a theological commitment to carnal voice. As he notes in the *Loudspeaker on the Tower: Belfry and Minaret*, words are carnal when spoken by a mouth and heard by an ear. Nowadays, out of a hundred words heard daily, ninety do not emanate from mouths and are even less addressed to personal interlocutors. For Illich, the powerful media techniques dislocate the voice and dissolve speech into a brew of messages creating an "omnipresent voice in the space of any size" (Illich, 2009).

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contingent, that is, as a reality indifferent to its own existence, and that does not bear within itself a reason or right to exist. At this moment, the world's very existence assumes the nature of something gratuitous, something that is a grace" (Illich, 1995).

As persuasively argued by Walter J. Ong, which Illich expands on in *The Vineyard of the Text*, the written text is fundamentally different from the spoken word since the first is permanent. At the same time, the second disappears even as it is pronounced. Yet, Illich remarked that he did not speak except as he wrote. Accordingly, for Illich, speech and writing are one. This means that Illich's written texts attempt the almost impossible feat of expressing the lived voice. It also implies a second impossibility – that his written texts cannot be read except as speech, which is within the theological horizon of the verb that became flesh. Illich need not have written a word. He could have been the messenger who announced the Word orally. However, he did write. To understand his writings, one must struggle with Illich as he strives to find the words within the horizon of the incarnate Word. But we have a clue of how to read what Illich wrote in this description of *Lectio Divina* is an ascetical practice that allows the reader to hear the voices impressed on the page and to walk through the vineyard of the text to savor the life behind the words that no longer breathe unless they are summoned.

1.3.2 The personal Line

The power of Illich's writings and practices in life and art (of suffering, of dying) derives from a certain recognition that he faced a crisis, that is, a crossroads. For Hoinacki, there were only two choices for Illich: either he "would follow the contemporary world in the direction of its postmodern acedia[8]" (spiral of boredom – the yawn that engulfs the whole world), that is, "wander in the direction of nihilism"; or he would "live in hope, with his eyes fixed on a future escaton (ἔσχατος)." The fruit of the second option, the one to which Illich was called, can be found in the afterword of *Deschooling Society* (1971) entitled *The Rebirth of the Epimethean Man*. For Illich, hope was distinct from optimism, which is usually indistinguishable from a romance with illusion, and the anesthesia in the soul is called positive thinking. On the contrary, Illich lived hope, in its most robust sense, as an abiding faith in the goodness of nature. Hope is an attitude towards life, a stance, a way of being in the world. Hope is nothing to do with an accurate reading of the forecasts and predictions that the time lived allows one to imagine.

In the *Rebirth of the Epimethean man* and later in his chapter for *The Development Dictionary: a guide to knowledge as power* (1992), edited by Wolfgang Sachs, Illich makes a

[8] Lee Hoinacki's choice of the word acedia here is no accident. In the past, acedia was part of the list of capital sins. The monk Evagrius Ponticus includes it in a list of eight capital sins. The one we have today – sloth – combines acedia (ακηδία) and laziness (οκνηρός) in the same term. However, the differences are huge. Laziness has a more behavioral connotation. Acedia, however, is a state of mind that leads to a 'sadness of the world'. It takes the man as a force capable of pulling out all his cheer for life and throws him into the crawling darkness of someone who has cut his own wings and cannot fly anymore. Nevertheless, Dante defines it as the inability to love that leads to the complete despair and eventually suicide.

crucial distinction between hope and expectation. Illich supports the argument that 'development' is a word that promises, even guarantees, that natural limits can be shattered by the new powers of science, technology, and political economy. With the idea of 'development' like 'progress' before it, the hope of achieving what is good has been replaced by the expectation that needs will be met (Sachs, 1992). Illich follows this argument by emphatically clarifying that expectations refer to a 'not yet,' which is different from hope. Hope guides in the direction of the unpredictable, the unexpected, and leaves open the possibility to be surprised; it is grounded in the Word of another. Expectations are based on managerial promises of development, improvement, progress, and problem-solving. They are oriented toward claiming the right for services or goods; they are built by the impersonal functioning of a system that can distribute health, education, and security, among other things. In this sense, hope confronts the unknown while expectations manage the unlikely. The one dwells in grace, and the other rests on probability. Hope is rooted in the personal relationship with a friend, whereas expectations are tethered to institutionalized roles. To live in hope means to dwell in the world knowing it is a gift from God and therefore to not be wholly of it.

But what does Illich mean by gift?[9] Gift carries the sense of gratuitous, which is given freely without obligations. The appropriate attitude towards a freely offered gift is surprise. The cultivation of surprise before what is freely given and the clearing of the obstacles to experiencing such surprise accounts for the personal line of force animating the writings of Illich. Illich wrote, "it is my strong belief that one aspect of modernity was the loss of gratuity" (Cayley, 1992). This is not only a factual sentence disclosing what Illich believed. Above all, it reveals the personal stance Illich took on the world. To read Illich rightly requires being sensitive to the personal line of force that animates all his written work.

[9] It is interesting, as a philological exercise, to reflect on the use of the word δωρά (dora) on the gospels, from which δωρεάν (dorean) derives, for example – Pandora, literally the giver of everything, in the Greek world. It is interesting how in the Gospel according to Saint John δωρεάν (dorean) appears in a circumstance that explains the breadth of the sense of gift. In chapter 15, verse 25, Christ said: "... that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause". Note that the idea of a gift is linked to an experience without cause, no reason. At first, the lines seem to tell us about the fulfillment of a prophecy. However, could have Christ treated hatred as a gift, something that, in his process of becoming the son of God, allowed him to cultivate a more heated attitude towards life? The meaning of something without reason, which carries the etymology of the Greek word, also appears with a small change, δωρον (doron), in the gospel according to Matthew, for example, with a much more literal sense of a present. In Matthew 10, verse 8, in the words of Christ: "freely ye have received, freely give". In chapter 23, verse 19, Christ also said: "*Ye* fools and blind: for weather *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?". Here the offerings are the gift, a gift given for free (the word in German, *Umsonst* – literally out of nowhere – means gratuity). The scope of the gift, the present, this surprising gratuity is very clear in the Greek vernacular.

1.3.3 The practical Line

So far, I have suggested that being alert to two lines of forces — the theological and the personal — is indispensable to reading Illich well. However, no reading of Illich can be complete without attending to the third line of force that animates his public words. The practical line of force in Illich is as central as the other two lines of force.

Illich has been called a militant intellectual for his deep and incisive critique of schooling, healthcare, work, city planning, and more. In each of these books, essays, pamphlets, and lectures, Illich invites the reader and the listeners to celebrate an awareness that can lead to practical, material, and concrete changes, instigating a feasible and concrete institutional revolution. But this is not the only sense in which Illich's writings are practical. His own lived experiences also shape them, sometimes a sustained encounter with a situation and at other times a chance phrase. For instance, Illich argues that a phrase from a feminist doctor, "Mr. Illich, have you ever seen a human body," launched his most controversial book, *Gender* (1982). Similarly, as I argue later, the main ideas of the essays in *Celebration of Awareness: a call for institutional revolution* (1969) emerges from Illich's exposure to Puerto Ricans in New York and on the island and from his time traveling through the deep South America where he found the real 'vanishing clergymen.'

One could say that this practical line of force manifests in his role as a militant intellectual or public intellectual. I do not discard this hypothesis. However, I suggest that Illich's practicality is better understood as that of a prophet, a point already made by Todd Hartch in *The Prophet of Cuernavaca. Ivan Illich and the crisis of the West* (2015). However, my position is different from that of Hartch's. He defines a prophet by what he does, by his practical deeds. Hartch calls him prophetic because Illich risked "everything he had to present his message to the world" and "repeatedly imperiled his future advancement for the sake of truth as he saw it." I am unable to reach Hartch's conclusion. I see Illich as a prophet in the sense of one who reveals what he sees in the present. I believe that what a prophet does is to recognize what is not widely seen, to expose what lies on the surface and is therefore usually overlooked. Unlike those who can see the future, Illich reveals what is now the case. So, reading what Illich has written is interwoven with his life experiences. Still, since it is not identical, it points to what remains stubbornly unsaid and perhaps unsayable, unseen, and unseeable.

I have suggested that three intersecting lines of force frame all of Illich's writings. These lines of force constituting his writings can be discerned in even the very first essays he penned. To support this argument, I analyze three essays Illich wrote when he was still a young priest — *Not foreigners yet foreign* (1959), *The Eloquence of Silence* (1960), and *The Vanishing*

Clergyman (1959/1967). All three papers were directed at the Catholic church and became part of his later publication *Celebration of Awareness*, known to be the first book he published.[10]

1.4 Three essays and glowing pages

The following pages were written to analyze the three essays mentioned above to demonstrate my argument that reading Ivan Illich attentively means tracing the three lines which traverse his writings: the theological, the practical, and the personal. It is important to emphasize that Illich wrote these essays when he was still a practicing priest within the Catholic Church and, therefore, explicitly addressed his readers in theological terms.

However, I corroborate and have written my master's thesis on this matter in 2017 – entitled *Ivan Illich: an approximation with his trajectory-work (1926-1967)* – with Giorgio Agamben's hypothesis explained in his set Foreword to *The Powerless Church* (2018), the most recent collection of Illich's early writings. Agamben suggests that "the concepts of Illich as a critic of modernity and archeologist of conviviality originates as a radical and coherent development of theological categories already present in the thought of the priest" (Agamben, 2018). I hope the reader can put aside any pre-judgment while reading the following lines to savor the arguments better, remaining attentive to their radicality and aware that they are the basis for his lay writings.

1.4.1 Puerto Ricans in New York: Not Foreigners, Yet Foreign

Illich wrote this short article entitled *Puerto Ricans in New York: Not Foreigners, Yet Foreign* to sow seeds of awareness for the situation of American citizens who felt foreign in their 'own country[11]. Between 1951 and 1956, New York received about half a million Puerto Ricans, and the wave of immigration was considered to have not yet peaked.

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[10] It is important to make a clarification regarding the use of the words church or Church (capital C) throughout the text. When I use church, I mean the institution, the "it", which embraces the bureaucracy, the administration, and the apparatus of the Catholic tradition. When I use Church, I mean the Mystical Body of Christ, the "She", not always visible nor necessarily under the wings of the church. By making such distinction I am not saying that the Catholic church is not within the Mystical Body of Christ, to which I call Church, where Christ is the head (see St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, his first and second letter to the Corinthians and his letter to the Colossians). I rather use Church to embrace communities and forms-of-life not necessarily under the approval or recognition of the church to avoid narrowing the Mystical Body to one institution. If the analyzes of this essay was one concerning the Lutheran church, or the Baptist church or the churches of Christ I would follow the same method of differentiation between the church "it" and the Church "She". The distinction, not the way I apply it, between the church "it" and the Church "She" can also be seen in Ivan Illich, *The Powerless Church* (2018).

[11] Puerto Ricans, in fact, have been American citizens since 1917, the year that the United States Congress passed the *Jones Act*. Since then, Puerto Rico is considered an associated state of the United States. However, it was not until 1947 that Puerto Ricans won the right to elect their governor. Still, Illich realized that Puerto Ricans, although

The nerve of this essay is relatively straightforward: what do we do when a stranger knocks at our door? We celebrate! Illich is writing about the ever-possible condition of embracing the stranger as a brother/sister. When a wave of Puerto Ricans flooded into the outskirts of Manhattan, Illich promoted and organized a festival to celebrate brotherhood with the strangers.

Foreigner refers to a country of citizenship; Puerto Ricans are not foreigners in New York. However, foreign also refers to customs, habits, and mores, and, in this sense, Puerto Ricans, regardless of what their passport says, are strangers to New Yorkers. Their modes of living, language, the rhythm of speaking, religious practices, and their relation to the environment and society are mainly shaped by the geography and history of their island. Thus, this essay was devoted to both elucidating Puerto Rican ways to New Yorkers and denouncing the "lack of consideration on the part of New York civic leaders."

I believe this short and early essay carries the signature of what I am proposing as a coherent way of reading Illich by attending to the three interwoven lines in his arguments. The theological line is quite clear: the core of the text responds to the question "who is my neighbor?" and what we may do when a stranger knocks at our door. The personal line follows Illich's invitation for those who, like him, to search for a form-of-life in the world and not of it, those who are children of their history and culture yet open to another's way of living. The practical line is also clear: Illich made New York less of a foreign land to Puerto Ricans by working with some people. The festival he organized, which until today is celebrated in New York, is a lasting memento of the practicality of Illich's ideas.

1. The personal line

On October 27, 1951, Illich boarded an old US Navy ship named USS General Harry Taylor in the port city of Bremerhaven, located north of Bremen, that was bound for the United States. The twenty-five-year-old Illich left Europe and docked in New York on November 6 of the same year. Illich had thought of doing postdoctoral research on alchemy in the work of thirteenth-century philosopher Albert the Great when he moved to New York City. He had an invitation from Princeton University.

On his first day in New York City, however, on his first afternoon, during a meeting with some of his grandfather's old friends, Illich first heard about the 'issue' concerning Puerto Ricans in New York. His hosts, who lived on 75 East St, commented on the need to leave the

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American citizens, were perceived as foreigners and more immigrants than those who preceded them, such as Irish and Italians, for example.

city because of 'these people' who kept coming. This peculiar encounter generated in Illich a curiosity regarding the situation of 'those people.' The next day, as he told Cayley about this, Illich walked to the *barrio*, far from the central attractions of New York, and wandered for two straight days up and down street 122 between 5th and Park avenues (Cayley, 1992).

There he found the Puerto Rican markets, people assembling on the streets, and got to know their living conditions closely. After these two days, taken by an inexplicable call, Illich went to Cardinal Francis Spellman's office and asked to be enlisted in any parish near the Puerto Rican community. Illich resigned his position at Princeton on that day, abandoning the reason for going to the United States in the first place, and took over the *Incarnación* Parish, located in the northern tip of Manhattan, in a neighborhood called Washington Heights[12]. Interestingly, this abrupt cut in Ivan Illich's trajectory is constantly repeated. As he once said, he never knew how to explain what led him to make the most important decisions of his life. And this was one of them.

I believe this essay carries theological categories that later nourish the concepts coined by the Illich, who was a trenchant critic of modernity. One church key that opens several arguments of Illich's methodology can be found in his explanation of the parable of the Good Samaritan[13], *The Gospel* according to St. Luke. The parable is straightforward. It was told as an answer to the question of a scribe, a master of the law of the *Torah*, who asked Christ about who the neighbor is, one of the most important commandments of the law, *love thy neighbor as thyself*. After being caught by thieves, a Jewish man is left half dead in the vicinity of a road that connects two cities. Two men of the same ethnicity as the half-dead man, with important positions among their own – a priest and a Levite –, and the third man of another ethnicity – a

[12] Taken by the desire to feel a little of the experience of walking to the *barrio*, I decided to walk from the Grand Central Terminal, in Manhattan, from 42nd Street to *Incarnación* Parish, in Washington Heights, 175th Street. It was in the winter of 2015, January. It was -8ºC. After two and a half hours of walking the twelve kilometers of asphalt, I arrived at the parish. The route is curious, the passage from a city of skyscrapers, taken in a triumphant and cosmopolitan air and full of symbols of modern wealth, starting from 122nd Street, it becomes a suburban landscape, with smaller and simpler buildings. However, when passing through Columbia University Hospital, Broadway Avenue intersects with St. Nicholas Avenue, at 169th Street; the change is remarkable. The atmosphere is different. I felt like in a Latin American country. Only Spanish was heard in the streets. Despite the cold that cut my skin, the streets seemed to convey a warmth, a different welcome, regardless of a more decadent appearance. When entering a store in search for a hot coffee, the clerk did not even consider directing me the word in English. We did all the counter conversation in Spanish, as if we had been in the Dominican Republic, the country of origin of most of the residents who currently live in the region.

[13] The reader of Illich was introduced to his exegesis of the parable of the Good Samaritan only after the conversations with David Cayley, later compiled in the form of the book *The Rivers North of the Future*. *The Testament of Ivan Illich as told to David Cayley* (2005). In chapters 1 and 2 (*Gospel* and *Mystery* respectively) the reader will find Illich's central thesis on the corruption of Christ – *perversio optimi quae est pessima* – and its implications regarding the institutionalization of faith, that is the rise of Samaritan corporations.

Samaritan, have their paths crossed by this dying man. The first two passed by, whereas the third one reached out to him.

Why did Christ choose a priest as an example among the men who ignored that dying man? The shallow answer is that Christ had used the priest's figure to condemn his day's religious hypocrisy. God elected a priest of the Jewish people through rigorous scrutiny. In addition to the privilege of entering the place of the Saints, first in the tabernacle and then in the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, the priest presents the burnt offerings to God, the bread of his God, and must therefore be in a state of holiness (Leviticus 21: 6). He examines his people, deals with disputes, adjudicates sensitive matters, and represents his nation through offerings to God. The priest is in a position of extreme importance, charged with authority and meaning in the relationship between God and the people he belongs to.

The Torah also legislates how this priest must behave to be fit for service. In Leviticus 21: 1, "And the LORD said unto Moses, 'Speak unto the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled by the dead among his people: But for his kin, that is near unto him, that is, for his mother, and his father, and for his son, and his daughter, and for his brother, And his sister a virgin.'" In the story told by Christ, the man who fell into the hands of robbers is said to be half dead. In other words, the Law that underlies the behavior, the mental space that shapes the life of this priest, forbids him from touching the dead body of a stranger. Nothing is more prudent to avoid becoming unclean than leaving this dead body. It is not hypocrisy but scrupulousness that prompts this man to refuse to touch the dead body of a stranger. The priest is following the dictates of a good conscience, fulfilling his role before the people of God, and maintaining meticulous compliance with the Law that has been bred into him through years of devoted practice.

And the Levite? Does he have an explanation as noble as that of the priest for crossing to the other side of the road when he sees the dying man? Yes. He handles all the utensils that belong to the Temple, which the priest will use and touch during rituals and offerings to God. Only the Levite can handle such utensils. And their list is vast. In other words, the law that applies to the priest also applies to the Levite, mainly due to his direct interaction with everything the priest touches. He is in the service of the Temple and belongs to God, set apart to serve and assist the priest (Numbers 3: 5, 10). The same prudence tingles the mind of the Levite, who, given the possibility of being impure, also passes by the half-dead man.

Thus, although the two men are of the same ethnicity as the man beaten to the ground, we see that the moral structure that governs the culture and the system of relationships of these two clergymen justifies their deliberate avoidance. Although countless commentaries of the

Christian bible take this direction, I do not see in this story any hypocrisy on the part of the priest and the Levite, but only the scrupulous obedience of the Law.

Finally, what does it mean to be a Samaritan? Who is this third folk? Do we find in him the 'ideal type' of love thy neighbor? The Samaritan is a type who, being a former Jewish settler of Samaria, abandoned the precepts of God and began to worship foreign gods (2 Kings 17: 24,41). For generations, those who settled in Samaria – called Samaritans – are considered, by the faithful Jews, to be semi-idolaters. The Chosen People should not even want to speak to people of the 'apostate race' (Barrett, 1978).

In St. Luke's narrative, the journeying Samaritan approached the dying man's feet and was moved by his gut towards that man (in Greek '*splankhnízomai*' – most, if not all modern translations choose the concept of compassion or pity for such word, although it literally refers to a visceral movement; viscera = *splankhna*).

To be viscerally touched is the expression of a movement within the being, which can and may result, if answered, in actions of love. This movement, the rumbling that stirs the insides, is a mystery I dare not spend words on. However, this seems to be where the Christian love for one's neighbor is born. To ignore such movement is Illich's definition of sin. The image of feeling visceral pain is not a philological whim of Saint Luke nor a textual ornament.

According to Frederico Lourenço, the verb '*splankhnízomai*' is used eleven times in the three synoptic Gospels – St. Mathew, St. Mark, and St. Luke totaling 33 cases. It always refers directly to Jesus (Matthew 9:35, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34; Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:2; Luke 7:13) or to characters in the parables of Jesus, who are like alter egos of Christ (the king who forgives the enslaved person's astronomical debt in Matthew 18:27; the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33; or the father of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:20, who viscerally rejoices the miracle of seeing, far on the horizon, the silhouette of his son, towards whom he runs).

In Illich's reading of the story of the Good Samaritan, something, or should I say someone moves the entrails towards the other, they will reveal the unknown, the neighbor. It is impossible to institutionalize such a movement. Responding to it consists of practicing a way of living open to the surprise on the other's face. Religious obligations or rules dull the clarity of the invitation towards another which comes from down there, from the bowels. Illich understood ethics as standing under the other, based on a personal vocation rather than obedience to laws, by forming a relationship responding to a call, and not behaving following a category or imperative.

Illich responded to a call he heard when he renounced his position at Princeton University. Following the parable of Christ, he lived the impossibility of categorizing 'who is

my neighbor.' A neighbor can be anyone, the gut will tingle, and one can or *can not* answer its call. Christ came to announce, as the center of his *good news*, that the Kingdom of God is among us, and if Illich read the *good news* rightly, it reveals itself in a mysterious and inexplicable movement that captures one's entrails, moves one's bowels to celebrate life with others.

2. The theological Line

In the third paragraph of this essay, Illich discreetly discloses the theological well from which he draws his argument. Illich distances himself from the typical take on foreigners. Either they are designated as strangers and consistently treated as outsiders or, in a misunderstanding of St. Paul's instruction "to make himself Jew with the Jews and Greek with the Greeks," indifferently included under the 'we are all Americans' banner. The first approach precludes any possibility of cherishing and corresponding with unique and unknown ways of living. On the other hand, the second denies the heritage, the sap of tradition which has fed peoples from the roots of history. The first stance has no windows or doors that open towards the boundaries that circle a community. In contrast, the second is a universal approach that colonizes the imaginary space of persons and their heritage.

In the case of Puerto Ricans in New York, the first approach to foreigners was predominant. What most impressed Illich and scandalized him was the stereotypical way in which New Yorkers —above all, the church —approached Puerto Ricans. He was distraught by the lack of sensitivity and perception of the locals to the newcomers, who were not the same as the Italians and Irish. A different approach and set of policies were needed to meet the Puerto Ricans where they were. A conflict was already occurring in the *barrio* between Irish and Puerto Ricans. Illich reported that he was somewhat impressed by the fact that he could find in Cardinal Spellman[14] , an attentive listener to his concerns about the situation in the *barrio* and his vision of how the church should position itself.

Spellman suggested a meeting between Illich and Joseph Fitzpatrick, the priest, and professor of sociology at Fordham University – where the cardinal himself had studied. The two became great friends and companions in the campaign for a New York more receptive to Puerto Ricans. Fitzpatrick, the author of *Puerto Rican Americans: The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland* (1968), had already researched this issue when Illich met him. Yet and above

[14] Francis Spellman had been Archbishop of New York since 1939. During the Second World War, he was a Vatican mediator on the Council of Archbishops for Military Service in Washington DC. He also shared the anti-communist spirit that characterized the 1940s/50s of the official Church in the United States. The cardinal participated in the political group of Irish Catholic immigrants who, in the 1960s, with the Kennedy family, elected the first Catholic president in the history of the United States.

all, according to Fitzpatrick, in *The Challenges of Ivan Illich*: *a collective reflection* (2002), "once Illich arrived at Incarnation Parish and realized that many newly arrived Puerto Ricans had moved into the area, he went to Puerto Rico, learned Spanish almost overnight, and spent one month on foot exploring many aspects of Puerto Rican life."

By the time Illich took over the parish in the *barrio* [1952], a third of the baptized Catholics in Manhattan and the Lower Bronx were Latin Americans. Until then, Puerto Ricans were the first group of non-European Catholic immigrants with religious traditions very different from the orthodoxy in these neighborhoods. The number of Latin priests was meager in Manhattan and Puerto Rico. Such was the difficulty of accessing certain Puerto Rican villages that a priest's visit was sporadic, if not exclusive, for a sacrament. Many baptized their children without the presence of a priest. The chapel, in addition to receiving some masses, never every Sunday, was a communal meeting and celebration space for the patron saint *San Juan*, named after the country's capital.

In these circumstances, attending Sunday Masses did not necessarily confirm a fundamental practice of the Catholic faith. The peculiarity of Puerto Rican Catholicism caught the attention of Ivan Illich. He realized, with keen sensitivity, that Europe and the United States did not know this more organic and less institutionalized faith. This day-to-day lived faith, within what is available and that can be experienced despite the limitations of the clerical bureaucracy, probably made Illich dig into the canonical laws of the church. Illich cited, in this article, the church Law that validated a marriage between Catholics even when not performed in front of a priest.[15] That is, if a priest, within a month, could not visit a distant village, the community would elect a layperson to carry out the sacraments.

My hypothesis, therefore, is that this is Illich's first direct contact with a living faith that allowed Puerto Ricans to overlook the need for a priest. This contact probably motivated him to horseback from village to village in the lost mountains of Puerto Rico. His last pilgrimage through South America further affirmed these stories of a relatively un-institutionalized and living faith. The knowledge of these circumstances might have been reflected in the first lines of his essay, *Vanishing Clergyman* (1959/1967).

[15] The reference is to the Code of Canon Law prior to the Second Vatican Council and to the Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* of John Paul II. In other words, the Pentecost of 1917, which had undergone its first reform of the *Corpus* in 1959, by John XXIII.

3. The practical Line

From 1951 to 1956, Illich was between the parish and the streets of Washington Heights for five years, working directly with the Puerto Rican community as a priest and, above all, as a community leader. In a conversation with Mother Abbess David at the Monastery of Regina Laudis in Connecticut, the United States, Illich's status as a community leader became clear. Both met in 1952 at Washington Heights. M. Abbess David was the daughter of immigrants, a Peruvian mother, and an English father and lived in the *barrio*. She was experiencing a crisis of faith due to her sociology course and went to the closest parish to seek advice from the priest. That's how they met. She was one of the women responsible for the *El Cuartito de María*[16] (The Little House of Mary), an apartment that housed a small library, ludic games, and some tables and chairs where women from the *barrio* could mind their children. They could come and go freely to study, have fun or simply rest.

Priests, social workers, and teachers were all immersed in a multitude of Spanish speakers. In the words of Ivan Illich: "they needed to learn to speak Spanish, more than anything, they needed to tune in their ears and open their hearts to the anxieties of people who were alone, frightened and helpless." In 1956, Illich's engagement culminated with the legendary celebration in honor of the patron saint of Puerto Ricans, *San Juan*. This first patronal celebration of the Catholic Church brought together more than thirty-five thousand people. Kaller-Dietrich says that Illich had given several coins to some thirty young Puerto Ricans to search the city's telephone directory for Latin names and surnames and invite them to the party (Kaller-Dietrich, 2011).

The Fordham University courtyard, which hosted the festivity, had been taken by a celebratory spirit; the community was spontaneously organizing itself little by little. Food, typical dance, pilgrimage, music, and merriment, completed a fundamental triad for the religious experience: liturgy, ritual, and celebration.[17] In the words of Fitzpatrick, "looking back

[16] Joseph Fitzpatrick serves us a reliable reference. "One of his [Illich] first achievements was the development of *El Cuartito de María* (The Little House of Mary), as creative a response as I have seen to Puerto Ricans. He rented an apartment in a tenement occupied by Puerto Rican families. With the help of a few dedicated young women of the parish, he set up an informal neighborly apartment where the young women could play with the children and mind them while their mothers were shopping; where women could gather for friendly conversation; and where the young women simply fulfilled the role of good neighbors. This was exactly the kind of casual, personal relationship that would have been characteristic of a barrio in Puerto Rico. Had this kind of imaginative response been multiplied, the experience of Puerto Ricans would have been much easier. It is an illustration of the kind of innovative leadership that Illich provided."

[17] After twelve consecutive years of celebrating this feast since 1956, driven by Ivan Illich, the celebration of the patron, St. John, was made official. This celebration, over the past twenty years, has been transformed into the *Puerto Rican Day Parade*, which in its 2016 version had the participation of more than 600 thousand people, in Manhattan. Today it is considered the largest cultural festival in the United States.

on this, I recognize his [Illich's] clear conviction of the need to enable the people to use their resources to cope with their problems rather than constructing agencies and institutions to care for them."

After that, Illich found himself in the good graces of people and Cardinal Spellman. He had been known as the 'Mister Puerto Rico' ever since. In addition to attracting the attention of public opinion, Illich brought to the streets a Church that had had difficulties incorporating the faith of Puerto Ricans and recreated some experiences typical of their homeland. He confessed that his proximity to Latin American immigrants brought him a certain reminder of Dalmatia, where he was raised. He observed in their culture a closer relationship with feudal society, in its sense of the vehemence of life, a life less planned and still suspicious of the promises of the American way of life; he realized that Latin America of the 1950s was not yet formed by the modern middle class that was beclouded by the American dream.

The relationship with Cardinal Spellman was greatly strengthened, and Illich became a trusted man to this prince of the Church. At twenty-nine, Illich became the youngest priest in the United States to be appointed Monsignor. Spellman also placed him in the city's archdiocesan coordination of Hispanic parishes. According to Fitzpatrick, "if the archdiocese responded reasonably well in its performance, this measure of success was due, more than to anyone else, to Ivan Illich. He gave a vision to officials and priests that they needed and was able to guide them in developing a pastoral ministry to the Puerto Ricans that was remarkably creative" (Hoinacki; Mitcham, 2002).

Illich's deeds in the *Incarnación* Parish make the fabric woven from the three lines of force I propose as a way to read Ivan Illich. Therefore, the theological line (gospel), personal (jump from Princeton to the *Barrio*), and practical (give Puerto Ricans something of a 'home' in NYC) are all evident in this short essay. A man who leaves his career at Princeton University to become a priest in the least prestigious neighborhood of New York City is a man who places himself in contingency, in the hands of God. The knot of this essay is the standpoint of the writer, who renounces power and answers a call heard in his gut to embrace the 'beaten' stranger and celebrate the grace of their friendship. The life lived among Puerto Ricans allowed Illich to embark on a journey of embodying a language, which became the source of the following essay analyzed.

1.4.2 The Eloquence of Silence

In 1956, the same year of the grand celebration in the *barrio*, Ivan Illich was sent by his superior to Ponce, Puerto Rico, to become vice-rector of the Catholic University. Convinced

that the formation of priests immersed in Hispanic culture was necessary, Cardinal Spellman guided Illich in creating the *Centro Intercultural de Comunicación* (CIC) – Intercultural Communication Center –, where a broad and deep course of Spanish language and culture would be offered. Although Illich's experience in Puerto Rico was short, just over four years, it was undoubtedly very rich. When asked by Cayley about where his home was (at the time of this conversation, 1992, Illich was living as a pilgrim between countries and tables, a sort of homeless wanderer, so to say), Illich promptly replied: Puerto Rico. He had never said, in his own words, "Here in the United States, we…, or in Mexico, or Göttingen, or in Marburg, or anywhere else. I would say, 'Here, people do this.' But in Puerto Rico, I said, 'Here, in Puerto Rico, we wouldn't do that, never 'We Puerto Ricans' (Cayley, 1992, p. 88)". Illich felt at home in Puerto Rico.

Illich's assignment as vice-rector in Ponce was to prepare the priesthood for ecclesiastical missions in Latin America. He took, however, the opportunity to offer people interested in working in the Hispanic ghettos of the United States a Spanish course, which was, in fact, immersion in Puerto Rican Hispanic culture. For a year and a half, Illich organized seminars and meetings for the intensive study of Spanish and courses in history, poetry, and music, among others, of the Puerto Rican social reality. Half of the participants were priests, mainly under the age of thirty-five. They had decided to live their lives in the poorest and most helpless byways of big cities. Illich recalled how difficult it was to convince an Irish American priest to spend his time with people who never came to church and yet considered themselves Catholic. The experience in the Hispanic neighborhoods of Manhattan allowed Illich to grasp and sense those people's faith in a way that his fellow priests rarely had.

The central hypothesis here is that the period in which Illich worked with Puerto Ricans in New York sparked his curious attention to what language means. Therefore, when he was living in Puerto Rico, this investigation, intensely related to daily life among Spanish speakers, took the form of an essay titled *The Eloquence of Silence*.

The 'eloquence' of 'silence' implies a logical contradiction. Strictly, silence does not speak and therefore cannot be eloquent. A careful writer's deliberate use of a contradiction signals the doorway to something more profound, the zone where opposites coincidence. Thus, reading this essay requires reading into the lines, not just reading the lines.

The center of this essay is the attitude or the stance which defines the missionary. To spread the good news, the Word is to be silent. The missionary's language is, first of all, the grammar of silence. The missionary must cultivate a quietness, a sort of stillness that allows the language of the other to be grasped. And according to Illich, there is nothing more precious in

a relationship than sharing one's silence. This essay reflects on the missionary activity, the meaning of sharing the Word in silence, the purposes of learning a foreign language, and its grammar of silence. But why the silence? According to Illich, "only the Christian believes in the Word as coeternal Silence" (Illich, 1973, p. 31). To spread the Word, be quiet. To be silent is not simply to listen, as I hope to demonstrate in the following lines.

1. The personal line

Illich knew the Spanish language was a vibrant tool for the priest interested in using his time and the church's resources to edify work among the neediest. Here one can see the practicality of this essay. I do not know if, at this point, Illich had heard of grassroots ecclesial communities, but some practices he was proposing resemble them. Illich traveled the profound path of learning a foreign language with a group of interested students. Not just its grammatical structures and vocabulary. There is an inner movement that is involved when exploring a new language. This movement would be the special occasion on which an adult would experience the condition of poverty, fragility, and dependence on the goodwill of others. This highly vulnerable occasion would remind the adult of the child's attitude. Every afternoon the group met for an hour of silent prayer. A language is learned in silence. From these experiences emerged, perhaps, one of Ivan Illich's most beautiful essays.

It is hard to say if Ivan Illich was accused by his contemporaries, back in the 1950s, of being an anti-mission priest; however, this representation appears in the recent publication of Todd Hartch's book*, The Prophet of Cuernavaca. Ivan Illich and the crisis of the west* (2015). Hartch's book unearthed a fundamental historical framework for characterizing the context from which the *Centro Intercultural de Documentación* (CIDOC) – Center for Intercultural Documentation – emerged, directed by Illich in the 1960s. The richness of details contributed significantly to the contextualization of the so-called Ivan Illich's pamphlet work[18]. However, Hartch's position on Illich as an anti-missionary is implacable. The American historian from Kentucky concluded, from Ivan Illich's strong and severe statements[19] (and, in my opinion,

[18] Respectively: *Deschooling Society* (1971), *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Energy and Equity* (1974), *Medical Nemesis* (1975) and *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (1978).

[19] In the short essay *To Hell with Good Intentions* one can find these severe statements of Illich against a certain damaging type of missionary. The essay was his opening speech for the Centro Intercultural de Formación (CIF) in Cuernavaca, México, where he addressed a large audience of north American priests excited by the call for 40,000 – the church plan, under the guidance of John J. Considine, to send 10% of the north American priests to Latin America. Here are some of Illich's statements: "I was impressed by your insight that the motivation of U.S. volunteers overseas springs mostly from very alienated feelings and concepts… the only thing you can legitimately volunteer for in Latin America might be voluntary powerlessness, voluntary presence as receivers, as such, as hopefully beloved or adopted ones without any way of returning the gift"; "I say this as a brother speaking to brothers and sisters. I say it against many resistances within me, but it must be said"; "next to money and guns,

necessary) against some practices of North American missionaries, that the author was opposed to missions and that he was imbued by plans to "sabotage the Catholic missionary initiative in Latin America." This judgment is unreasonable and shows a lack of comprehension. Illich understood the Christian mission in a very profound way. *The Eloquence of silence* is Illich's love letter to the mission.

"Words and sentences are composed of silences more meaningful than the sounds." These are among the first words of the essay. Illich was at least five years in Washington Heights, inserted within the Latin American community in a very attentive way. Attention is essential for dense and refined contemplation. Each word breathed in sentences is an element in a rhythm of silence and sound. Language, in this sense, is a flow of sound and silence, which contains the luminous void of unspoken speech.

Xylography, the art of woodcut, may express this idea in a much more visual way. The groove inscribed by the artist's hand creates a space. It enables the relief to receive the ink later transferred to the paper: printing. The dance of black and white on the page depends on this binary groove/non-groove relationship. Language, for Illich, had that same structure: the place of silence in conversation is the most eloquent and fundamental. Illich, therefore, defined language as a "cord of silence with sounds the knots in which the empty spaces speak." To understand persons is to be aware of their silences more than their words.

For Illich, the conversation is always a binary rhythm of silence and sound – a *yang-yu*. For him, learning languages for missionary activity in a mature and wise way is the result of accepting the responsibility of silence and sound. A language is sounded through its silences; the subtleties of meaning are much more present in the pauses that make up a conversation than in words. When someone entrusts their language to another, that person presents an intimate gift, the possibility of finding one's silence. Nothing is more uncomfortable than a conversation flooded with words, words, and words, nothing more than words emptied of lived meaning. And what does the repertoire of words and concepts do? It triggers the erudition proper to a professional speaker who long ago failed to recognize the silence of wisdom in knowledge.

The hope that ran through Illich's veins was to rekindle a mission that requires effort, time, and delicacy to learn a people's silence, not just their words. He took up this challenge during his five pastoral years in the *Incarnación* Parish. But as Illich makes clear in his text, as much as there is effort, time, and commitment to learning a language, there is also a mysterious

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the third largest North American export is the U.S. idealist, who turns up in every theater of the world: the teacher, the volunteer, the missionary, the community organizer, the economic developer, and the vacationing do-gooders. Ideally, these people define their role as service."

determination — a vocation — in heeding the missionary call. You either are or are not called to learn to speak with another. The maxim of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi[20] is a reference to this call — he who does not know his silence will never be fit for the Christian mission. Perhaps, for this reason, concluded the author, "some missionaries never speak another language properly, that is, to communicate delicately through silences." Note that it is not a matter of speaking another language with a native accent or acquiring rhetorical fluency; without the "grammar of silence," these linguistic instruments show the distance traveled by the missionary and reveal how far they came to never having arrived. The grammar of silences is a much harder art to master than the grammar of sounds.

Illich describes the nature of three types of silence. The silence of pure listener, the silence beyond words, and the silence of love. I am most interested in dealing with the first of these, which he calls "attentive silence." This experience of deep interest and listening is constantly threatened by the silence of indifference, the possibility of considering that there is nothing to be received from the other. This ominous silence is not related to life and, according to Illich, is typical of the missionary who never understood the miracle of a foreigner who silently listens to the Good News[21], which is a more remarkable testimony to the love of Christ than words spoken. As understood by Illich, the missionary is the foreigner capable of listening, suspending discourse in actions, and sharing that primeval love in which life rejoices. The greater the distance between two worlds, the greater the proof of love rooted in this attentive silence. This is what Illich calls the silence of 'he/she in us' when the words of the other can be grasped because of one's silence.

In this sense, one must also understand the relationship between the silence of God and man. "There is no greater distance than that between a man in prayer and God." According to Illich, the silence "graced by patient disposition" is perhaps analogous to the Virgin before the Ave, which became the silence model before the Word and allowed it to be passed on. The author adds that the flesh can become one with the Word thanks to this profound silence. Prayer is silent listening. Through this habit, the Word becomes flesh in a foreign culture. When a missionary finally learns to pray, the Word conceived in silence also grows in silence.

[20] The temple had the statement "Know thyself", one of the Delphic maxims, carved into it.

[21] The good news narrated in the first of the gospels, St. Mark, appears as the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ would have called his first disciples by the Sea of Galilee; they were probably coming back from fishing. It announces the arrival of a new time. In the words of Nietzsche's Antichrist, "he denied any abyss between God and man, he lived this unity of God and man as his 'good news'. This 'bearer of the good news' died as he lived, as he taught - not to 'redeem men', but to show how to live".

Illich argues that the unbridled haste of industrial society threatens the silence of the attentive pure listener silence. The time of expectation does not support silence; it is animated by agitation. Illich did not advocate a monastic and purely contemplative missionary stance. However, the time of the machine, of the reification of communication, in which conversation is governed by the commonplace of ideas and the relentless deafness of the excessive custom of oral habit (today, the supreme confusion of freedom of speech), suppresses the possibility of this type of missionary silence. It is the time that governs the missionary who believes that one "word is as good as the other and that words need no nursing."

2. The practical line

The appreciation of the first kind of grammar of silence is to prepare a better missionary. Illich perceived the rush in the heart of the Church and the hearts of many unprepared missionaries. It took thirty years for Mary to break the silence of longing for the Word to become a be-longing. Christ waited thirty years to break his silence and begin his journey as a teacher. The missionary or foreigner who does not taste this silence is like the English-speaking priest. When trying to say something in Spanish, the latter searches within himself for the English word instead of looking for some correspondence or for finding the word, the gesture, the silence that is understood even though he lacks the equivalent in his language or his own culture. Illich was highly uncomfortable with the rush of the mission, as understood by many North American priests. He had noticed a typical attitude in these missionaries: they did not allow time for the seeds of the new language to sprout in the "foreign groove of their souls."

The silence beyond words is the kind "which does not prepare any further talk." There is nothing else to be said beyond a final yes or no. Illich warned his listeners about the ever-present possibility of the emergence of an infernal silence in the innermost recesses of the soul. This kind of silence can arise when death occurs, even after Life presents itself. It is the refusal of Life, an eternal saying no. This is not like the patient dwelling in the cocoon of hope that eventually quiets beyond words; instead, it is like the cocoon that closed in on itself and awaits in its depths for the ruin and decay of everything alive. Such a nihilistic silence is a silence that separates and divides people between them and us, a silence of indifference (the silence of indifference is the counterfeit of the silence beyond words). Illich defined it as a "constant noise full of agitation and words."

This infernal silence threatens the very existence of the missionary type. The agglutination of this silence with a mission arms the missionary with a destructive ability to destroy the living silence of a people not of his own. This dangerous combination transmutes

the organic and living yes into a silent denial and converts hell into an experience that resets itself, day after day, in a foreign land[22]. The missionary priest tries to enforce his language on others or buy the language he does not speak as if he were like buying a T-shirt. This type of missionary is the one who does not respect the silence of God and puts his own words in the mouth of God.

In a way, Illich's criticism is akin to Nietzsche's criticism of the priestly type. In the aphorism XII of the *Antichrist*, when he spoke of the German philosopher as a continuation of the priestly type, Nietzsche's words recalled the missionary type that Illich condemned: "when a person has sacred tasks, how to improve, save, redeem men when he carries divinity in his chest when he is a spokesman for imperatives from beyond, such a mission already situates him outside of any just rational assessment – this task already sanctifies, it is already the type of a higher order!… And the priest has dominated until now! He determined the concepts of 'true' and 'not true'!".

This type of missionary, Illich concluded, is the type who "basically tries to violate the culture to which he was sent." By such violation, the missionary extends the prison he lives to others. Illich recounted the frustration that engulfed the spirit of many missionaries sent to Latin America. In the author's words, "he was sent, but he got nowhere, he left his place, but he never got to any land, he left his house, and he never entered any home." Illich had grasped, with acute sensitivity, the harm this missionary type inflicted on himself and others. Unfortunately, this missionary type has prevailed throughout Christendom.

3. The theological line

Illich ended his exposition of the *Eloquence of Silence* with an intimate plunge into the silence of love. The way to inhabit a conversation "opens the sensitive depth of the soul." It is about opening a clearing in the innermost part of the being, "which may be a moment or a lifetime experience." Illich raised the question that the silence of love is perhaps the only

[22] One thinks here of the South American film *El abrazo de la serpiente* (The embrace of the serpent). When Karamakate, accompanied by the German anthropologist Théo, went down the Amazon River in search of the healing plant, his canoe went through a Mission. The stop was mandatory. Native original people seen as practicing diabolical values were forced to experience a silence that had destroyed their own language, thus their silent experience. Because their practices were essentially evil, the native language could not even be pronounced. Spanish should impose itself on the vernacular language, a forgetfulness forced by the overlapping of the supposed Word of the good news. It is curious how the film shows the consequences of this intervention in time. After forty years, Karamakate returns to that same place, now accompanied by a researcher interested in Theo's journey, and the insanity of that place was disturbing. Hell on earth, mission as domination. Evidently, Illich knew the stories of catechization in Latin America among indigenous peoples. It is worth reminding the reader that he belonged to the order of the Society of Jesus, and as a Jesuit, versed in the history of the missions.

universal aspect of language, "the only means of communication which was not touched by the curse of Babel."

The confusion of languages represents the inability to listen and be silent. Each, in the construction of the common tower, becomes his god, the language of the inflamed ego that weaves the web of Luciferian solitude, the light that closes in on itself[23]. It must reach the heavens because man carries within himself not only the will to be God of his own life but to be god over everything and everyone. There are no longer limits, there are no more extended contours or contingency, only the loud cry of the ego. Industrial society is the tower of Babel based on overcoming nature as a material object. It is not enough for man's vanity to go to the moon; it is necessary to plant the flag on that stony ground. Modernity is the best expression of tools planetarily arming men as a lightning god, submitting social and natural milieu to irreparable degradation.

However, Illich credited the silence of love with the possibility of "being with others and the Word without having a foreign 'accent.'" The possibility of correspondence and understanding between beings is open, despite the language. The silence of love is the condition for proportionality between foreigners and locals. Illich suggested that the path of this love leads to the silence of the *Pietá*, which is not the silence of death, but the silence of the mystery of death. It is beyond questions, words, and answers. Michelangelo's Mary seems invaded by this silence. The one who gave birth to the Word as a living form took the mystery of his death in her arms. She followed the absolute path of the slow maturation of silence, and, for Illich, this is the journey of the Christian missionary.

Missionary silence is a gift.[24] To forget the gratuity that characterizes it is to forget that the language of another is an offer that cannot be conquered but given it freely. The Word becomes flesh among two persons when the other's language is heard by me, especially one's silence, and corresponded in my language, that is, in my silence too. This is only possible if I gaze at the other's face, touching it with my eyes. Thus, my 'self' and the other's meet on common ground, which is neither my *topos* nor the other's *topos*. The creative Word becomes flesh within us and is necessarily an encounter.

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[23] Here I dwell on Kierkegaard's words in the *Works of Love*: "As God dwells in a light from which every ray of light which illumines the world issues, yet by none of these ways can a man enter in order to see God; for the way of light changes to darkness if one faces toward the light…; as the rays of the sun invite men by their radiance to behold the glories of the world, but reprovingly punish the presumptuous man with blindness if he inquisitively and audaciously faces about to discover the source of the light."

[24] When writing about the impact of the *Eloquence of Silence* among the priesthood, Fitzpatrick said "these were the great moments that reflected Illich's prophetic gifts, an insight into spiritual realities, and the ability to illustrate the ways these expressed themselves in the routine of daily life. These are the gifts Ivan gave so many of us in those exciting days of Ponce, Puerto Rico. And this continued during the early years at Cuernavaca, Mexico."

That would be the role of the Holy Spirit, to affect one's gut towards gazing at the other who was once separated by ethnicity. The missionary should carry that same silence of Mary, awaiting the gestation of something alive, a seed that must be nourished and cultivated. To take the body and the blood – bread and wine in the last supper – not only because Christ died and was resurrected but also because he is an eternal living power, an eternal yes that gives rise to a possibility of proportionality between God and men is the theological line that is quite evident in this text.

Now, Illich was engaged with conducting a center for the formation of priests involved with Latin America or Hispanic communities. His practical concerns in New York caused Illich to think through the missionary activity and contribute to the substantial change in the relationship between the church and Latin America, between priests and mission. Illich had the soil onto which he stood as the *topos*, the place from which his concepts and way of thinking emerged.

The relevance of this journey may have surprised Illich later on. In the 1960s, Illich took the position in the church as director of the *Centro Intercultural de Formación* (CIF), Intercultural Formation Center – which later became CIDOC. He might have been the only feasible choice due to his time in the *Incarnación Parish* and Puerto Rico conducting the Center in Ponce. In the 1960s, the question of the Christian mission would have placed the young priest at the epicenter of the papal order to send 10% of the North American priests to missionary activity in Latin America.

Perhaps, *The Eloquence of Silence* is an essay that can bring light to the Illichian mode of being, his way of living entwined with his writings, the personal line. My central hypothesis is that Illich started to write precisely because he was prompted by the demands of a concrete situation that he recognized called for taking a position or stance, the practical line. This was the case with his first text on Puerto Ricans, and perhaps it remained so until his pamphlets. I do not want to paint a picture that Illich's ideas and thoughts expressed in these essays are not original or not the result of his creativity. On the contrary, I wish to emphasize that life's concreteness nourished the core of his intellectual scholarship. The missioner who 'vanishes' in the encounter with the other; the missioner who dissolves into a man/woman who is attuned to the silences of the other; the 'missioner turned man/woman' leads us to the analysis of the next essay.

1.4.3 The Vanishing Clergyman

Illich's experience as vice-rector of the Catholic University in Ponce was fundamental to his later reflections on education and schooling. The encounter with thinkers such as Leopold Kohr and Everett Reimer contributed to his first investigations of the subject. Illich lived for roughly five years immersed in a collection of concrete events of a country of the so-called 'third world' (Puerto Rico), throwing himself into the population's daily life while teaching at the University. His reflections arose from his academic and religious background and, above all, from the urge to trust his intuition.

In one of his conversations with David Cayley, Illich said that the experience in Latin America brought back to him the trust in his intuition as a way of thinking, that is, in the flesh as a constitutive part of deliberation and reflection. Trusting one's senses is one of the pillars of a convivial society, especially when thinking of what Illich calls "finding a natural threshold." I smell something when I read Illich saying that he has recovered his trust in intuition during these years. It is a plausible guess that in Latin America when Illich is first exposed to communities not yet homogenized by industrial modes of production and service institutions, his interest in the senses as a fundamental historical category is sparked.

Young Ivan Illich left Ponce and embarked on a pilgrimage that began in Caracas, Venezuela, and extended beyond Santiago of Chile. Kaller-Dietrich says that the author made his pilgrimage on foot or hitchhiking. Illich told Cayley that it is only by walking on his own feet that each region's distances, cultural universes, and particularities are experienced. This pilgrimage is thought to have taken at least a year, although Kaller-Dietrich claims it took only four months. I concluded differently because Illich himself stated that he had spent a few months just traveling northeastern Brazil on foot alongside Dom Hélder Câmara. Although we have very little information about the events of this pilgrimage, we know that it was filled with meetings with notable figures in favor of a more organic Church. In addition to Dom Hélder Câmara and the priests of *Petrópolis*, we know that Illich met with Francisco Julião and the peasant leagues in the Northeast – a very important activist group that first initiated the struggle for agrarian reformation in Brazil – as well as Paulo Freire and other intellectuals whether they were linked to the church or not.

The central hypothesis here is that Illich's *Vanishing Clergyman* is an essay that, although published in 1967 in the *Critic* of Chicago – the first draft is from 1959 – comes forth as a written text after the maturing of ideas and propositions that were taken from Illich's immersive years in the deep heart of Latin America. Illich said he would not take the matter of clergyman in "abstract terms." After living among Puerto Ricans, once in New York and later

in Ponce, in addition to his pilgrimage across villages, communities, peoples, and slums, Illich may have witnessed the concreteness, the soil, the living attitude for the "shape of the future ministry."

Illich vanished as a clergyman so that he could become a man again. Not a clergyman, just a man. He longed and (be)longed to a Church where the dinner table could be the altar. That is the core of this article.

1. The practical line

The essay's incipit clarifies Illich's argument: "the Roman church is the world's largest non-governmental bureaucracy." At that time, the church employed somewhere between 1,800,000 persons. The threads of his argument were these: how can it be that the Roman church, which wants to be the sign of Christ's presence in the world, relies on a bureaucratic structure of faith? What are the possible paths toward a more communal Church? Illich is not arguing for the complete dismantling of the Roman church structure. However, could it be possible to fathom a church that renounces control over the mystery of Christ within us? These are the main questions this essay seeks to answer.

Most priests acquire a bureaucratic mentality that keeps them away from the consuming fire that is the love of Christ. Training priests and dioceses management was increasingly under the influence and teaching of business consultants. Illich thought the clergy desired more but needed less. In this sense, Illich had a waking dream of sowing, and did so throughout his life, what he called the "Christian community of tomorrow"; of ministry as a work of leisure and not a bureaucratic job for professionals; of a 'lay' adult to preside over the Christian community; of regular contact among friends to take the place of Sunday meetings between unknown strangers; of the one who would conduct the reading, the teaching of the Word and preside the meeting as a self-supporting accountant, or a plumber— anyone who held the wisdom of the scriptures and a way of living recognized and witnessed by the local community – authority by widespread recognition, not papal dispensation.

One must take this essay as a cornerstone for Illich's own life and thinking. A thorough investigation of his intellectual trajectory would conclude that a household table is a fundamental place to meet for ideas to flourish, encounters with others, and hospitality. In the words of Illich, "I foresee the face-to-face meeting of families around the table, rather than the impersonal attendance of a crowd around an altar." Is not this the same condition, the soil, from which sprouted all Illich's later books? Did not "celebration sanctify the dining room" from whence Illich thought and wrote? Could one say that this idea also nourishes the conclusion

about Gender? Or the hesitant gaze which finds in the face of the other the possibility for ethics in the 21st century?

Illich is not encouraging abandoning the stone build church or parish or the structure of the Roman church. The point here is less about destroying something and more about embracing a practice that already exists (how the church 'it' could make room for the Church 'She' to flourish – one could take this same path to understand *Deschooling Society*). Again, I believe and continue to insist throughout this article that Illich witnessed the Christian community of tomorrow as a present reality in the depth of Latin America.[25] My old man and his sea, Sr. Posidoni was the "minister" of his community; the shrimp rice feast started with him saying the Lord's prayer. No priest would visit his village within 30 days. This was in 2014. I could only infer that Illich had seen hundreds of communities between 1951 and 1967, where such conditions were the reality of their Church.

Illich described in detail how such a Church was a possibility even according to the canon law of that time. One reads the essay and sees how thoroughly he was considering the possible paths to be taken toward a more communal Church. For instance, he mentions the sacramental ministry of marriage performed by a layperson as a reality allowed by church law when a priest cannot attend a community within thirty days. Or when he imagined a situation of a layman/woman becoming unfit for sacramental symbolic unity. The canon law of 'suspension' could easily fit such circumstances.

I do not intend to say that the Christian faith was lived in the southern tropics so that anyone would come to Illich's conclusions and ideas. Neither do I mean to say that these communities are paradise-like, where joy and freedom are celebrated daily. The brutal and violent history of slavery is just a straightforward example of some of these countries' sociability. Nevertheless, I sense that Illich had seen conditions fitting for the Church to come, one that could embrace the malleable spirit of the distant and deep communities of the tropics. I would argue that his imaginary space was still broadly open for sprouting ideas not shaped by services or 'canned solutions'— above all because he cultivated a way of living that renounced the apparatus as much as possible. According to Illich, "the current ecclesiastical imagination is still inadequate for defining this new synthesis."

Of course, this is not the reality in all communities in Mexico City or São Paulo, for example, where the industrial mode of production was rapidly changing the fabric of society. However, in that epoch, most of the countries in Latin America had an open window toward a

[25] One is not saying that these conditions could not be verified elsewhere in the world. However, Illich was living and wandering, at this point of his life, across Latin America, the soil from where his ideas sprout out.

society that was neither capitalist nor socialist – we know how much the CIA took care of that openness! I think Illich saw a terrain for something completely different from the bipolar world. In his essay *Planned Poverty: the end result of technical assistance*, *Celebration of Awareness*, Illich argued in the same direction, "we must seek survival in a Third World in which human ingenuity can peacefully outwit machined might."

2. The personal line

I believe Illich has been confused for a liberation theologian by his contemporaries, not to mention by the Doctrine of the Faith. This confusion persists today if one considers Hartch's book, *The Prophet of Cuernavaca*. In Hartch's own words: Illich "camouflaged his theology" because he "had a hidden purpose." Illich never wrote about Theology of Liberation in his writings while he was a priest. He may have known Gustavo Gutiérrez[26] in Lima, Peru. Gutiérrez's book aims to confront social injustice and centuries of violent domination in Latin America with the light of the Gospel[27]. One of the few, if not unique, the appearance of the idea of liberation in Illich, *Lima Discourse* – precisely at the epicenter of Theology of Liberation – points toward something quite different: "liberation can come only from those who choose the desert because they have been set free."

Illich might have cultivated relationships with grassroots ecclesial communities and theologians of liberation. Nevertheless, the relation between liberation theology and left Marxists is later provenance. The "use" of the Gospel for social change is not a hidden purpose in Illich's early writings as a priest. Negative theology is a much different thing than camouflage. One cannot say that his writings are under the methodological frame of historical materialism. Illich clarifies this issue: "I want to celebrate my faith for no purpose at all."

The timing of this essay is coeval with a Brazilian document of the Bishops and Superiors of the Northeast – of which Dom Hélder Câmara was part – *Eu ouvi os clamores do meu povo* (I heard the cries of my people). Roberto Romano, *Brasil, Igreja contra Estado: crítica ao populismo católico*[28] (Brazil, Church against State: criticism of Catholic populism,

[26] See *Teología de la Liberación* (1972), by Gustavo Gutiérrez.
[27] For Illich's perspective on the role of the church on social change and development, see the essay *The Powerless Church*, also in *Celebration of Awareness*.
[28] This book is a pearl among the literature of history and philosophy of the Roman Church in Brazil and its relation to the State. Because it is the doctorate dissertation of Prof. Roberto Romano, one can find the original in French or his own translation to Portuguese: ROMANO, Roberto. *Brasil, Igreja contra Estado: crítica ao populismo católico*. São Paulo: Kairós, 1979. We remind the reader that this book was written during the horrendous Brazilian dictatorship, during which the author, who had been a Dominican priest, was arrested and tortured. The church's choice of populism over communal life can give a historical perspective on the rise and establishment of evangelical churches throughout Brazil and South America due to the void left by the Roman church. The evangelicals are the fraction of society who helped electing Jair Bolsonaro as president (2018).

my translation) brilliantly explains the presuppositions of this document. The document defended the thesis that '*Deus está comprometido*' (God is committed). In Portuguese, however, differently than in English, to be committed means also, depending exclusively on the context, to be compromised. Romano will play on the word's double meaning in Portuguese (God is committed or compromised).

He speaks of deciphering the times in the light of reading the gospel as a form of conscience. Romano exposed at least four ways that, during the 1960s, one could exemplify God committed to (or compromised by) his people. The first way would be through the relationship between man and God, intimately established by a divine commitment within historical consciousness. The second way would be to subject divine commitment to reactive judgment, exemplified by the official church sacralizing transient economic and social orders. The third way is secularization, which takes the meaning of compromise, in erasing the church's existence over the long run. Finally, the fourth form would be that which recognizes the discredited condition of the church and, therefore, "takes as a historical task to shape the de-Christianized culture." The first "proposes development as an ideal policy"; the second wants to "detach Christian values from positively established orders"; the third "expanded into industrial societies"; the fourth, and last, believes in the need to "defend Christian doctrine through modern means of communication" (Romano, 1979). These four positions reflect the church's position, all of which Ivan Illich criticized from the standpoint of the Church, to which he remained committed without compromise.

Illich conceived the metamorphosis of the altar into the dining table of a family that receives friends and celebrates life in Christ among others sharing love and joy. In this way, the anonymous crowd around the altar would become personal. Illich knew that this could have been a possible reality in the tropics, not necessarily for the whole of Roman Christianity. The grassroots ecclesial communities had already cultivated certain aspects that shaped this ministry of tomorrow of which Illich spoke. One could argue that the ecclesiastical reality of the Christian communities in the first century was like what Illich was seeing in Latin America in the mid-twentieth century[29] and that the Church to come is already a historical/theological reality. However, to invoke the reality of a communal Christianity is not to force a pure and

[29] The book of Acts – the continuation of the Gospel of St. Luke – for instance, which narrates the deeds of the Apostles and the history of the primitive Church after the death and resurrection of Christ, suggests this way of living among first Christians: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved".

authentic form of Christianity upon men. Instead, it suggests that there were concrete symbolic and material conditions for such Christianity to thrive organically. It is not because one intends to propagate right living under an orthodoxy that one point to the existence of the communal Church. Instead, it is to recall and summon the Word back to a place where it can fit in the world again because the Word is written in the hearts of men.

3. The theological line

But what would then happen to sacramental ministry and theological education? Was Illich promoting a shallow and compromised teaching, that is, distant from centuries of tradition and trapped in imprecision? Quite the contrary. He reminds the reader that, beyond personal maturity, theological precision, contemplative prayer, and charity, the "specific result of Christian education is the *sensus ecclesiae*." The sense of the Church is the root nourished by the soil of authentic Christian tradition. The fruit germinates in "the imaginative inventiveness of the faith" expressed "in terms of the gifts of the Spirit." These gifts (without reason, no causes) can only stream out of someone who lives a distinct way of living, whose wisdom comes not from the seminar room but the "prayerful celebration of liturgy." Illich had spoken before on deschooling the Church on two different occasions: *Lima Discourse*, a lecture directed to an auditorium of priests in Lima, Peru; and *School: The Sacred Cow*.

He is not underrating the importance of rigorous theological study (he appreciated it – I can only imagine how much he could delight himself with such readings). His position is to "put it in its proper place." That means, for Illich, to use theology to verify the fidelity of one's experience of savoring the revealed truth (*lectio divina*, for instance), which is ultimately the result of the Church's faith. Theology is not necessarily the result of faith; often, it is not. In this sense, theology should bow before faith and aid its imaginative enrichment in obedience to the Word. The minister of the Church to come is not trained for "professional competence to teach the public," but one who seeks "prophetic humility to moderate a Christian group."

By centering faith back to the heart of the church, Illich was opening room for the Spirit to re-create the Church continually. A direct definition of faith is found in the New Testament letter of *Hebrews*, chapter eleven: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Only the Spirit can unfold and unveil the evidence of things not seen. Illich was creatively celebrating his faith nourished by what he saw during his pilgrimage through Latin America. The question remained if church authorities and his superiors could also see the unseen and have faith.

As Illich once said, “utopia is neither prophecy nor planning. It is a humorous way of looking at the present, which makes faith transparent”. Illich saw evidence for tomorrow’s ministry, but he did not put himself in the position of a priest who stands in place of God or a manager seated on a throne of bureaucratic power and setting the pace of change. The three lines of force of his writings meet at the place where Illich himself stands: contingency. His stance is that of one who walks the thin rope, constantly aware of the necessary balance, gazing towards what he hopes because he sees it. If Illich is to be taken as a prophet, I can only fathom it as a gift of seeing with sharp clarity his present. The advantage of the prophet is to see into the present, to see what remains unseen today.

The words are from Stephen, minutes before he was stoned to death, but are coeval with Illich’s condition within the church: “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers…”. The posture of the religious, the priestly type of Stephen’s time is very similar to that of Illich’s; they covered their ears and yelled at the top of their voices. Like the Great Inquisitor in Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*, he was told to leave the church and never return.

The Spirit, as Illich said because he lived it, is the manifestation in history of “hope, the foolishness of Christ and sometimes utopia.”[30] Illich became a man by vanishing as clergy; his irreligiosity allowed him to celebrate the powerless Church. He was the vanished clergyman; he renounced priestly power to live in the silent eloquence of a mission. According to some of his friends, whom I have the privilege to meet and befriend, he would simply light a candle on the table.

1.5 Conclusions

The three main essays analyzed in this chapter correspond to Illich’s necessity to write: his attitude towards life when confronted with concrete circumstances. They are insightful, imaginative, and creative thoughts that combine Illich’s intellectual scholarship with his immersion into the depths of communal life across Latin America and Hispanic communities. They were born out of the encounters in his life in New York City, Puerto Rico, or Brazil. He listened to a call and changed his direction, he lived as a vanished clergyman and practiced

[30] For more on Illich and utopia, see the article Leonídio, A., & Leão Neto, E. P. de S. (2019). *A utopia de Ivan Illich.* Diálogos Latinoamericanos.

poverty as powerlessness, by learning languages or by pilgriming. They all suggest the grounding of thought in life and vice versa.

Thinking and living were undeniably bonded in the young priest Illich, his gaze touching the concreteness of social and religious life to which he was intentionally drawn. Illich is the knot, as it were, where the three lines of force that both produce these written texts and constitute their form meet: the theological, the personal, and the practical. Though I limit my analyses to three concise essays that expose a concordance between life and thought, I am almost convinced that one could see the same pattern throughout Illich's life and written pages. Whether when he abandoned his position at Princeton University to take over a parish in the abandoned outskirts of Manhattan or when he taught his fellow priests how to cultivate the Word for missionary silence meaningfully, Ivan Illich's early life as a priest, social critic, and activist has still much to teach us about his bibliography. I hope others now can see his writings differently, as the commingling of three lines of force seems crucial to reading Illich. I suggest that the pages of the so-called CIDOC pamphlets, or *Shadow Work*, *Gender,* and *In the Mirror of the Past*, contain much evidence of what Illich saw of the industrial mode of production in modernity that remains unseen or ignored. I believe this should be more than enough to start making a case for Illich as a classic of the 20th century as an archeologist of the vernacular.

One could say he was a militant/public intellectual, an activist thinker, a Christian anarchist, or an existentialist— the list is long. He was a prophet of his time, a man who could see evidence of the unseen and hoped for their flourishing. In other words, as a man of faith. Not because he was a credulous believer, but because he lived in the child-like simplicity of his faith and the intellectual depth of his theology. And faith, as Kierkegaard wisely put in the *Works of Love*, "invitingly volunteers to be man's companion on the way of life but petrifies the one who impudently turns around to try to understand it."

Illich's writings were written with blood, and as Nietzsche had said, to read others' blood is not an easy task. Why is it so hard to formulate an Illichian methodology? Why is it so hard to write as an Illichian? I hope I have suggested some possible answers to these questions.

This is how *I* read Ivan Illich. This young and still very immature student is risking himself by foolishly trying to tell a story of how to read a man he never met but has only savored through his writings. I do not claim this reading of how to read Illich to be the definitive version or even a possible version. Instead, the truth it possesses derives from some correspondence to where I stand and the way I live. I hope that this work can motivate a few other stories. And hope does not disappoint.

2 Chapter 2: Why to read Ivan Illich in the 21st Century?

> "*At the point you perceive the irreparability of the world, at that point it is transcendent. How the world is – this is outside the world*."
>
> Giorgio Agamben

2.1 Preamble

2.1.1 'Green': an (old) new deal

It was a mild winter in State College, Pennsylvania, in 2020. At least, that is what people told us. My wife and I, of southern flesh, were not used to dry, cold, and long, grey days. Samar and Sajay's table was the warm and welcoming place for fruitful conversations, breaking bread, and conspiracies. Among them, we could regain some summer colors, a constant in Brazil. Above all, we missed the green. Not the "green" inscribed on the bottles of lemonade and vanilla yogurt; nor the "green" seal stamped on big rectangular plastic boxes of organic salad sold at Wegmans, nor the electric "green" car Tesla that occasionally crossed Atherton Street; and not even the immaculately maintained lawn of Old Main could give us a fleeting glimpse of what we have experienced of green since we were children. We missed the green.

The tropical sensibility finds no solace among naked forests and leafless trees. How could it be that such a green-less season was filled with green labels, green ideas, green cars, and green buildings? Nothing was green! Yet the talk of green was incessant. The possibility of a wholly abstract relation to "green" was never made more brutally apparent to us.

We brought this bizarreness into a conversation during a delightful dinner on a Wednesday evening. The town was approaching what North Americans call Spring Break – one week holiday for the students during which they left the campus – and somehow, an atmosphere of calmness descended on us who remained behind. Sajay was always tuned to what was exciting happening on campus. For instance, we attended lectures on the notion of "idea" in late Renaissance art and on the most recent opioid crisis in the United States prompted by the scurrilous relationship between pharmaceutical companies and public health agencies. This time, however, the invitation was to watch the premiere of a documentary called *Planet of the Humans*, directed by Jeff Gibbs and presented by Michael Moore.

The State Theater, downtown State College, hosted the event. With the presence of director Jeff Gibbs, the audience was invited to watch a movie in which the synopsis suggested

a society immersed in "green" illusions. The movie banner was quite intriguing; the font used for the title was similar to that of the famous blockbuster *Planet of the Apes.* The solo man facing what appears to be a mining area evoked a sense of displacement.

We got there earlier to make sure we could get good seats. The mid-row, located in the center of the theater, accommodated four curious yet wary souls. Pictures of biogeochemical degradation have shaped the last twenty years of environmental imagery. Modern industrial society's destruction of the physical milieu has been a long-term consensus, and many documentaries have touched the nerve of climate change for decades.[31] Would this one be another session of horror, decadence, and destruction, where the spectator, while eating a jar of popcorn, gazes at the consequences generated by the way of living based on fossil fuels and the food industry chain? The lights were finally off, the cozy cool darkness of cinema embraced our bodies, and it was on.

The movie begins with a question posed to people on the street: "how long do you think we humans have?" A few answered. Millions, infinite, decades, few more years. A man driving on a highway behind a big truck cuts the interviews. The voice narrating this image launches the quest of the journey we are about to embark on: "what are the consequences when one single species dominates and takes over the whole planet and, ultimately, when it has gone way too far."

To our surprise, Jeff Gibbs talked from within the forces of change. He shows us that the significant problems of modern industrial society (pollution, climate change, high quanta energy dependence) have been known, at least since 1958. Influenced by scientists such as Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*, 1962), he was among the generation of students who sparked the environmental movement in the United States. In a nutshell, Jeff Gibbs presents himself as a man preoccupied with the environment since very early in his life and hopeful that humanity would find a better way. This stance took him to live in the woods under sustainable forms of life, from bioconstruction to renewable energy; he was what we call today a 'green' activist.

After ten minutes of a short introduction to Jeff Gibbs: to what has centered his activism and what is this movie about, we enter a long hour and a half loop of social/environmental catastrophic consequences caused by the "green" economy, or worse – the contradiction in terms – by "sustainable development." The destruction generated by so-called 'green' energy, in its forms of solar farms, wind engines, or biofuels; the devastating procedures required for the construction of 'green' electric cars, such as Tesla (the picture of mining); 'green' funds

[31] To name just a few well known, see, for example, *Koyaanisqatsi*: *Life Out of Balance* (1982), *The Eleventh Hour* (2007), *Flow: For Love of Water* (2008) and *The City Dark* (2011).

and ‘green’ investments of ‘dirty’ banks and corporations; and the dependence on coal to overcome the intermittence problem of renewable energy. The primary excuse: is the period of transition. Gibbs invites us to get outside the matrix by exposing the desert of the real. When he digs into its foundations, every structure of the ‘green’ economy is sustained by ideas of profit, economic growth, technological predation, and venial corruption. He was devastated because he believed the ‘green’ and the ‘green’ turned out to be an illusion.

As readers of Ivan Illich, the four of us were celebrating the fact that after roughly forty-seven years since *Tools for Conviviality* and *Energy and Equity,* someone was widely exposing the inextricable social/environmental degradation condition of ‘clean technology’ under the assumption that society is always chasing to solve the dilemma of not enough energy and keeping the march of infinite growth on. On the other hand, we were also intrigued by the fact that Gibbs had addressed overpopulation, overconsumption, and the delusion of keeping things as they are but only greener, had interviewed several prominent ecological thinkers, and despite it all, found himself in an aporia. The *Planet of the Humans* made apparent that technoscience and economic markets were still the horizons of thinking. None of his interviewers could give him a feasible alternative to these, and even Gibbs himself does not know what can be done except to despair. He seemed a man exhausted and defeated by the hard job of disclosing such a grim reality.

It was over. The lights were on. Jeff Gibbs, gently and calmly, took the stage and opened himself to questions, critics, and conversation. The tone of the discussion was ambiguous. On the one hand, the audience was trying to digest the arguments based on thorough research, proving that “clean” energy and a “green” economy are fallacies. On the other hand, the discomfort of such a condition, and the breakdown of expectations, created a moment of distrust and justification. “What can I do,” one person said, “if my company will not accept me having just two pairs of trousers”!

We left the theater with a silent sense of urgency. While walking back home, the four of us were thrilled to recall that the ideas, concepts, and arguments Illich had formulated in the early 1970s precisely answered the questions of Gibbs and some among his audience. It became clear to me, at this point, that Illich is as current as he once was. Above all, I could follow Illich’s diagnosis of industrial society, aware that his thought is not only contemporary, but it also offers rational, feasible, and radical solutions to the problems, for instance, unfolded by Jeff Gibbs.

However, Illich’s *oeuvre* is not a solution. He never wrote as an engineer trying to give answers to problems. His thought emerged from and was in defense of a way of living. Thinking

and living are not separated in Illich. Could these thoughts resonate with ways of living today, or have we gone way too far? Ears might have been closed for his words in the past. Are they open today? Has the time of his legibility arrived? This chapter is dedicated to the words of Ivan Illich. The reader already knows how I read Illich (see chapter 1). It is time to face why I think it is crucial to read him in the 21st century.

I am in my village. It is spring in Brazil, October 2021, while I type these words. I glance through the window — everything is green!

2.2 Introduction

Ivan Illich is a classic. We often approach great thinkers of the past from two opposite yet related roads: assuming they are either determined by their historical period and therefore outdated, or as timeless geniuses. Both approaches, however, are blind to what a classic is and to what is an *oeuvre* (Chaui, 2015). A classic always has something to tell us because they respond to fundamental questions. A classic also teaches coming generations to raise the meaningful question of their own (Merleau-Ponty, 2014).

I argue that Ivan Illich's *oeuvre* corresponds to a classic as it creates a new field of ideas in which we can learn how to open paths for our inquiries. By reading Illich, I have been learning the rigorous craft of raising good questions and how to confront my own time through his propositions. Illich's thoughts are not old or timeless. I believe he is as current as he once was because many of his questions have not been widely confronted, and some have been completely ignored, though most of his thoughts are still potent provocations to radical thinking that goes to the roots.

My reading of Illich has taken me on a journey of listening to his words and profoundly engaging with what he has to say. This immediate relation has crafted the feeling of visiting the interior of his speech that has yet something to say despite its distance from my time. But it is this very historical distance that, little by little, allows me the exercise of reflection, from which emerge questions and propositions that are not the author's. It is precisely at this moment of clear distance that his voice finds a greater strength and is capable of evoking new questions that are now mine.

I leave my questions and propositions for chapter three. In this chapter, I sew together two threads of his thoughts: Illich's diagnosis of modernity and his proposals. The first is located on a particular *topos*, a diagnosis of modernity placed in the past that gazes towards the present. Illich was a careful reader of classical and medieval texts and a great connoisseur of the XII century. However, he does not call for a recovery of those times; quite the contrary –

there is no sense, in my opinion, of nostalgia in Illich's words. In *On the Concept of History*, Walter Benjamin's 'Angel of History' is located in the present and faces the past: layers of nonlinear and chaotic ruins. He backs to the future, facing the ruins of devouring progress. Modernity, Illich thought, was best understood from a point outside itself, and therefore he studied it from the perspective of the past. Illich's crab walks backward through the centuries while gazing at the present and, above all, from the XII century, sees the unfolding waves that constitute the present moment. Such a method of diagnosis has given Illich an extravagant[32] way of thinking/living.

The second is the result of the first insofar as the second is the result. They are intertwined. Illich's propositions evoke possible and feasible ways of living/thinking that emerge from becoming estranged from the present. I believe that the questions raised by Illich help a particular critic better understand the certainties that form the mental topology of late modernity, along with proposals for a livable society under the limits of proportionality. As I have argued in the first chapter, the triad theological/personal/practical gives insight on how to read Illich. In this chapter, I discuss the set of historically informed concepts and rigorous arguments that Illich offers to clarify three aspects of the contemporary ecological crisis: why we got into it, how we got into it, and a possible way out of it. To my knowledge, Ivan Illich is the only thinker whose diagnosis and therapy for the ecological disaster do not entirely rely on the same tools — techno-science and markets – that produced it.

The nerve of this research shapes the choice of books from which I draw the referred lines: to investigate how in modernity environment and society are pushed way out of proportional limits. After a systematic reading of Illich's complete *oeuvre*, under Dr. Sajay Samuel's guidance, we could pinch the fundamental arguments of crucial books that are imperative for the proposed research. I have selected from his *oeuvre* a smaller set of writings to focus on for this chapter, which is concerned with understanding why and how ecological and human limits have been breached in modernity. Therefore, this chapter covers, from an eagle's viewpoint, *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Energy and Equity* (1974), *Shadow Work* (1981) and *In the Mirror of the Past* (1992). Many of his other books and essays are referred to, but we dove into specific books to unearth three key concepts: *commons, vernacular,* and *conviviality*. The reason for emphasizing these three concepts and their surrounding

[32] In Latin, *vagare* means to wander and *extra* means outside. Thus, I refer to the etymological sense of the word extravagant. Illich has literally wandered down a path and built a thinking outside the mainstream, outside the academia and outside well stablished methods, such as historical materialism, for example. Sajay Samuel has told me that Illich was testing the fittingness of this word as a self-description – as an extravagant thinker.

constellation of ideas to understand better the ecological disaster caused by technoscientific market society can be stated here. The transformation of the commons into property – whether private or public – marks the destruction of the relationship between the given or created and the man-made. Such capture of the created by the made also expresses a reversal of values – according to which the vices of pride, greed, and envy are made virtuous. The vernacular refers to what is home-made and home-grown, which is done autonomously by a community of persons. Paid services and highly capitalized products disable such autonomous action and convert persons into clients and consumers. When the property replaces the space of the commons, and the scope of human activity is reduced to accepting goods and services for money, there is no possibility for living together, for conviviality. The tools for conviviality are based on restoring multiple balances necessary to both live well and, incidentally, avoid planetary disaster. I elaborate this summary over the rest of the chapter, which I devote to my friend and teacher, Dr. Sajay Samuel, who taught me how to see the fine marble lines of Illich's chisel.

2.3 The Commons

In 1976, on April Fool's day, CIDOC was celebrating its 10th anniversary and the ceasing of its activities. Since late 1969, Illich had indicated that CIDOC would not be a perennial project which could have eventually turned into an institution (Cayley, 1992). The closing of CIDOC represented a transitional moment on Illich's intellectual journey. He stepped down from the position of a social critic of modernity and started investigating the roots of modernity. By writing as a historian in *Shadow Work*, Illich fleshed out the pastness of the past. As he wisely said in a speech to the *Eastern Economics Association Conference*, "I study history to become sensitive to those modern assumptions which, by going unexamined, have turned into our epoch-specific, *a priori* forms of perception" (Illich, 1992). The backward walk from the late 1970s until the Middle Ages and mercantilism allowed Illich to precisely see the rise of market society based on economic scarcity[33] and the formation of anesthetizing modern certainties.

For Illich, the public discussion on the limits to growth had gone through two stages and was entering [the 1980s], concomitant with his essays in *Shadow Work*, the third stage of

[33] lllich used the term scarcity in a very precise sense, that which was also used by the economists since Walras: the field in which the laws of economics relate subjects, institutions, and commodities "within an environment in which the commons have been transformed into resources, private or public." For more of Illich on scarcity, see footnote 11 in the book *Gender* (1982).

analysis. The first stage [the 1960s] centered the analysis on the social degradation of industrial production and its obvious danger to the biosphere from stresses on the physical environment. The main concern at this first stage was the production of goods, exemplified by the destruction of nature – waters, airs, and places – by excessive industrial production.

The second stage [the 1970s] took place when the analysis embraced the dimension of services and unearthed the institutionalization of care, learning, moving oneself, and all given abilities forced into the realm of scarcity. Illich's *Deschooling Society, Limits to Medicine,* and *Energy and Equity* are good examples of his critique of this stage. For Illich, limits on care, for instance, are the necessary complement to limits on goods. By demonstrating the destructive side effects of the institutionalization of *given* abilities into services, the second stage could render a broader analysis of modern industrial society, taking both the production of goods and services as crucial spheres for a political struggle towards limiting growth.

The third stage [the 1980s], to which the book *Shadow Work* was dedicated, was focused on the commons. Any political arrangements seeking to set growth limits must extend the analysis beyond the property regime, whether public or private. The commons is the condition for such analysis. The classical understanding of the commons is the images of woods and pastures, areas that are used for existence outside the market. Above all, the commons is soil. It is precisely the enclosure of the commons, understood as communally regulated spaces of subsistence,[34] shared by many for what economists understand as 'utilization value of the environment,' that forced peasants into proto-industrial wage labor (Illich, 1981). For Ivan Illich, therefore, the public discussion of limits to growth must embrace three complementary dimensions: production of goods, the institutionalization of services, and the destruction of the commons.

In economic terms, the commons generate use-values. It is from where people can organize forms of independent subsistence. The transformation of the commons into an environment, which is an economic resource, has occurred in all spheres of experience. The commons were that people "recognized claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households" (Illich, 1992, p. 49). It was neither enclosed by

[34] The British case is the pinnacle of the enclosure of the commons. However, Karl Marx (see *Capital* vol. I, above all chapters 8 and 11) has also shown the origin of the corvée in the Danubian Principalities as a form of servitude organized only after the usurp of common lands. Some parts of the Romanian fields were originally under common regime, for cultivation and for 'utilization value' of the physical milieu. With the enclosure of common lands into *ager publicus* (public fields) and into private lands, the former labor of free peasants on common fields is expropriated in the form of corveé, which has developed relations of servitude, not on paper, but in reality. Without the commons, the labor on private or public fields are always in the form of exchange value, in Marx's terms the surplus value (Marx, 2013).

private fences nor policed by public law. The suffocation of the commons by private and public property leaves people very little on which to exist freely. However, the distinction of the commons from the regimes of private or public property is invisible to the political economy field in its historical and contemporary forms.

Sajay Samuel and Jean Robert have already demonstrated that the origin of political economy, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, is based on a decisive overturning of the Aristotelian tradition. Rather than basing his arguments on the question of what is good and just, Adam Smith legitimizes the art of economic enrichment. Under these conditions, political economy is the science that enables the wealth of individuals and nations (Samuel and Robert, 2010). For the structure of Smith's arguments to stand, it was necessary for him to explicitly ignore all activities rooted in use value (see chapter 2 of Book I of *The Wealth of Nations*). Smith thus bequeaths to neo-classical economics its blindness to all but private or public ownership regimes.

What is true of neo-classical economics is also true of Marxist economics. In Chapter 1 of *Capital,* Karl Marx elaborates on the function and origin of the commodity in industrial production to examine the fundamentals of exchange value. Despite rescuing the distinction between use-value and exchange-value, Marx devotes the rest of his work to a critique of the commodity understood as exchange value. Both Smith and Marx thereby ignore as historical detritus the commons – the zone beyond all ownership, whether private or public – wherein people do for them and/or by themselves.

Similarly, the American ecologist, Garret Hardin, changed the historical meaning of the commons when he argued that the 'tragedy of the commons' would be inevitable when the property regime did not control the scarce resources – private or public (Hardin, 1968). Hardin's argument that access to resources not part of the property regime would lead to environmental collapse has become dogma. His work, which reinterpreted the commons from the perspective of acquisitive property regimes, legitimized a race to appropriate what remained of the common.

Approximately twenty-two years later, Elinor Ostrom – Nobel Laureate in economics – partially challenged Hardin's thesis. For her, the 'tragedy of the commons' is unnecessary due to access to resources outside the property regime. For Ostrom, environmental abuses can be contained and avoided through sensitive common governance methods through institutions in collective action (Ostrom, 1990). She argued that the arenas of ecological conflict should be seen as the meeting place and occasion for the construction of collective institutions of sustainable governance based on economic agents' rational action and interest.

Both authors correctly understood the commons as an alternative to property. But neither escaped the shadow thrown by the economy. While Hardin sought to excise the commons to avoid the supposed tragedy of overuse, Ostrom sought to extend modes of economic governance to ensure the efficient use of the commons. In sharp contrast to these economistic interpretations of the commons, Ivan Illich proposed the commons as the inverse of the economy. This is one of the fundamental analyses of books such as *Shadow Work* (1981) and *In the Mirror of the Past* (1992) – above all in the essays titled *The Three dimensions of public option* and *Silence is a commons* – in which Illich argued for extricating the commons from an economic or propertied reading.

Roberto Esposito, the Italian philosopher, offers a path to understand Illich's comprehension of the commons as an alternative to scarcity. At the beginning of his book *Le Persone e le Cose* [Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View], Esposito demonstrates that there is a correspondence between Greek philosophy and Roman law, although the first is often taken as metaphysical and in opposition with the second, which concretely deals with genuine relationships. For him, the law also produces its metaphysics, the legal world established in ancient Rome – which became the model for Western law – gave birth to a peculiar correspondence between realism and metaphysics, concreteness, and abstraction (Esposito, 2015, p. 67).

While clarifying the dual meaning of *Res*, as both thing and case, Esposito develops the argument that that which distinguishes, for instance, *res publica* – the collective interest – from *res communis* – which belongs to no one in particular, thus belongs to everyone – cannot but be grasped through the contrast between categories, where neither has a definition in itself. "The *summa division*," argues Esposito, "conforms to this negative register". Things that are appropriable, *res humani iuris*, are those that are *non divini iuris*, which are all things that are inappropriable. Within *res humani iuris* [human law], there are private and public things, which, again, are things that can be appropriated. The *divini iuris* [divine law] gathers that which is *communes*, belonging to everyone, and thus unappropriated for the time being.

Thus, following the arguments of Esposito, the commons in Illich could be well understood as God's creation, what the Romans called *divini iuris*, which are things that can be used but should not be appropriated – such as water, soil, forests, and so on. It has clear correspondence with Franciscans' attempt to have the ability to use without having rights, that is, the ability to use without the necessity of appropriation (Agamben, 2014). In Illich, the commons is the opposite of property, just like ancient Roman Law, but with a crucial nuance: while the environment is the name for that which can be appropriated, the commons is the name

for that which belongs to the Creator. The right to use without the need to possess (consumption) frames Illich's political task of calling for the protection and the recovery of the commons. Illich's propositions are framed by forms-of-living shaped by inappropriable things, which ultimately allows the flourishment of non-market-oriented activities.

2.4 The Vernacular

It was to flesh out such activities that Illich revived *vernacular*, whose etymology designated everything woven, cultivated, and made at home instead of what was obtained through exchange. Vernacular names structures of mutual dependence inscribed in each aspect of existence. In such a world, there was no possibility of 'the economy' being disembedded from its deeper social matrix (Illich, 1981). Thus, Samuel has elaborated the scope of the vernacular in Illich, which does not only refer to things, places, and activities but also to ways of knowing (Samuel, 2016).

The reader might be more familiar with the term vernacular within linguistics. Ivan Illich, however, breathes "new life into the old word." According to him, vernacular "is a technical term from Roman law. It can be found there from the earliest records up to the codification by Theodosius. It designates the inverse of a commodity." Vernacular, in its Indo-Germanic root, connotes rootedness and abode, while as a Latin word, *vernaculum*, "was used for whatever was homebred, homespun, homegrown, homemade, as opposed to what was obtained in formal exchange" (Illich, 1981).

However, to contrast such activities with a new form of unpaid labor in modern industrial societies, Illich could see the rise of what he defined as the *shadow economy*. He coined this term "to speak about transactions which are not in the monetized sector and yet do not exist in pre-industrial societies" (Illich, 1981). These are not activities that foster or support use-value, although apparently outside the net of money. Understanding this crucial distinction is imperative to recover the commons and convivial society.

The formal economy and shadow work together to constitute the industrial mode of production. Shadow work is the condition of a form of unpaid labor that does not contribute to the independence of persons from the market but instead creates more needs, generates more scarcity, and prompts more wage labor ever. Illich's historical analysis of industrial work also showed that there had never been a sexually neutral *homo economicus*. The modern couple deepens market dependence as *vir laborans*, the workingman who complements *femina*

domestica, the housewife.[35] Thus, shadow work degrades a type of autonomous activity that prevails among women to support one which privileges men (Illich, 1981). Everyday housework does not provide subsistence for the family or produce things with use-value. Instead, unpaid labor is necessary to transform exchange value into use-value, for example, shopping or homework. Often classified as self-help, shadow work refers to the unpaid labor necessitated by wage labor.

Accordingly, the word *vernacular* clarifies the distinction between *shadow work* – unpaid labor standardized by industrial commodities – and autonomous activities (or subsistence) – external market dependence and monetary relations. The vernacular contrasts radically with shadow work through the mental topology of scarcity, permitting easy confusion between them. For this reason, Illich's *Shadow Work* offers five essays where such distinction is drawn.

2.4.1 The war against the vernacular

The third essay of Illich's *Shadow Work* is entitled *The war against subsistence*. It is the main article for the reader engaged with grasping the meaning Ivan Illich gives to the vernacular. I prefer not to speculate why Illich avoided addressing the vernacular in the essay's title for which it was dedicated. Samuel has already argued that "the vernacular is a better fit than 'subsistence' for referring to the 'what' that has been muscled into the shadows by an expanding techno-scientific economy" (Samuel, 2016).

By revivifying vernacular, Illich was trying to "bring into awareness and discussion the existence of a [vernacular] mode of being, doing, and making" that is outside the market and exchange value since the word vernacular itself is far from technical and specialized terms. The word vernacular, therefore, evokes forms-of-living that are "characterized by austerity, modesty, modern yet hand-made and built on the small scale," the opposite of development and the competition of economic indicators (Illich, 1981). Development like colonization before it, therefore, has been one of the weapons of mass destruction in the war against the vernacular.[36]

Development as a mission of the West has its roots in late antiquity, and it was a particular attitude towards the alien within the Western European Church. The barbarian was

[35] For more on Illich and the regime of sex as a break with the past, see *Gender* (1982).

[36] I believe that Ivan Illich has given perhaps the most precise definition of development: "Fundamentally, [development] implies the replacement of widespread, unquestioned competence at [vernacular] activities by the use and consumption of commodities; the monopoly of wage labor over all other kinds of work; redefinition of needs in terms of goods and services mass-produced according to expert design; finally, the rearrangement of the environment in such fashion that space, time, materials and design favor production and consumption while they degrade or paralyze [vernacular] oriented activities that satisfy needs directly" (Illich, 1981, p. 15).

not a burden for the Greeks to be brought into the *polis*, just like in Rome, where they could become citizens, but never as an intended mission. Sensing the stranger as someone in need belongs to Christendom and for Illich defines what we call the West, which would not have come without "this universal mission to the world outside."

Illich draws the thread that crosses the history of the needs (and why not the Church's *oeconomia*)[37] by sewing the successive forms of the perception of the outsider as someone who needs help. In late antiquity, the barbarian mutated into the unbaptized pagan who by nature must be Christian and incorporated into the body of the Church. In the early Middle Ages, although most of the people in Europe were baptized, the arrival of the Muslims gave birth to a new mutation. The pagan Moor mutated into the infidel. During the time of Maritime expansion and the conquering of new lands, the Renaissance humanist came across the savages of a new world. The infidel mutated into the wild man. However, the dreams of a lost paradise shone a light of virtue on the wild man. The threat to mercantilism and colonialism due to a kind of man who lives under no commodified needs generated the mutation of the wild man into the native. By the time of the Bretton Woods Conference, a global agreement was set to create universal welfare grounded on the needs of goods and services. A man with limited needs could not delay the locomotive of progress and growth. The native mutated into the underdeveloped (Illich, 1981).

Illich firmly confronted the international north-south relation in terms of Development. A whole set of vernacular ways of living were being labeled as underdeveloped. Beneath the development premises, unpaid vernacular activities "which provide and improve livelihood" are often mistaken for shadow work or 'informal sector' and, above all, systematically destroyed by the West's missionary effort. Illich did not address such a worldwide process as a certainty of inevitable good. On the contrary, he breathed new meaning to the word vernacular precisely to contrast both sides of the industrial mode of production – the formal economy and shadow economy – to celebrate the ability to live in ways that insist on freedom that neither attempts human control over nature nor replaces the "nests and snake pits of culture by sterile wards for professional service." While development based on high per capita energy quanta expands the shadow economy, the expansion of the vernacular domain fosters the relation between people-tools and people-soil under limits of proportionality.

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[37] For more on the idea of the Church's *oeconomia* and the history of the needs, see Giorgio Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (2011). Illich mentioned in the beginning of *Shadow Work* that he would later engage with the historicity of the needs and the history of scarcity. Such book has never been written by Illich. I suggest, however, that Agamben has traced something quite similar to that which Illich had once intended to do.

I propose that the discussion on limits to growth must be grounded on the triad of instruments (the balance between convivial tools and technologies – whether dominant or systems), soil (the balance between commons and property – whether private or public), and activities (the balance between vernacular and economy – whether wage labor and shadow work).

As in Illich's considerations of the convivial society, there is no requirement that the domain of economy is fully dismantled. The argument is quite precise. It is necessary to "struggle for the freedom to expand the vernacular domain" so both men and women use-value activities (doing) effectively counteract the economic domain of wage labor and shadow work (having). It is to flesh out the war against the vernacular and unfold the clear contrast between the *vernacular domain* and *shadow economy* that Illich took the "privileged road" of history. We shall walk the same path, following Illich's footsteps.

2.4.2 The word became grammar, and scarcity dwelt among us

Everyday speech was not separated from the mother tongue before Columbus, just as the Americas were not distinct from China in the European mind. After Queen Isabella decides to allow Columbus' venture, the colonial conquest overseas discloses a pivotal moment of the war against the vernacular. Illich's historical investigation unfolded a crucial and often unreasonably overlooked figure of Spanish colonialism: Elio Antonio de Nebrija. The Queen blessed Columbus' sailing fleet to enlarge the empire of the Cross, a familiar weapon. Meanwhile, Nebrija was "engineering a new social reality" that reduced the wild men and, above all, the Queen's subjects to "an entirely new type of dependence." He introduced a new weapon named *Gramatica Castellana* (1492).

While Columbus' petition for resources was similar to many others – to discover a new route to the China of Marco Polo – Nebirja's established an invasion into the heart of the motherland. "He offers Isabella a tool to colonize the language spoken by her subjects; he wants her to replace the people's speech with the imposition of the queen's *lengua – her* language, *her* tongue" (Illich, 1981, p. 34). The baptism of wild men was henceforth through language, and experts and tutors would discipline the anarchy of vernacular tongues.

Nebrija knew that the vernacular speech embodies a loose tongue, free of precepts and rules. It is the speech of everyday life within which people embrace their existence with others. The words correspond to that which is commonly shared and acknowledged among a particular group of people. Speech can vary from place to place, often within very short distances. For Nebrija, such vernacular speech jeopardized the crown's plans for seeding the modern State,

while Gutenberg's printing press threatened to spread the anarchic reading of the untaught speech in black and white.[38] Nebrija petitioned the Queen to control her subject's speech as a way to bring them under her bureaucratic control. His grammar was a tool for the monopoly over the tongue, for a taught official language to replace vernacular speech. Nebrija was counseling the Crown to silence and suffocate the abundance of vernacular tongues by transforming the word into a scarce tool that needed to be taught to everybody. This new reality disembedded the words on which people existed and shared. The words then became grammar, and scarcity dwelt among us.

Before the *Gramatica Castellana*, only the Church could express the nourishing milk of salvation. Through the past mirror, Illich saw Pope Gregory VII naming "the Church as *Mater*, *Magistra*, and *Domina* – mother, authoritative teacher, sovereign." The institutionalization of the Gospel took many centuries until the constitution of a formal maternal authority that offered an exclusive universal service it monopolized —the church. According to Illich, this process can be traced back to Carolingian times. After the Church reform headed by the Scottish monk Alcuin, the court philosopher of Charles the Great, the term 'holy mother the church' ceases "almost totally to mean the actual assembly of the faithful whose love, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, engenders new life in the very act of meeting" (Illich, 1981, p. 59). In the 8th century, services for salvation could only be offered by this new sacred mother, whose ordained male priests perform the pastoral care of the individual, the family, and the village. For Illich, "this gender-specific mythology of male hierarchies mediating access to the institutional source of life is without precedent" (Illich, 1981, p. 60).

The vernacular Christian way of living, which Illich celebrated as a vanishing clergyman (see chapter 1), started declining between the 9th and 11th centuries in favor of a life "organized around pastoral care." For this pastoral care, the sacraments of the liturgy must be performed in Latin, the language of administration and church doctrine. *Lingua vulgaris* then became the distinction between vernacular speech and Latin. However, peasants were not to be taught the holy mother tongue, they lived their everyday life grounded in vernacular speech, drawn by each one from the cultural environment. The sacred scriptures were a scarce resource, but the Church never dared to insert such sacred tongue into the mouth of those poor souls. The holy mother tongue was never meant to be universally taught.

[38] For Illich, the printing press could have expanded the vernacular domain if it had not been transformed into an industrial tool to armor the monopoly over reading. Nebrija was upset by the fact that people "who speak in dozens of distinct vernacular tongues […] waste their leisure, throwing away their time on books that circulate outside of any possible bureaucratic control". He seeks to standardize "a living language for the benefit of its printed form" (Illich, 1981, p. 39).

Nebrija's *Gramatica Castellana* was not a rupture with this process. On the contrary, it enlarged the maternal representation of the church to the Crown. "Formerly, there had been no salvation outside the Church; now, there would be no reading, no writing – if possible, no speaking – outside the educational sphere" (Illich, 1981, p. 44). A maternal state must have a mother tongue that is universally taught. Mother tongue is the first step to the commodification of everyday speech, and it exemplifies the suppression of a *given* ability by a standardized service. Vernacular speech carries the incarnated word, it is learned among people who care, dislike, and address each other in the context of everyday life. When the learning of words becomes a bureaucratically controlled universal service taught by a professional speaker, the mother tongue becomes an artificial paradigm, "the earliest of specifically modern commodities and the model of all basic needs to come" (Illich, 1981, p 68). In the same way that transportation has established a radical monopoly over mobility – "the feet no longer fit" – taught mother tongue has it over speech.

According to Ivan Illich, the transmogrification of the vernacular into the mother tongue – from a living unleashed speech to an official taught language – "is perhaps the most significant […] event in the coming of a commodity-intensive society". By transforming *Castellano* into a bureaucratic artifact, Nebrija set a milestone in the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times. It has taken roughly five hundred years for universal education to extricate my mother tongue from my mouth. I do not speak my mother's tongue, which survives as the vernacular speech in many places. I talk about a language imputed into my mouth through artificial creation. Mother tongue was Nebrija's declaration of war against the vernacular. The instruction to speak a mother tongue first destroyed the living vernacular within the Habsburg Empire. It later became the most lethal weapon to ruin the soils of 'New Spain' across the Atlantic. Such internal and external crusade of professional knights of imputed services, initiated with taught mother tongue, has deepened and widened its domain through the radical monopoly of commodities over vernacular forms-of-living.

The vernacular fosters forms-of-living that are rooted in multiple acts of mutual reciprocity. To expand everyday speech on this long and fiercely forced war against the vernacular is the act of 're-membering' word and flesh. I believe this is what Illich cultivated through *conspiratio*: "only persons who face one another in trust can allow [the] emergence [of the vernacular]. The bouquet of friendship varies with each breath, but when it is there, it needs no name" (Illich, 2009).

2.4.3 Christianity is the corruption!

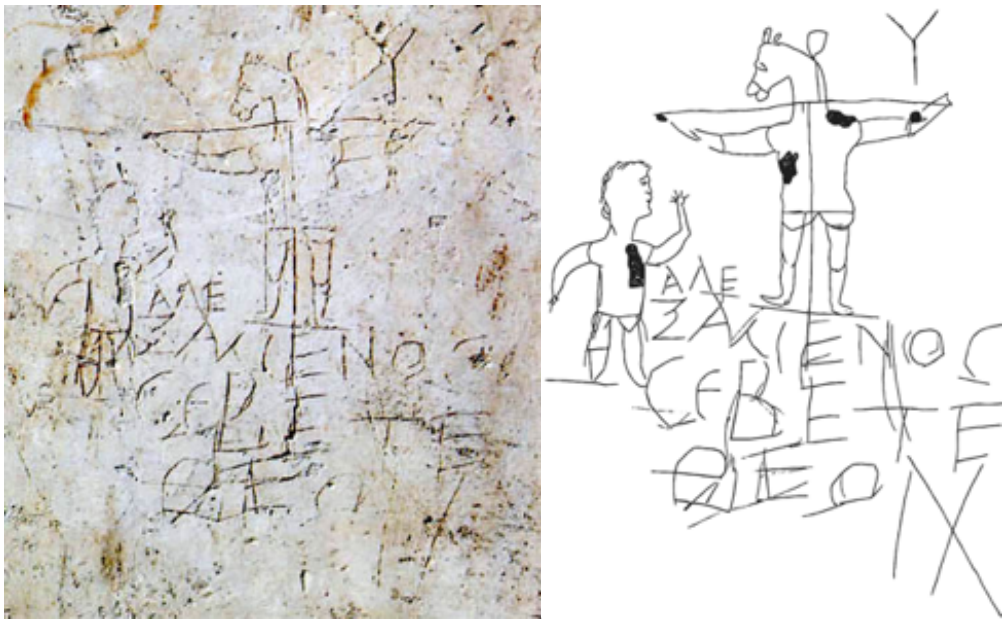
A few years before Queen Isabella's death (1504), Pope Alexander VI attributed her the title of Catholic Monarch. I agree with the title for quite a different reason than her inquisition. She is the monarch of universalism, an engine that boosted dependence on experts for the learning of ordinary speech. Although it was only in the 20th century that "both language and energy [have] been treated as worldwide needs to be satisfied for all people by planned, programmed production and distribution," Nebrija's tool was undoubtedly the model for all other dependencies typical of humans (Illich, 1981). I believe that example clarifies Illich's claim that the institutional development of the West in the long resulted in a shift in the relationship between people and tools.

Illich's lifelong digestion of the meanings of '*perversio optimi quae est pessima*' (the perversion of the best which is the worst) is grounded on his reading of the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, told by St. Luke's writings of Christ's life (see chapter 1). During hours of conversations with David Cayley – which later was presented on CBC Radio under *The Corruption of Christianity* (2000) – Illich unearthed the ontology of relation on which the *Good News* is rooted. It is impossible to categorize who is the other to whom one is moved to embrace as a neighbor. Nevertheless, when the Christian Church lost its communal characteristic and entered the Roman Empire's official status, such a relationship, once the fruit of surprise, gradually became a bureaucratic service.

According to Illich, it was typical for a Christian home in the early centuries to keep a spare mattress and some extra bread reserved for an eventual and unexpected guest. However, the growth and strengthening of the Roman Church were accompanied by "Samaritan corporations." They were institutions with the duty of supplying services to foreigners. The Church *oeconomia* of "Good Samaritanism" is engaged with providing well-being within the social structure typical of Roman antiquity. The bishop must inhabit palaces to operate institutionalized care. St. John Chrysostom (347 - 407) fought against the rising of the *xenodocheias*, literally 'house of foreigners', with vehement denial of such institutions since, in the long run, the Christian house would no longer keep a spare mattress, and some extra loaves of bread. For Illich, "the attempt to be open to all who are in need results in a degradation of hospitality and its replacement by caregiving institutions" (Cayley, 2005, p. 152).

Illich traced the roots of what he understood as the perversion of the Gospel. The priest is the precursor of professional service. However, he does not see this transmogrification as a process of secularization, "the perversion of the Church that, by institutionalizing itself more and more as an alleged *societas perfecta*, has furnished the modern State with the model for

completely taking charge of humanity" (my translation – Agamben, 2014). For Illich, contingency might have disappeared as a social reality, when "constraints on technological development began to fall away" and the world began to be placed in the hands of men. Nevertheless, he has not lived with God as an '*as if*', but in the foolish trust that His word could reach him[39].



Picture 1: "Anaxamenos adores his God".

2.5 The Convivial

2.5.1 A general theory of industrialization

During the late 1960s, Illich's seminars were centered on educational devices. They were critical studies of the monopoly exercised by the industrial mode of production. By 1970, they found that universal education through compulsory schooling is not possible; that mass

[39] I vividly remember the *aula* my teacher Renato Brolezzi gave to our group of studies in the Palatine Hill. We had crossed through the Titus Arch and had stared at the drawing lines, carved in marble stone, of roman soldiers carrying the covenant chest and the menorah as spoils of the second Temple's destruction. He told us of Palestine and its resistance to the Roman Empire, but above all, he directed our gaze towards the very first image attributed to Christians, roughly a century before Constantine's Chi-Rho (XP). I was directly taken to Illich's words that "the first representation we have of the Crucifixion was found in the ruins of ancient Rome on the outside wall of what archaeologists assume to have been a brothel. It pictures a crucified man with the head of a donkey and below him a man in an attitude of prayerful devotion. "Anaxamenos adores his God", says the inscription. This image is the first historical indication that the *Crucifixus*, the body on the cross, had a meaning for Christians, and it has remained a mystery whether it was intended as a mockery of Christian belief or as a Christian's affirmation of his understanding of himself as a fool. Either way it exemplifies an understanding of Christianity as a form of foolishness, an understanding that remained alive in the Eastern Church until the late nineteenth century" (Cayley, 2015, p. 159). I believe this is the imagery that fleshes out Illich's way of living in gratuitous foolishness.

education is the conditioning of consumers and workers for modern societies; and thus only a society highly committed to levels of shared learning and critical personal commitment could set pedagogical limits on industrial growth (Illich, 1973)[40].

Accordingly, his analysis of schooling and mass production of education, a service commodity organized as public utility and thus defined as a basic necessity, became the paradigm for other industrial enterprises. The analysis both then and now has well-formulated limits to the industrial growth of commodities but has been mostly blind to the industrialization of services and its destructive side effects. Illich's pamphlets (*Deschooling Society*, *Tools for Conviviality*, *Energy, and Equity* and *Medical Nemesis: the expropriation of health*) show not only the catastrophic side effects of the industrialization of services but also call for a political engagement with setting limits to this other ignored side of the same coin. Only when the production of goods and services is analyzed is it possible to clarify the limits to industrial growth.

This analysis is founded on an alternative concept that Illich called multidimensional balance, the framework for evaluating man's relation to his tools. When tools —whether medicines or machines — grow beyond a certain scale, they frustrate the end they designed initially. Take the example of cars in big cities. Although designed to increase mobility, most sit for hours in long unavoidable traffic jams. Illich proposed two fundamental criteria for such analysis: identify the natural scales and their social limits within which human life remains viable (Illich, 1973).

When Illich published *Tools for Conviviality*, as he had highlighted, two-thirds of humanity could still have avoided passing through the industrial age if they had chosen postindustrial balance in their mode of production. In the early 1970s, Illich was aware that hyper-industrial nations would have to choose such postindustrial balance, conducted by non-industrial countries, as an alternative to social/environmental chaos (Illich, 1973). He referred to *Tools for Conviviality* as an epilogue to the industrial age. He was writing it during a time of the energy crises —a term he seemed to have coined in *Energy and Equity*. It was clear to him that further growth of mass-produced services and goods would make the human milieu hostile to its flourishing. Such accelerated growth inflicts social and natural changes at a rate that destroys cultures, renders political precedents powerless and damages the physical milieu of man. In the social sphere, it means, for instance, extinguishing the unrestricted use of natural abilities. The ability to walk is given naturally by the form of our bodies. The growth of

[40] For more of Illich on the phenomenology of schools, see *Deschooling Society* (1971).

industrialized transportation not only pushes the wanderer off the streets but, in most cases, makes it impossible for her to walk safely. This way, locomotion becomes a scarce resource, a paid public transportation service or private cars.

In this sense, it is entirely irrelevant whether an enterprise, a product, a service, a collective, or an industry – which produces such destruction – is public or private, cooperative, or communal. In other words, it is not a question of management. Market economies or planned economies, for instance, under such monopoly mode of production, generate reasonably the same set of degradation. Illich's theory, what and how he saw where industrial society was/is leading humanity, argues for restraining the power of human tools whenever they tend to overwhelm human activity. In this sense, empowerment means that "beyond certain natural scales and limits, machines lead to a new kind of serfdom," humans are enslaved to machines (Illich, 1973). I believe that such a 'General Theory of Industrialization' corresponds to a milestone in the analysis of late modernity.

The challenge at this point is to recover one's imagination and fathom a modern yet industrially balanced society. In Illich's words, "our vision of the possible and the feasible is so restricted by industrial expectations that any alternative to more mass production sounds like a return to past oppression or like a utopian design for noble savages" (ibid). I believe these words could have been written today. Against such conditions, Illich formulated his concept of counterproductivity, composed of three dimensions: technical, structural, and symbolic. For example, the technical one implies that a car made for transportation cannot move due to congestion and the overwhelmingly high number of the same tool sharing a limited space. When I am pushed off the streets to the extent of literally having no way to move from one place to other marks the point of having reached structural counterproductivity. The deformation of self-perception as a *homo transportandus*, a being who needs locomotion, marks the third and most damaging consequence of the radical transportation monopoly. Understanding oneself in the light of what dominant tools says of oneself is its most degrading effect.

How to feasibly think of a theory of society that is both very modern yet not dominated by industry? This is the central question of Illich's critical research of modernity. The answer connects the social to the environmental, perhaps what is now known as environmental sociology *avant la lettre*.

In 1973, Illich's answer to this question came from an understanding that humanity had been facing a crisis, a moment of pivotal decision. Either the extraordinary scientific discoveries of the last decades would narrow and domesticate people's activities into the specialization of functions, or a possible and feasible alternative would enlarge the range of each person's

competence. The first defines industrial society for Illich: the institutionalization of values and centralization of power, and people are mere accessories of bureaucracies. The second inverts the first structure into what Illich named a 'convivial society.'[41]

Above all, a convivial society is formed by the shape of tools that recognize natural thresholds. For Illich, modern technology serves the purposes of managers in an industrial society. A society gradually becomes convivial sense politically interrelated individuals control the use and operation of modern tools by taking them off the hands of experts. In this sense, "convivial is a technical term to designate a modern society of responsibly limited tools." That is why the term is applied to tools rather than to people. A shared house, therefore, in the context of how Illich uses the term, is not necessarily convivial, although people are 'living with' one another. What determines a convivial society is a relation between people and their tools and to which extent this relation sprouts new collectivity.

Illich retraced a classical way to understand interrelated individuals acting together in pursuing a balanced society: Aristotle's *eutrapelia* and Aquinas' *austerity*. The first could be understood as 'pleasantness in conversation' while the second as 'discipline and creative playfulness.' These are the foundations of friendship. When we hear of austerity, however, we think of a neoclassical political-economic fiscal policy defined by 'responsible' spending cuts of government expenditures. Austerity has vanished as "the fruit of an apprehension that things or tools could destroy rather than enhance *eutrapelia* in personal relations." Both virtues do not exclude all enjoyments, but "only those which are distracting from or destructive of personal relatedness." Each society must find and set the limits to meet the appropriate balance that avoids destroying what creates the condition to encounter the other.

Illich's radical critique of modernity reached the loss of pleasant conversation as a result of both social and environmental degradation in an industrial society. He was looking at not only the biological or social degradation caused by dominant tools but also the conditions needed to regain the fabric of the community in relation to its milieu through disciplined and creative personal engagement or friendship.

2.5.2 Two watersheds

In modern industrial societies of the 20th century, Illich argued for identifying two watersheds in advance of new technologies. What are these two watersheds? The first occurs when a new tool enables many people to access, use, retain or enjoy its effects and new

[41] Convivial comes from the Latin *convivere*, which means to live (*vivere*) with (*con*). Illich revives such word to conceptually define a modern yet balanced society.

possibilities. The second occurs when this new technology grows beyond social and natural limits to create new problems initially intended to solve. In other words, the scale of the tool disables the abilities once enabled by it.

Let us take the example of cars once again. In the late 1920s, a car mechanic and fix it named Mario Fava, a former inhabitant of *Pederneiras* (a town 50 km from my village), left his mother to embark on a journey to which he had just been invited (he was chatting with two military officials, who had been abandoned by their mechanic while fixing their Fords Model T). Then, they left the State of São Paulo, representing the instructions and initiatives of the Brazilian government, crossed 15 countries of the three Americas, helped to construct significant sections of the Pan-American Road, traveled 27,631 km, and arrived at the Oval Office, Washington DC, after ten years, one month and nine days[42]. In 1940, when Mario Fava returned to his mother's doorsteps while the world was being shaped by this new tool, she was flabbergasted by his presence. Her first words: 'what took you so long?' His answer, which names one of the books dedicated to his adventure, was, "I did not know it was so far away." Mario Fava also did not know that he was testifying to a period in history in which cars, the new tool for human locomotion, were about to cross the second watershed. Cars, along with the transportation industry more generally,[43] had rapidly reached a scale that produced the disease they were supposed to cure. Work, social life, politics, learning, healing, and leisure were pushed off the reach of one's steps. A person's ability to move was disabled by the environment created for and shaped by the transportation industry. Since then, more conditions have been defined as needing transportation producing an expensive, scientifically designed, bureaucratically controlled environment that dominates all aspects of human life. In this way, professional transportation became a significant threat to transit.

To live constantly within the second threshold generates such a level of disability that people become immersed in frustrations. Illich thought that such frustration would prompt fresh perspectives. Perhaps this is the cornerstone of Jeff Gibbs' *Planet of the Humans*. To end the frustration, we must first destroy illusions. Crossing the second watershed results from a society sustained and infected by the growth mania. When the sense of proportion is lost for the ever

[42] For more on this Forrest Gump like story, see '*Eu não sabia que era tão longe*' (I did not know it was so far away – my translation) of Osni Ferrari and '*O Brasil através das três Américas*' (Brazil through the three Americas – my translation) of Beto Braga.

[43] For a critic work on transportation, see *Le temps qu'on nous vole: contre la société chronophage* and *L'etá dei Sistemi nel pensiero dell'ultimo Illich*, both by Jean Robert. He demonstrated that all studies on traffic congestion, in cities with subway lines and more than 10 million people, shows that the average speed during the day, not including the night, is 15 km per hour. Which means that in a megacity like São Paulo, a woman who left for work, dwelling at the east side and working at downtown (the case of approximately 5 million people), has arrived roughly at the same time that a man would have arrived if riding a horse in the 1920s.

'more' and the 'not enough,' people become blind to a solution rooted in communally established limits and confuse the idea of ceilings to industrial growth with a return to pre-industrial oppressive society. For this reason, Illich proposed a convivial reconstruction to reverse the primary trend of the 1970s so that modern science and technology could be used to "endow human activity with unprecedented effectiveness" (Illich, 1973).

2.5.3 Wearing the suit of historians

So far, we have investigated Ivan Illich's general theory of industrialization and the precise meaning he gave to conviviality. We know that tools are convivial within a society that has struggled to set limits on both technology and energy. From this point on, the reader should be aware of the use given to conviviality as a society that fosters freedom and equity through communally established ceilings to high quanta energy tools. Illich's conviviality has a bodily scale. By centering the body at the heart of his theoretical scheme, Ivan Illich was aware that he would have to wear the historian suit to trace the history of scarcity. The result was *Shadow Work* (1981), dedicated to the discussion on the limits to growth, focusing on the commons and from which sprang the concept *vernacular*.

2.5.4 Towards convivial reconstruction

After historical materialism and Marx's *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, political economy and social theory have also rooted their premises in one fundamental hypothesis: machines can replace enslaved people. Industrialization, roughly since 1870, has been promising that machines work for men and women so serfdom and slavery can vanish. But the eventual scarcity of these new 'slaves' necessarily leads to crisis and the ever-constant expansion of mechanical tools. Used for these purposes and beyond a certain threshold, the power of machines enslaves people. Thus, "as the power of machines increases, the role of persons more and more decreases to that of mere consumers" (Illich, 1973).

Convivial reconstruction begins with recognizing the failure of the hypothesis that slavery ends when tools work for men and women. The vision that humans depend on energy enslaved people, which they must learn to master, is a symbolic facet of modern industrial crises. Inverting this tool structure, convivial society simultaneously eliminates the need for slaves or enslavers. In a convivial community, men and women have highly efficient tools to work with instead of tools that work for them. Working with tools enhances each one's range of freedom. For such autonomous individuals and groups, technology makes "the most of the energy and imagination instead of well-programmed energy slaves."

Objects and services that conform to Illich's broader understanding of convivial tools are part of every culture that enable people to move, dwell, communicate, heal, and learn. Tools for conviviality signify autonomous and creative relations among persons whose tools open their imaginary space for individual freedom realized in personal interdependence. However, in industrialized society, tools are shaped by professionals that dictate the needs and impose demands on people's way of living. In such circumstances, autonomy is reduced to maximizing the consumption of industrial goods and services, and the relationship between people and tools becomes "suicidally distorted."

To reverse such a trend and reconstruct conviviality, Illich proposed a measure based on what is most equally distributed among all people: personal energy, or what we now call metabolic energy. Tools and institutions must be under communal control to creatively use metabolic energy to shape people's activities. In other words, exogenous energy should be limited by endogenous energy. Such a political process removes the decisions on technology from the hands of experts and allows people to regain trust in the practical and liberating condition of living within limits.

According to Illich, the satisfaction of three fundamental conditions can assist persons in imposing limits on tools. Though each is necessary, none is sufficient without the others. First, any social reconstruction must reverse the ongoing devastation caused by unchecked industrial production of natural species, including humans. Second, any reversal of the industrial mode of production must satisfy the just distribution of industrial outputs. Third, a convivial society must be rooted in the reasonable distribution of power measured by a person's metabolic energy.

The satisfaction of these three conditions enables the imposition of limits on tools for the transition from the industrial mode of production to the convivial mode of production. Therefore, what Illich understood as a postindustrial society is converting industrial society into a convivial society. To achieve this transition, Illich called for the Christic category of renunciation. Conviviality requires the rejection of unlimited progeny (overpopulation), renunciation of boundless affluence (overproduction-consumption), and renunciation of unlimited power (over-programming). For over industrialized societies, these renunciations will lead to liberation from the monopoly of the industrial mode of production. Their inhabitants, however, must renounce the taste of something they have been savoring for some time – *hubris* –, despite the bitter taste at the end of each bite, above all for the poorest. For under-equipped societies, these renunciations will expand people's life beyond the radius of tradition. Their

inhabitants, however, must renounce the temptation of tasting the falling fruit they have heard of but have never relished.

In industrialized societies, people must undergo the complex process of regaining trust in the aesthetical categories of balance and limits. They have been living beyond the watersheds of proportionality and are dominated by goods and services – fueled by the growth of too many useful things for increasingly useless people. Their minds have no room to imagine the delightful banquet of personal accomplishment that accompany the range of modern though limited tools. To renounce the consequences of *hubris* requires the recognition that, for instance, the "green revolution [the 1960s] guarantees that feeding people escalate starvation", or saying differently, that limits for all are rather radical than promises of equal consumption (Illich, 1973).

In under-equipped societies, persons must go through the hard process of avoiding the path of enslaving machines to find liberation through convivial tools. Their challenge is to engage in a political process that allows control, under participatory conditions, of the appropriate tools to enhance traditional activities and enable new ones. They can be candles whose beautiful flame can spark renewed ingenuity among those hooked on electric power.

I have insisted on this matter because it is the source of principles that impose limits on tools. Only people can do that. Illich pointed out that "some despotic Leviathan cannot extort this price, nor elicited by social engineering. People will only rediscover the value of joyful sobriety and liberating austerity if they relearn to depend on each other rather than on energy slaves"[44].

Illich was neither promoting fantasies nor drawing sketches for a utopia. His propositions are guidelines for action, a methodology to recognize tools that have turned means into ends. Convivial reconstruction is not a fictional community of the future nor a manual for the universal design of convivial institutions or tools. Such reconstruction begins with framing criteria to identify institutions and tools that manipulate people and destroy convivial life. Each community must engage with this identification and make political choices according to its unique social arrangements.

In a world divided into those who have more than enough and those who do not have enough, the focus must be on the structure of tools and not the users. From Beijing to Boston,

[44] Ivan Illich's limits for tools that promote face to face encounters resonates with Immanuel Levinas' studies of 'the face'. For both authors, my face comes to life from the face of the other, what one could call relational ontology. In Illich's words, which could have been Levinas', "what the face of the other does in its exquisite delicacy and impenetrability is to address me forever in an ethical way" (Illich, 2009).

industrial tools imprint a ‘universal and recognizable world.’ Everywhere we go, the landscape is carved by similarly shaped hospitals, highways, classrooms, offices, and buildings. Illich knew that identical industrial tools promote the same character type while a diversity of limited convivial tools would foster plural ways of living.

But again, these are not formulations of political strategies or managing tactics. No government can legislate convivial reconstruction. Only participatory justice can animate and fuel such a process, and the limitation of tools requires a corresponding new economic theory. We must first abandon measuring ‘good’ in terms of dollars. Modern institutions have shaped our sense of proportion, and we now measure ‘good’ in arithmetic terms, as did Plato’s bad statesman, who believes the art of arithmetic measurement is universal[45]. In contrast, proportion, limitation, and ultimately what is ‘good’ are measured by geometric balanced terms of too much or too little.

At this point, a lazy reader could have wrongly understood Illich as a neo-Luddite. To avoid such a mistaken understanding, it is worth emphasizing that Illich contrasted autonomous tools (least controlled by others) against heteronomous tools (most managed by professionals and managers) to avoid falling into “the equally damaging rejection of all machines as if they were works of the devil” (Illich, 1973). Industrial tools contrast in every aspect with convivial tools. The first entails that people are mastered by the tool, which determines their self-image, while the second implies that people master the tool and thereby invest the world with their meaning. In a convivial society, men and women must politically struggle through the participatory process of finding a proper balance between industrial/manipulative tools and convivial tools.

Let us take the example of two contrasting tools for roughly the same purpose. Cars require no metabolic energy for transport, while bicycles require metabolic energy for transit. The first is operated while the second is used, and the optimal traffic will require a balance between transportation and transit. Too many cars impose a negative synergy between autonomy and heteronomy, while bicycles have a positive synergy between autonomy and heteronomy (Robert, 2019).

However, it is crucial to recognize that an industry operated by manipulative machines makes bicycles. I cannot make a practical bicycle in my backyard. In principle, conviviality does not exclude a school system or high-speed traffic, neither television nor airplanes.

[45] For more on Plato, measurement and proportion see *In Defense of Vernacular Ways*, Sajay Samuel and *“Quem não é geômetra não entre!” Geometria, Filosofia e Platonismo* (“Who is not a geometer, do not enter!” Geometry, Philosophy and Platonism, my translation), Gabriele Cornelli and Maria Cecília de Miranda N. Coelho.

Therefore, it is “a mistake to believe that all large tools and centralized production would have to be excluded from a convivial society” (Illich, 1973). That is precisely why Illich proposed a balance between industrial and convivial tools – in principle, this balance is independent of the level of technology of tools. Each society must find the appropriate balance of tools to maximize the range of autonomous action. Such a criterion could guide each community to structure the totality of tools they desire to define their way and level of conviviality.

But how do some tools foster conviviality? Illich defined five crucial principles. One, “they are easily used by anyone for the accomplishment of a purpose chosen by the user.” Two, “the use of one person does not restrain another from using them equally.” Three, “they do not require the previous certification of the user.” Four, their “existence does not impose any obligation to use them.” And five, “they allow the user to express meanings in action” (Ibid). Tools like libraries, laboratories, bicycles, farmers’ markets, and many others fit such principles, whereas cars, planes, and nuclear energy plants do not.

A continuous political process nourished by these principles, which cannot be mechanically applied, guarantees the defense of people’s liberty. Instead of struggling for control over the means of production – classic socialism – conviviality struggles for constant, careful analysis of the basic structure of tools as means. Conviviality could not have been designed at an earlier stage of history when pre-industrial societies’ power was limited to the muscles of men and women. Thus, controlling more power meant heading the physical effort, that is, to lord it over others. So far, however, all experiences of industrial societies have led to a condition in which much of the power became self-governing. Men and women had been replaced by machines and reduced to mere operators. To restrain industrial tools to a balance with convivial tools would have been the most revolutionary accomplishment of the 20th century.

Standard R&D, which Illich in *Shadow Work* (1981) called *science for* people, played a considerable role in preventing such a revolution. These sorts of scientific research have been oriented toward industrial development, so tools increasingly program human initiative[46]. In industrial societies, the teacher operates a classroom just as the worker ‘operates’ a crane. Professions replace personal vocation and genuine interest. Counterfoil research, later called

[46] See for example Herbert Marcuse’s O*ne-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Illich, however, disagrees with Marcuse in crucial points. Marcuse advocated for the redefinition of values in technical terms, due to the materialization of values (science and technology have rendered possible the translation of values into technical tasks). Illich, in the other hand, argued for the ability to “counteract the progressive materialization of values” as the pre-requisite for regaining social/environmental balance. Otherwise, society is “totally enclosed within [its] artificial creation, with no exit”. It is against Marcuse’s one-dimensional analysis, the expansion of hubris to technological totality, that Illich suggested a multidimensional analysis.

science by people, enables the possibility for knowledge to be used to simplify tools so that vocation can shape the mediation between persons and their surroundings. It means to remove the "quasi-religious authority" of certificates from the hands of experts, whose goals are "taken as the measurement of what 'good'/'better' means."

Finally, and above all, convivial reconstruction meant the urgent need to recognize that the inversion from an industrial society to a convivial society, thus to Illich's post-industrial age, was imperative for the survival of all people. The materiality of an *eschaton*, no longer prophesied by oracles or prophets of ancient times, has been a feasible reality since the atomic bomb and during the growth mania. Illich's theoretical possibility for such inversion was framed by the negative design criteria for tools as a matter of political action to reverse the ongoing social and biogeochemical degradation. The call for convivial reconstruction was the call to restrain the radical monopoly of the industrial mode of production and, ultimately, to promote the condition for mutual love.

2.5.5 The multiple balance

Conviviality is not a technical solution. Ivan Illich's proposed balance between industrial and convivial tools is based on the multidimensional analysis of tools' efficiency to upset the equilibrium of life. Any political debate that ignores limits to the industrial mode of production is palliative. Thus, Illich identified six ways industrial development sustains the unlimited creation of new needs, threatening social and environmental balance by trespassing across the second watershed. One, *natural balance*: technology can render the environment uninhabitable due to ecological degradation. Two, *tool balance*: radical monopoly of the industrial mode of production paralyzes the activities one can do for/by oneself and others. Three, *learning balance*: over-programming "transforms the world into a treatment ward" under oppressive meritocracy. Four, *power balance*: "centralization and packaging of institutionally produced values" that generates polarization and structural despotism. Five, *tradition balance*: "engineered obsolescence can break all bridges to a normative past." Six, the *balance of purpose*: growth renders a tool antagonistic to its specific aims, what is referred to as counterproductivity.

By typifying, in six categories, the hazards created due to the growth mania of tools, Illich has written the requiem of industrial society. Its melody has six movements and resembles Mozart's *Sequentia* "*Dies iræ, dies illa, Solvet sæclum in favilla*" (the day that will dissolve into ashes – my translation). The early 1970s was a pivotal turbulent moment of crisis for a possible inversion of modern tools when the end of industrial society was just as likely as that

of people. The following discussion outlines Illich's multidimensional balance designed to promote the first to prevent the second.

1. Biological degradation: the balance of nature

Many aspects of environmental degradation, according to Illich, are phenomena that can be "easily discussed and appreciated by people who have never studied science." The precarious balance between humanity and the biosphere has been stressed by deforestation, loss of biodiversity, pollution, waste, smog, and climate change, which are just a few examples of the consequences of the industrial mode of production.

For this reason, Illich identified three main trends of such imbalance. One, overpopulation; two, affluence; and three, faulty technology. The first is dependent on limited resources; more and more people live within the growth mania. The second compels each person to use more energy, assuming that one's wealth is not enough. The third degrades energy in an inefficient way; high quanta energy tools (i.e., vehicles) are paralyzing and hostile to low quanta energy tools (bicycles)[47]. Ecological modernization, the illusion of retooling under the growth mania (third watershed), enhances the expectations that machines will do our work for us (slave mentality). We can initiate the necessary inversion to conviviality by setting limits on procreation, consumption, and waste. However, Illich was aware that the ecological imbalance could lead to the false expectation that human action could be "engineered to fit a world conceived as a technological totality." Such bureaucratically guaranteed survival (what we see today in China's ecological civilization, for example – at least in theory) would regulate men and women in every single aspect of their lives, from womb to tomb. Illich was not proposing limits set by a "green" Leviathan. Instead, he believed that "the only solution to the environmental crisis is the shared insight of people that they would be happier if they could work together and care for each other."

2. Radical monopoly: the balance of tool

The classical notion of monopoly is the economic circumstance in which my choice, for example, of drinking fizzy drinks, is restricted to Coca-Cola. But even if the only gaseous drink

[47] For the cardinal distinction between *congestion* and *paralysis*, see *The Rigth to Useful Unemployment*. Ivan Illich argued, following the thesis of the two watersheds, that the usefulness of commodities is limited by congestion, the "measure of the degree to which staples get in their own way", and paralysis, when people become "so dependent on vehicles that they are paralyzed and just cannot take to their feet". Both are the result of escalation. Such distinction enables people to see the passage from abundancy to scarcity or how activities (verbs) have been replaced by institutionally defined staples (nouns). Thus, education replaces 'I learn', transportation replaces 'I move', health care replaces 'I heal', sustainability replaces 'I care' and so on.

available in the market is the black sugary liquid, I can always be free to drink water or beer. Radical monopoly, however, is a much deeper and more structural condition. It is the dominance of one type of product/service rather than one brand. In this scenario, thirst would only be diminished by Santa's coke. The relationship between what people can do by themselves and what they need to obtain ready-made is perturbed by what Illich calls over-efficient tools, which ultimately destroys the balance between the active man and passive consumer.

Let us take the example of transportation once again[48]. Cars can monopolize traffic by shaping the cities into their image and ruling out locomotion on foot or by bicycle. Built in the late 1950s, Brazil's recent capital, *Brasília*, is the quintessential ideal type of a city shaped by gasoline-fired vehicles. Although located in a vast flat territory, no lines of the original drawings of the urbanist Lucio Costa and architect Oscar Niemeyer were meant for people on foot or by bicycle. The large blocks and long high-speed highways were designed for cars. There are no sidewalks in most parts of the city. Transportation becomes not only dangerous and costly but also such overland radical monopoly creates long distances which only cars can break (slowly). The space becomes scarce, and the environment is destroyed for persons' innate mobility. "Green" buses and "green" cars, and "green" constructions, under these conditions, produce the same result and effect.

Therefore, a radical monopoly exists when a significant tool rules out natural competence, imposes compulsory standardized consumption and restricts personal autonomy (Illich, 1973). People's native capacity to do by and for themselves and others – moving, healing, consoling, building, burying their dead – become scarce. These activities (use-values) are means for satisfying abundant needs and could have been marginally dependent on commodities (exchange-value)[49]. By the time Illich framed his general theory of

[48] For Illich's thorough and detailed argument of radical monopoly on learning and healing see respectively the books *Deschooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*. Schools redefine learning as education, thus any other source of tirocinium that is outside schools is officially stamped 'uneducated'. Hospitals and funerals are examples of medicine's radical monopoly over dying. Professional experts prescribe treatments and control burials, they got hold of the body to an extent in which people are conditioned to sickness.

[49] At this point, one can fathom Illich's approximation with Marx's labor-value theory. The radical monopoly of modern institutions dismantles and undermine the natural/native/traditional abilities of human competence. Healing, consoling, moving, learning, building, and burying our dead have historically been capacities that met needs that could be found in abundance: what people can do by/for themselves and others. If we translate these abilities as autonomous, they are fundamentally use-values, non-alienated labor. Radical monopoly tools, such as transportation, schools, hospitals, construction industries and funeral homes, are large-scale institutions that exclude natural competences through the compulsory imposition of standardized commodities that only they can provide. Such institutions are uninterrupted creators of exchange-values that are scarce precisely because they restrict personal autonomy (use-value). Satisfying basic needs, such as learning, healing, eating, building, or moving by imposing exchange-value services, consists of the radical monopoly over abundant natural/native activities. The creation of a radical scarcity of vital and natural/native abilities constitutes the industrialization of

industrialization [the early 1970s], most countries of the world, including Brazil, were not yet entirely physically shaped by radical monopoly. Simple alternatives were still within reach of the imagination, and independent action had not yet been paralyzed.

Hyper-industrialized countries, however, have atrophied their ability for independent action. According to Illich, two cardinal palliatives could evolve the illusion of reforming radical monopoly: consumer protection and addressing frustration with planning. The first promotes safer cars and roads, for example, to respond to dangerous traffic. The primary effect, however, is the increasing dependence on high-powered vehicles. The second promotes the illusion that planners could provide public free-of-charge services to cure the frustration of scarcity (socialism or well-fare-state). Therefore, social/environmental reconstruction begins with breaking radical monopoly by fostering a convivial society, the modern yet balanced alternative to progress.

3. Over-programming: the balance of learning

The balance of learning depends on the ratio of two contrasting kinds of knowledge in society: the creative action of people in their milieu versus those in manufactured environments. The first can be learned from ordinary living, such as speaking the native language and walking; the second must be known as a result of intentional teaching, like mathematics and fishing. Each place and time relate to these two kinds of knowledge, depending on rituals and traditions. The ability to learn on my own has much to do with the structure of the tools. Making a clear distinction between learning through convivial tools and learning through manipulation is fundamental for the balance of learning.

Compulsory attendance to a school system that centralizes total learning produces a society of operators and clients of a scarce commodity: education. In the structure of schools, Illich unfolded the hidden curriculum that inculcates the ritualization of progress and the industrialization of values (which ultimately undermines people's imagination and trust in their native abilities). Therefore, he listed seven cardinal values every schooled person learns as part of the hidden curriculum. One must spend more in class to acquire more value in the market.

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values, that is, the last stage of global capitalism, when every single ability is at the service of exchange-values. And exchange-values taken not only as products/goods of modern industrial society, but above all as scarce services that cannot be performed outside institutions – alienated work – is perhaps Illich's greatest contribution to political economy. In this sense, understanding the freezing of autonomy and abilities (use-values) through the imposition of consumption of services (exchange-values) consists of a stage in the evolution of capitalism that is largely ignored or intentionally disregard in favor of the "development" of the so-called "third world" countries, precisely where these autonomous abilities are most alive and traditionally structured. This form of imperialism is little studied and makes up the symbolic and material gear of '*Das Kapital*'.

Two, to value progressive consumption of curricula. Three, no matter what a major institution produces, it always has value (even invisible things such as education or health). Four, adopt and esteem grade advancement under passive submission or "creative misbehavior." Five that the teacher and the ability to learn are restricted to the walls of classrooms, overwhelmed by the disciplined competition. Six, to define oneself as a "holder of knowledge stock" capable of performing in the specialty in which one has invested time and money. Seven, to accept one's place in society according to the level, degree, and specialization one has been ritually subjected.

The hidden curriculum structures and strengths of the symbolic counterproductivity of which Illich spoke. The school system radically monopolizes learning and castrates the imaginary space, allowing people to fathom alternatives to such monopoly. Over-programming dries peoples' trust in their native abilities and rich traditions. People learn from a very young age that learning is a scarce resource that cannot thrive outside a major institution that provides the best opportunities to fit industrial jobs. The result of the hidden curriculum is an efficient and perverse social control since the "pressure for more and better conditioning of people in the name of education has led schools over their second watershed." When education becomes the stumbling block on the path of learning and trusting one's ability to do things by/for oneself with simple means, people increasingly adhere to and demand more powerful tools to armor them for a hostile social environment, which only increases radical monopoly.

For Illich, "only among convivially structured tools can people learn to use the new levels of power that modern technology can incorporate." The grace of the argument is precisely the fact that what people most need to learn they cannot be taught or educated to do, namely, to celebrate life within limits of proportionality. Not even Pope Francis can educate people about joyful renunciation and voluntary poverty. Survival, however, usually allows a person to learn faster than what one apparently cannot do.

4. Polarization: the balance of power

The growing polarization of power can also be seen as a result of the broken balance of learning. People "hooked on teaching" are conditioned to be consumers for everything else they need. Their ability to shape "reality by their own lights" is frustrated and generalized by standardized higher affluence. To celebrate life within limits is pushed into the blind spot of social vision. Under the growth mania of unlimited powerful tools, poverty levels rise, and the gap between rich and poor widens, which is the nature of destructive polarization.

Using-value activities become less feasible at a higher cost while industries' radical monopoly structures the conditions to make such activities illegal. Only under the laws of industrialized food production can a vernacular farmer produce what once was a traditional and centenary wooden barrel cheese.

The structure of the patriarchal government, such as in Brazil, where thousands of slavered women and men were under the control of one single man, persists and goes farther and more profound in the radical monopoly of industries. While in the first, a multitude of people was transformed into tools for the realization of few male owners of agricultural plantations (religion, ideology, and the whip were the principal means of control); in the second, the amount of power controlled by a few men gets bigger as tools get bigger (energy conversion enormously exceeds the body of all people). That is why Illich was able to say that "switches concentrate the control over this power more effectively than whips ever could" (Illich, 1973). In modern society, we are enslaved by powerful high-quanta energy tools that never before have been so concentrated in the hands of such a small élite.

Illich had seen, I could have said prophesied if it had not been so predictable, the significant effect of destructive polarization: the multiplication of minorities. "When the legitimacy of educational certification breaks down, other more primitive forms of discrimination are bound to assume renewed importance." The obvious collapse of meritocracy would lead to a condition where people would be judged to be less valuable for the market because they are women, because they are black, because they come from the so-called 'third world' countries, because they belong to the wrong niche of people or simply because they could not graduate in a higher institution. "Minorities now organize themselves to seek an equal share in consumption, an equal place in the pyramid of production, or equal nominal power in the government of ungovernable tools."

For Illich, minorities could have been the pivot of social reconstruction if they had sought equal work rather than equal pay or equal inputs rather than equal outputs. He insisted that changes in the ownership of radically monopolizing industries could not invert social polarization. At best, the controlled industrial expansion would render new ways to administer unbalanced power.

5. Obsolescence: the balance of tradition

As argued before, Illich's convivial reconstruction was not based on the abolition of all industrial production but on disrupting the radical monopoly of the industry. Convivial society

depends on the dynamic in which a society fosters and secures the power of individuals and communities to choose their ways of living through modern yet bodily-scaled tools.

The radical monopoly of large-scale tools produces two cardinal social effects: social polarization (balance of power) and obsolescence (balance of tradition). In the first, people are systematically excluded from industrial inputs and outputs, while in the second, life becomes intolerable even when people are not directly excluded from them. Balance novelty with tradition is the essence of the fifth dimension of Illich's multiple analysis. Progress is grounded in one fundamental idea: innovation of never-ending and progressive consumption (of products and services). New necessities always endow new scarcities. What is new translates into an important privilege.

Peasants in my village are being pushed out of the paths their horses trot by tar pavement built for big trucks. Only very few privileged men are driving through these new roads with their new trucks. The villagers do not wish to own a truck, their lives, memories, and perception are strictly related to those paths taken at a different pace. When anything new is proven to be "better," the social grading of individuals is based on the age of the things they use. To ride a horse becomes the symbol of a renovated condition of "poverty." The commitment to the paved road and its monster trucks makes horse riding impossible, and the addition of a few men devours the milieu that once had the marks and memories of several people. The accelerating change of progressive new models drains the waters of memories, rips out the shared roots of *savoir-faire* (know-how), and upsets the balance of tradition. Ultimately, it teaches that "the *better* replaces the *good* as the fundamental normative concept." A society caught up by the spell of 'better' perceives any invitation to celebrate life within limits as a threat.

Illich was whittling down the thick surface of obsolescence; the apparent layer is the well-known concept of a tool designed to succumb after a certain pre-programmed period (the bitten apple of computer engineering is the perfect example). What one can see from a deeper examination is the intolerable arrangement in which the past becomes the repository of old and obsolete stuff. At the same time, the present is filled with something new, therefore *better*, even though the new cannot patch the fabrics of social life collectively woven by countless hands for hundreds of years. People have become obsolete with their myths, traditions, ways of living, and knowledge. They end up in museums, documented by ethnographers, or wiped out by powerful industrial tools (which can be a school or a backhoe).

The convivial reconstruction must redress the imbalance between changeless societies and societies of constant change. Such a mixed-mode of production can foster unpredictable,

creative, and lively forms-of-life that drink from the waters of *Mnemosyne*[50] for the renewal convivial tools.

6. Frustration: the balance of purpose

The over-efficiency of tools, above all in the scenario of constant growth of large-scale production, disturbs the balance of purpose; namely, it renders tools antagonistic to their specific aims. This is the definition of Illich's counterproductivity. Its three dimensions, technical, structural, and symbolic, engender the condition of frustration of purpose, abilities, and ultimately imagination.

The balance of purpose depends on the political process of recognizing the most desirable power of tools and their balance of means and ends. Cars are means of locomotion; they aim to carry people from one place to another. Bicycles are also means of locomotion, but they aim to transform the potency of muscles into a further range so people can move from one place to another. The first has a negative range of synergy between metabolic energy and external energy (the required energy to drive a car is like watching a blockbuster movie, one must be awake and barely concentrated). The second has an optimal range of synergy between metabolic energy and external energy (the bicycle can only give potency to the range of my muscles if I pedal it)[51].

At this point, the reader should know that Illich was not advocating the destruction of cars and not demonizing tools. His argument was to expose how to recover the balance of purpose by highlighting the addiction to energy which submits to the radical monopoly of the industrial mode of production. Every new solution for the multiple imbalances is designed within high quanta of energy; modern society has not yet abandoned the premise of not having enough energy because it is caged in the symbolic dimension of counterproductivity. When the imaginary space of people has shrunk because they are hooked on energy, the sun starts to be seen and perceived as an unlimited resource of unlimited energy.

Within a society addicted to the combination of growth mania and high quanta energy tools, the three dimensions of counterproductivity increase uninterruptedly. In such circumstances, frustration rapidly transforms into madness (*Hades* ultimate punishment); our

[50] For more on Illich and *Mnemosyne*, see the books *ABC: the Alphabetization of the Popular Mind*, above all chapter 2, and *H_2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*. The last one also titles an essay in *In The Mirror of the Past*.
[51] One could argue today, although not at the time Illich had written *Tools for Conviviality*, that electric bicycles have a tolerable range of synergy between metabolic energy and external energy. The pedaling is empowered by electric energy beyond the mechanics of the relation muscle-tool. Illich, however, had already suggested that tools have an optimal, a tolerable, and a negative range.

modern industrialized societies perform the labor of Sisyphus with the lunatic and futile expectation of regaining the lost balance by rolling different boulders through the same path. Convivial tools, on the other hand, foster gains in equity, activity, health, and freedom because they do not cross over the threshold of negative returns. Only a political procedure that clarifies and dramatizes people's relationship to their tools can render social arrangements in which people are aware of the consequences of their use of tools in various ways, according to the available resources.

2.5.6 Living within limits

Social and environmental degradation cannot be inverted unless these dimensions are considered together. "Each of these balances must be preserved" to recover an equilibrium that renders a modern yet proportional society. Illich's proposal was based on the conceptual criteria to recognize escalating multidimensional imbalances. Such standards serve as guidelines for political procedures that people can use to develop constitutive limits and on the power of tools.

These imbalances must not be addressed by scientific attempts to retool society. The so-called "green" economy results from a political process that takes high quanta energy of unlimited consumption as a certainty and thus cannot even start imagining a modern society based on the limit to tools. For Illich, the levels of biophysical degradation of the 1970s resulted from such antecedent social degradation. This understanding explains his radical and lucid affirmation that "mankind may disappear because one is deprived of basic structures of language, law, and myths, just as much as one can be smothered by smog" (Illich, 1973).

Illich wrote *Tools for Conviviality* to be a circulating pamphlet to foster the political inversion from an industrial to a convivial society. This happened precisely during one of the heaviest crises in the modern economy, the so-called oil crisis of 1973. All over the world, the OPEC embargo made by Arabic countries in response to the Yom Kippur War affected millions of people. Endless lines of cars waited for a few liters of gasoline. Illich understood crisis as the ancient Hippocratic tradition: the moment of a disease in which either the fever breaks into a sweat or the pulse weakens towards death.

Crises are windows for inversion, political decisions, and community procedures that can break the frustration of the radical monopoly of the industrial mode of production. By calling people to fight for a technology limit instead of unlimited cheap fossil fuels, Illich was not promoting utopia nor a "green" economy *avant la letter*. He was seeing what was as yet unseen and feasible at a specific historical moment when energy was at the center of political debate, when no one had a clue of what would be the day after tomorrow, and when the truth

could be heard once again. Conviviality remains viable if societies are open to reflecting upon their relation to tools and their dependence on high quanta energy. Illich's conviviality was a call for celebrating life within limits, to regain the confidence of one who trusts in the freedom of limited but personal energy over seemingly unlimited but exogenous energy.

2.6 Panegyric upon bicycles: a practical proposition for energy and equity

In 1973, Ivan Illich was invited by the editor of the French newspaper *Le Monde* to write an essay for their front page. The opening sentence used the term 'energy crisis.' At that time, the editor suggested one minor change, to remove this technical and little-known term. Nevertheless, by 1974, the term had already spread to all corners of the world. Today, the energy crisis hits the front pages of newspapers. However, the roots of this crisis remain the same, although they have reached deeper since Illich's *Energy and Equity*.

The energy crisis is widely taken for the impasse of *not enough energy*. Bureaucrats, scientists, engineers, politicians, entrepreneurs, and social-environmental activists agree on the scarcity of energy. Illich's thesis, however, inverts such a trend. For him, the energy crisis is the impasse of *too much energy*. Therefore, he proposed the enabling distinction, formulated in *Tools for Conviviality*, between two contrasting kinds of tools: industrial tools (high quanta of energy) and convivial tools (low quanta of energy). The first is dictated by technocracy whereas the second enables diverse ways of living.

The fundamental political process is to balance industrial and convivial tools. The necessary procedure is to set a ceiling on energy use, which leads to social equity and ecological balance. Above a certain limit, energy grows at the expense of equity, and biological degradation becomes inevitable. Thus, even 'clean energy', 'renewable energy', or even 'green energy', without any procedure to put a ceiling on high quanta power, will maintain and deepen the destructive growth mindset.

The fatal image of 'man the slaveholder' structures a society based on high quanta energy slaves, tools that replace human activities in all aspects of life. Such doctrine has been preached since Kennedy's 'Alliance for Progress' (1961), and planetary worship of unlimited energy power has been won at the cost of destroying biodiversity and the cultures of man.

Identifying natural thresholds and the communities' search for limits characterizes Illich's counterfoil research, later coined as research by people in *Shadow Work*, when "limits on the per capita use of energy must be theoretically recognized as a social imperative" (Illich, 1973). The limits for social degradation are lower than those of nature. Social degradation becomes a structural condition faster than ecological degradation. For this reason, Illich took

the example of modern traffic to expose feasible ways of setting limits to energy consumption and balancing industrial and convivial tools, so modern society is within ecological thresholds.

High-powered speed vehicles distort the physical space of men and women by transforming them to suit vehicles instead of people. By "restrict[ing] mobility to a system of industrially defined routes and create [ing] time scarcity," the modern transportation industry has reduced not increased equity. Speed stuns people's imagination and distorts their perception of space, time, and personal space. This techno-genesis of perception[52] transforms men and women into technological addicts. The speed of few must come at the expense of the slowness of many. This is what Illich called net transfer of lifetime. Beyond a certain speed limit, the total travel time of all increases, and acceleration becomes ineffective. As shown by Jean Robert, the average speed of inhabitants of megacities during the day is around 20 km per hour[53]. Speed must be under political control to balance traffic and foster equity and low-energy tools.

The political process for setting a ceiling to the movement velocity must be grounded on identifying natural dimensions. Illich called the critical threshold the combination of the body's self-metabolic power and tools, in this case, men and women and bicycles. People who ride bicycles become "masters of their own movements without blocking those of their fellows" (Illich, 1974). The optimal time-and-destination speed of dominant motors, such as cars, which are subsidiary to bicycles, is 40km/h.

Using traffic as an example, the political procedure for regaining equity and ecological balance could start by limiting the speed to 40km/h. Borrowing the words of Laura Bliss is a logical but not politically simple argument[54]. The political procedure of setting a ceiling to speed does not necessarily culminate in the banning of all cars (if the limit is respected), but

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[52] Illich has also dedicated the last years of his life to the history of the senses and the techno-genesis of perception. See, for example, the articles *Guarding the Eye in the Age of Show*, *The Loudspeaker on the Tower* and *The cultivation of Conspiracy*.

[53] Take the example of San Francisco. Between 2009 and 2018 the speed average in the city center decreased 27,5% due to congestion (official numbers of San Francisco County Transportation Authority: https://sfgov.org/scorecards/transportation/congestion). In March 2020, after two months of a car-free policy within the central downtown, average speed of all has increased, favoring bicycles, scooters, and walk. Private vehicles were banned and time travel of all is now quicker (see the article of Laura Bliss for Bloomberg CityLab: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-10/early-results-from-san-francisco-s-car-free-street).

[54] The recent administration of the city of São Paulo, under the mayor Fernando Haddad (2013 – 2016), attempted a partially successful policy of reducing the speed of many avenues, streets, and roadways. The number of accidents, for example, had reduced drastically, considering Brazil has one of the most violent traffics of the world. In addition to reducing speed limit, it built more than 400 km of bicycle path. The average costing of R$ 650,000 per kilometer (approximately US$ 200,00) is otherwise alarming. Despite the accusations of embezzlement, many other alternatives could provide a long-term transition for the use of existent routes and ways where cars are subsidiary to bicycles and scooters under the fitting speed limit. The lack of a wide and open dialogue with society rendered such procedure a technocratic one. Nonetheless, the next administration increased the speed limit in its first year.

above all is the process that fosters convivial ways of transiting so society can regain a form-of-life that is modern yet less dependent on high quanta energy enslaved people.

Illich was reanimating a cardinal distinction, elaborated by Aristotle, between *physis* (nature) and *techne* (art). In his *Physics*, Aristotle defined nature as a "principle of innate motion and rest in substances, which move or become stationary by themselves and not through an external cause or accidentally." Nature is the realm that controls and explains the actions of given substances (Belo, 2015)[55]. On the other hand, art and crafts are artificial objects made by the ingenuity of humans. Thus, the ability for locomotion is naturally *given* to people, whereas the *made* bicycle does not have the power to move but must be moved by an external agent.

To balance *given* abilities with artificial *making* is the core principle of modern industrial society, which Illich named 'technological maturity'. Convivial tools are artifacts that allow optimal synergy between nature and technology. However, Illich's ontology is not one of essentialism, but of relationality, the example of bicycles and speed limit is illuminating for the political process towards maturity. Who would imagine that a politically established speed limit of 40 km/h could be the beginning of a radical reconstruction of convivial society characterized by personal equity and freedom?

2.7 Towards critical technology

I hope the reader is grasping Illich's effort to unearth radical historical changes within Western societies due to incorporating new tools under the assumption of scarcity. We know that, for Illich, "the definition of needs in terms of professionally defined commodities in the service sector precedes by a millennium the industrial production of universally needed basic goods" (Illich, 1981, p. 60). The dependence on fossil fuels for locomotion mirrors, centuries later, the reliance on taught mother tongue for everyday speech. Both are paradigms of destroying the existence of vernacular ways of living: speaking, walking, reading, and building.

Vernacular activities increase the autonomy of individuals and communities insofar as they reduce the dependence on the market or professionals. However, they must not be confused with returning to the 'good old days', as if Illich was promoting a neo-Luddism, society free of any institutions and industrial tools. I believe that Illich's argument in *Shadow Work* follows the framework of *Tools for Conviviality*, and thereby, the balance of economic and vernacular activities and their contrasting forms of research: respectively, science *for* people and science *by* people.

[55] For more on Aristotle's distinction between *physis* and *techne*, see the article *The Concept of 'Nature' in Aristotle, Avicenna and Averroes*, Catarina Belo.

According to Illich, the industrial revolution did not start with intensive machinery producing goods. It started with the service sector, as in the example par excellence of Nebrija's *Gramatica Castellana*. Before the industrial mode of production, there was no precedent in the history of imputing universal needs for services that professionals and their respective service institutions could only provide.

Nebrija is the precursor of the rising expert who can demand that his knowledge be universally applied to other people. This is also a suitable definition of science *for* people. Research and Development, or simply R & D is grounded on such premises as exemplified by economics which has imposed a planetary regime of property upon the commons and justified exchange-value instead of vernacular actions. Physics and mathematics have had a similar fate. Even the social sciences are grounded in the premise that assistance is meant *for* the common good of people, *for* the benefit of others.

As an alternative, science *by* people is a solo or collective autonomous effort to do disciplined research unplugged from the market of prestigious journals. It can be nourished, when applicable, by results of R & D; however, it directly aims the fostering vernacular forms-of-living, that is, use-value activities outside the web of marketing[56]. Illich was not proposing a utopian science but rather formulating the principles for science *by* people who could withstand the deadly objectivity of R & D.

When the second watershed is transgressed, one of the tasks of the coming generations will be to engage in the form of science in which "people concentrate on constructing, improving, or beautifying the tools and immediate environment which serve them directly, leaving to others the task of imitating or adapting what they do" (Illich, 1981, p.78). To regain the feasible political task of balancing these contrasting forms of science, Illich started with unearthing Hugh of St. Victor's philosophy of technology, which, according to him, has been largely ignored.

Born in 1096 in the Flemish region, Hugh of St. Victor, at a young age, joined the Canons Regular, a new religious order established in the free cities to set an example to the Christian population. The rule and practice of monks designated a mode of life proper to small rural communities. On the other hand, this new order conceived a monastic life within the city's walls.

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[56] For a thorough investigation on science *by* people in the 1970s see the *Reference Guide to Convivial Tools*, prepared by Valentina Borremans in 1978. Borremans was co-founder of the CIDOC, and as such one of the closest collaborators of Ivan Illich. She defined science *by* people as the research "done to increase the use-value of daily activities without increasing the person's dependence on the market or professions" (Borremans, 1978).

When Hugh joined the Augustinian cloister of St. Victor, Paris was filled with learned men. It was the center of a "spiritual ferment" that was growing the intellectual life. He was a student of Peter Abelard and William of Champeaux. Their teachings emphasized the role of reason "in an age of ritual and legalism". They demonstrated the indispensability of methodological doubt by contrasting opposite opinions and thoughts of traditional authorities against one another (Illich, 1981).

The place of science in human life is the core of Hugh's teachings. According to Illich, he had an "exaggerated curiosity about scientific and mechanical matters". But such curiosity was driven by humor as one essential ingredient in preparation for addressing serious matters. He was known to recommend laughter to Christians and to encourage "teachers to foster merriment among their students" (Illich, 1981, p. 81).

For Illich, the twelfth century embodies a rare moment in history when the "works of the past is about to reach a natural end", that is, they seemed to have been assimilated and digested, and thus, it was time to create a new synthesis. This is how Illich reads St. Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, and Abelard, for example. Hugh's *Didascalicon* (c.1127) and the *Epitome of Dindimus on Philosophy*, disclose original thoughts on mechanical arts as a remedy, providing a path of study within philosophy that seeks to ameliorate environmental disturbance caused by humans. For Hugh, science was the search for remedies against the ecological disorder. The *artes mechanicae*, which by the time of Hugh meant "making artful imitations of nature", he insisted must be merged with science. "Hugh is the first to speak of *scientiae mechanicae*" (Illich, 1981, p. 89).

Nevertheless, Hugh's understanding of mechanical science as an aid, remedy, or cure can only be fully grasped if his perception of the human condition is considered. He is grounded on the soil of the Genesis' story of Adam and Eva. The harmony that conducted all creation was lost when they both tasted the fruit of power. After that, their relationship with nature, once as gardeners of Eden, was no longer one of correspondence but of discrepancy. The environment where they must obtain sustenance is under the curse of sin. The inability to renounce the power generated a new sort of toil on humankind.

As Illich has argued, "Hugh takes this historical understanding of ecology as the starting point of his general theory of science". Thus, science is searching for a remedy to relieve human weakness, it conducts the development of tools to provide ways of surviving the environment damaged by humans. For Hugh, science attempts to aid this painful condition of disharmony but not to "control, dominate or conquer nature to turn it into pseudo-paradise" (Illich, 1981, p. 84).

Illich understood while writing in the 1980s, that the metaphor of the transgressing couple did not fit the age of atomic energy. Hugh dwelled in creation, not in space. However, Illich could recognize quite well the roots of a classic. The differences between these eras could be contrasted, above all, by their approaches to ecology. Hugh saw the need for science in response to ecological reality. Since Ernest Haeckel, ecology "is based on scientific assumptions." By contrasting these distinct approaches to science, Illich found an epistemological and ontological frame for a modern yet limited science, research *by* people.

For Hugh, science carries the attempt to restore the balance lost in the ecological catastrophe and has three vital aims: wisdom, virtue, and competence to face needs. These three are precisely the remedies against the three principal evils: "wisdom against ignorance, virtue against vice, and competence against the body's weakness." Science as remedy resembles Plato's myth of Theuth and Thamus in which *pharmakon* is the disciplined art of achieving the correct dose. For each ill, its proper remedy: "for wisdom, the theoretical arts […]; for virtue, practical arts; for needs, the mechanical arts" (Illich, 1981, p. 86).

The mechanical arts deal with human necessities that must be faced due to disharmony between people and nature. The environment becomes more hospitable as the mechanical sciences remediate "something without which we cannot live, but without which we would live more happily". Science as a remedy is characteristic of Hugh alone. It also shows him the originality of placing mechanical science in philosophy. His definition of *philosophia* as the "caring pursuit of truth motivated by what has been tasted and found pleasing" has no proper name since the enlightenment, which is what "science *by* people" captures well (Illich, 1981).

Hugh's mechanical science was not concerned with a specific craft such as fabric making but with the precise dynamic established through the relationship of this art and wisdom. Mechanical science was not the study of how to make or adequately use artifacts; it was the study of the relation between artifacts – human conceptions that imitate nature – and people's competence to remedy their weaknesses.

As Illich has pointed out in *Shadow Work*, less than a century after Hugh's ideas of science as a remedy and mechanics as part of science, western Europe was under an accelerated technological development. The term 'mechanics', after that, was used in the sense of outwitting nature and ceased almost completely to mean its imitation. Mechanics meant something much closer to its modern meaning — a tool for the exploitation of nature— and inaugurated the sciences of domination over the environment and the fabrication of a man-made environment.

When the science of tool-construction entered the curriculum of eighteenth-century universities, it was "conceptualized as diametrically opposed to Hugh's *scientia mechanica* (science *by* people)". The latter was rooted in the pursuit of wisdom in the imitation of nature, while this new subject "clearly was *engineering* science: a science concerned with production *for* people" (Illich, 1981, p. 91). Mechanical science as a way of engineering the environment in the image of humans, as the study of techniques to dominate nature is the birth certificate of what scientists today call the Anthropocene.

To analyze the relationship between people and tools, Illich proposed the term "critical technology" – Jacques Ellul addressed the same issue by simply using the French term *la technologie*. Illich's method of seeing the present through the mirror of the past took him to the twelfth century, where he could find the first appearance of critical technology. Hugh's attempt to unite mechanical arts and science within the realm of philosophy is the first appearance of philosophy of technology *avant la lettre*. For him, tools were recognized as a social or philosophical problem; he was the first among his generation who did not take tools for granted. The transformation and social-environmental impacts of tools were first seen as an issue of study by Hugh of St. Victor.

Hugh's ideas on mechanical science appeared in sharp correspondence with some profound changes in the new cities. The plough and the mill, as Illich has shown, depicted "an increase in yields beyond subsistence needs, and the new city constituted a market where this surplus could be traded" (Illich, 1981, p. 93). This period inaugurated a new era of technical innovation and a new set of aggressions against the environment. The new mills were a fresh sign of a groundbreaking relationship between people and their surroundings, they typify human power over nature, but above all, control of few over many, with nature as the instrument.

Illich's suspicion of anything that pretends to be new is the cornerstone of his historical approach to critical technology. Illich neither regretted the forgetting of Hugh's essential sense of technology nor did he claim creationism as a solution to global warming. By contrasting and comparing his era with that of Hugh's, Illich was able to raise questions of his own that fit his time and propose a critical technology under the aegis of its historical appearance. For him, "the critical technologist of 1130 and that of today are both on the same edge of the stage. Hugh faces tradition naiveté, and we face its Baconian version" (Illich, 1981, p. 94). Both observed the rise of innovations but developed contrasting ideas on technology. At the same time, Hugh's mechanical science proposes remedies to human weakness to face an ecological disorder, and Bacon's scientific method is rooted in mastery over nature.

Hugh's understanding of the ecological disorder has nothing in common with the ecological catastrophe prosecuted by centuries of Baconian science. Hugh knew that his mechanical science must not attempt to recreate a pseudo-paradise. Technology as a remedy would never regain the power humans had in their original condition in the Garden of Eden. For Bacon, science is precisely the opposite, it generates the tools which restitute human sovereignty over nature, and it liberates people from their inconvenient state caused by the environment. Bacon's dream of a scientific-man-made shell has arrived as a nightmare. Science as the power to conquer, subdue and domesticate nature is the foundation of climate change and environmental devastation.

Biogeochemical degradation is rooted in Bacon's insistence on "putting nature on the rack, torturing her by experiment and thus forcing her to reveal her secrets" (Illich, 1981, p. 94). Ultimately, humans cannot dominate nature, the attempt to do so has taken humanity to an unprecedented ecological crisis. The naiveté that Illich recognized in the 1980's only endured and deepened into the 21st century. It persists when ecological modernization, green technology, and clean energy, under the premises of science *for* people, are taken as alternatives, as if they could produce fundamentally different results than dirty technology. To believe that 'ecologically-oriented' R & D is a replacement for total domination over nature is an illusion. It deepens when people cannot see an alternative to ecological crisis outside hyper-technological solutions.

For Illich, real alternatives for the ecological crisis must be based on critical technology. Conducting and regaining research *by* people starts with removing the mask of humans, the consumer. Science *by* people is research that provides a framework for limits to tools, limits to property, and limits to scarcity. History has given us a period in which critical technology could have fostered our ways of doing science. Hugh formulated a philosophy of technology in the face of the rising of scary new ways of damaging nature. He was forgotten. Today, if the current ecological devastation has not yet shown enough of its consequences to spark a renewed critical technology, I can only conclude that a new subject is under threat of being forgotten: humankind.

2.8 Conclusions

This chapter was dedicated to unearthing three main concepts from Illich's *oeuvre* that directly speak to the ongoing ecological disaster. A thorough analysis of commons, vernacular, and conviviality clarifies their use in Illich's thought and their usefulness for us in thinking through the crisis.

First, within Illich's framework, tools can be convivial or industrial. If societies are committed to setting limits to high-quanta energy tools, then conviviality remains a practical political task. In Illich, it is tools that are convivial, not personal relationships. Conviviality, therefore, is not used to define the character of interpersonal relations. It is not a gathering of people nourished by the enthusiasm of a common cause, and it does not refer to a set of mutual support. When Illich referred to convivial society, he defined it as the political struggle to find the proper balance between convivial and industrial tools. It was used to designate the type of political arrangement in which people are engaged, setting limits to tools and high-quanta energy dependence.

Second, Illich's definition of the commons is framed by its physicality, equal to the soil, the waters, the air, and the silence. The commons are outside the regime of property, public or private. It does not refer to the environment, which for Illich is an economic concept that refers to resources that are extracted from nature and made scarce. The commons are historically inherited by customary law and a social-political arrangement grounded in property limits. It does not belong to Illich's usage of the term the scope in which David Bollier and Silke Helfrich's have given to the commons (*The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market & State*, 2012). For Illich, there might exist a digital conviviality, but not a digital common, a convivial energy but not an electricity commons. The commons in Illich are limited to creation.

Third, Illich revived the word vernacular to contrast forms of activities that are outside the web of money against shadow work. Shadow work is not badly paid labor nor unemployment, it is precisely unpaid work that does not generate forms of subsistence. It is a complement to industrial society that has enforced the domestic enclosure of the women – housework that does not contribute to subsistence. What Illich meant by the shadow economy is the complement of the formal economy. Vernacular activities, in stark contrast, are characterized by autonomy, non-market-oriented actions through which people satisfy everyday needs. The vernacular encompasses what in political economy has been defined as use-value activities, but it is not limited to it. Its broader meaning includes styles of thought framed under the prudence of limits to science (Samuel, 2016). Science by people, thus, is a vernacular epistemic.

Illich has formulated a general theory of industrialization in *Tools for Conviviality* and has shown its historical roots in *Shadow Work*. While the economy enforces scarcity, the vernacular promotes abundance. Vernacular is the forms-of-living that presupposes limits to property and limits to the power of tools. Illich saw an alternative to the economy in a period when a window toward conviviality was wide open (1973). Today, a new window is available

after the predictable failures of such ‘alternatives’, at least from Illich’s standpoint. Ecological devastation and its consequences, together with the end of the illusion of full employment, cannot but be faced with an epistemic of property limits, tools, and scarcity. Ivan Illich lived his thought and found both in history and during his lifetime the conditions and the existence of vernacular forms-of-living. They remain today within grasp. I believe it is urgent to summon a forgotten classic to rejoin the current ecological debate.

3 Chapter 3: Thinking after Ivan Illich: to hell with sustainability, a call for vernacular forms-of-living (Part 2)

> "*And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived*."
>
> Revelations of St. John

3.1 Preamble

3.1.1 The Cathedral

It was half-past midnight when we arrived in Oslo, under the last rays of sunlight. When the outside temperature hits the mark of 18ºC, I wear a scarf. Tollef Graff Hugo, our beloved friend, was waiting for us outside the airport wearing his comfortable shorts. It was the first time Isabelle and I was able to meet Tollef in his home country. We were thrilled, and his gentle, cozy, large, long hug enfolded us in his warm arms.

Many, if not most, of the life-changing encounters are inspired by someone. In a letter, Dara Molloy whispered his excitement for a young Norwegian who was also interested in Ivan Illich. We set a time and date in that surprising 2015, and the rest is history.

Tollef and I met through the blessing of reading Illich. He was looking for a writer who could flesh out the boons of autonomy in a society highly dependent on the welfare state. He did not fit the school system; he was too creative for it. I, on the other hand, was looking for a writer whose diagnosis of modern industrial society could nourish alternative propositions for development. Tollef was looking for the vanished vernacular while I was witnessing its destruction. Our caring pursuit for truth has bloomed into a close friendship. Alongside Eva, his companion, they came to Brazil a couple of times to meet us from the standpoint of our thoughts and ways of living. We were finally meeting them at theirs'.

After a few minutes of celebrating seeing Tollef again, we took the bus downtown. Tollef knows the city like no one else. Besides being a writer, philosopher, and storyteller, he is also a bus driver in Oslo. We were flabbergasted by the experience of gazing at the mixtures of blue typical of an Oslo dawn. The sun never really set. When we arrived downtown, no more public transportation was circulating Tollef's neighborhood. We walked for roughly two hours uphill to Nordstrand. The freshness of meaningful conversations sustained our exhausted

bodies. Tollef told us of his ancestors' role in building the streetcar rail uphill, which we could see on our left. On our right, the sea was cutting what remained of a long fjord that reaches Oslo in low height.

On our first night, or should I say first lingering dawn, we had spoken about vernacular construction in contrast with the new 'green' buildings. Tollef is also a craftsman; he had learned carpentry in Norway's tradition of wood mastering. He posed a question right before we entered his house, which accompanied me throughout our northern journey: "how is it sustainable to inhabit a non-breathing house?".

For the next three days, we walked around Oslo under the guidance of Tollef and Eva. We gazed at Munch's astonishing panels, wandered in conversation through the Botanical Garden, and passed by the house where Illich used to stay when visiting Nils Christie. Tollef told us of Christie's important role in conducting the public debate on surveillance, guns, and criminal justice that arose right after the heinous attacks by Anders Behring Breivik. Norwegian police officers persist in not carrying firearms, criminal justice has not shifted to punitive law, and people demanded an even more open society to face this tragedy.

It was our last day in Oslo before hitting the road north. Tollef and Eva had planned a journey through the mountains and hoped we could find a cabin among friends in Valldal. We were on the rooftop of the Opera House, gazing silently at the ocean. Tollef broke this silence with a concise argument that welled from our last days of conversations. He could wisely contrast the extended political struggle to sustain a participatory democracy as the critical factor for the socialization of oil profits against the new tendency to embrace sustainable development as an alternative to fossil fuels naively. He was not addressing the fact that the green economy and energy transition depend entirely on oil; he was concerned with a deeper structure.

The new buildings in Norway do not breathe. To create a zero-waste energy policy, many new apartments have sealed windows, fully insulated walls, and no exchanges with the outside milieu. People are living in a technologically controlled shell. Instead of setting limits to the power of tools or the dependence on high-quanta energy, people are widely adhering to a way of living girdled within a technological womb. It does not matter how much energy is consumed, as long it is in an efficient manner. People cannot even fathom a society within precise limits and yet modern. Limit to waste, in this case, is the perversion of recognizing ceilings, it is the engineered solution that takes how much the planet can suffer as the measure for alternatives. And my friend concluded, "if Norway is a reference for the world of how to live sustainably, then let us be a cold-based territory that can live under limits as a celebration. Suppose we could decide together, after a drastic trauma, that we would be a society against

guns and surveillance. Why can't we also decide together, under the trauma of climate change, to be a society that recognizes the blessings of limitation? We are envied for the wrong reasons".

I believe friendship is the best place to dwell – where ideas are sketched, bread is broken, and thoughts are tasted together – and we hope to relish it again. Our departure towards inland mountains promised more delightful banquets.

Tollef and Eva had borrowed a car so that we could journey through the mountains. We left Oslo early in the morning. Like many of the cars in Norway, ours was also electric. We had charged it during the night, loaded it with a few things, and left home with no sense of time – the southern flesh had lost the ability to guess the hour after days without darkness. The journey was experienced through the mingling of Norwegian folk songs – we were introduced to Erik Bye – conversations and silence. All of a sudden, we were facing what appeared to be a massive wall. The feeling was one of climbing with the car and not driving it. Tollef is used to climbing these mountains with buses, without a rope. A light car was a piece of cake. We trusted him! After jumping from one diagonal line to another, with a precipice between us, we arrived at the top of the mountain.

I have rarely had an experience as breathtaking, although I have used the term more often. High mountains are not common in Brazil. I was only taken to such a place through the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, Peder Balke, and Albert Bierstadt. They taught me how tiny I am in front of nature. But I never really saw myself unequivocally little until that day. It was not a sense of humiliation but one of humbleness. Isabelle and I had been wanderers for half a year when we saw the abyss. "From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens when the waters become hard as stone when the deep surface is frozen?". We were reminded of the questions once directed to Job.

Silence.

We arrived in Valldal, surrounded by mountains that spear the sea. We were still and silent. Tollef stopped the car at the local dock. He turned off the vehicle. Everyone took a deep breath! A talking machine addressed the driver with the typical rude awakening of alarms: "Congratulations, your trip has planted a total of twenty-two trees!". The dashboard started blinking green lights in the shape of trees and a written phrase saying, 'Sustainable Trip!'. I was at the cusp of crossing myself – and I am not Catholic – when Tollef said: "To hell with sustainability." I truly hope no one believes that while driving electric cars, trees are magically growing on the burned soils of the Amazon. They do not.

The electric car experience is like crossing Dante's inferno, "*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*" [Abandon all hope, ye who enter here]. To hell with sustainability is a call for

hope, one of the sources of vernacular forms-of-living. Living among Tollef and Eva is a cut into chronological time. Our passports say we spent roughly twenty-five days together, but I am quite sure it was at least ten years. Friendship is a boon. I dedicate this chapter to the Cathedral, an imaginary space built among friends.

3.2 Introduction

Sustainability is the new scarcity. Some say that with the emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity, the Roman Empire was defeated by a religion of enslaved people. Following Illich's footsteps, I say that at the cusp of disappearing, Rome had found something with which it could amalgamate itself and endure for centuries; after all, the West is Christianity insofar as it is Roman. Capitalism, in this sense, has been the only modern permanent revolution. Invariably, when it finds itself at the edge of vanishing, it kidnaps something to which it can amalgamate. In the post-war period, it amalgamated with democracy and welfare for some, and for others with dictatorship and primitive accumulation. The post-energy crisis period is connected with neoliberalism and globalization. Besides authoritarianism and accumulation, all the rest is in ruins.

Sustainable development and the green economy are variations in an ongoing capitalist revolution. If the welfare state is kidnapping socialist values, then 'sustainable capitalism' seems like the kidnapping of sustainability. I propose, however, that 'sustainable capitalism' is not a contradiction in terms, aware that three generations of scholars have argued so (Marques, 2020). I see no contradiction due to a simple fact: in no usage of the term 'sustainability' – within economics, ecology, anthropology, or sociology – does there appear any explicit recognition of limits to tools, limits to scarcity, and limits to property as necessary for it (Silva Junior, 2013).

Without this triple limit, environmental collapse is treated as an accidental outgrowth of still immature capitalism. After some political adjustments and technical corrections, it can straighten its path to avoid environmental damage. I argue, after Ivan Illich and, more recently, Luiz Marques (*Capitalism and Environmental Collapse*), that the political task of our generation is to combat sustainable capitalism. To do so, I believe we need to begin by demolishing a major illusion: sustainable capitalism is not the perversion of sustainability but rather the materialization of its epistemic framework. Sustainability was the missing piece for completing the puzzle of the new Western-Buddhist capitalism, portrayed by a vegan CEO of an online bank that has a company policy that is mandatory to hire LGBTQIA+ employees.

This is the core reason for cursing sustainability so we can move forward on the public debate towards real alternatives.

Illich rarely addressed capitalism by name in his books. I do not see it as a blind spot in his ideas or an alternative seduction. I argue that his general theory of industrialization (see Chapter 2) is broader and deeper than the dichotomic balance of power between capitalism on one side and socialism on the other –which was how the public debate was framed at that time (the 1960s/70s). The United States, Europe, the USSR, and, more recently, China have caused roughly the same social-environmental destruction. In accordance with C. S. Lewis' advice, I refuse to engage myself by calculating the relative costs since the devil always sends errors into the world in pairs – pairs of opposites – and encourages us to scratch our heads debating which is the worse (Lewis, 1980).

I see neither 'sustainable capitalism' nor orthodox socialism as alternatives to the social-environmental collapse. However, today, I address the modern industrial mode of production, above all, in terms of overcoming capitalism for two objective reasons. First, it's the structure in which unlimited property, unlimited tools, and unlimited scarcity have prevailed. Second, socialism, which in its historical forms has been under the same structure of unrestricted industrial growth, now only survives as a relic of the lost ideological battle.

In Chapter 2, I elaborated Ivan Illich's thought as it bears on questions of political ecology through a particular way of reading his work, which was the core of Chapter 1. In this chapter, I want to shift public debate on political ecology from planetary or ecosystem limits to limits to property, tools, and scarcity. To do so, I review the existing scholarly literature on sustainability to show that because it does not recognize limits grounded in the body, the sustainability discourse can only add to the ongoing environmental destruction. In contrast, the practical literature on sustainability – notably degrowth and communing – recognize some but not all the relevant limits necessary to slow down, if not avoid, the coming environmental collapse.

To help shift the public debate on sustainability requires challenging myself to think after Ivan Illich, which means both thinking with him – explaining his argument – and after him – extending his arguments. Accordingly, I present Illich's conceptual triad – commons, vernacular, and conviviality – as defining the epistemic space to recognize limits. I propose that *conviviality* corresponds to limits to tools, whether sustainable ('green') or industrial; *commons* correspond to limits to property, whether private or public, and *vernacular* corresponds to limits to scarcity, whether shadow work or paid work.

In extending Illich's argument, I suggest that the political struggle to realize limits to tools, property, and scarcity that are scaled by the human form will necessarily generate social arrangements which, following Agamben, I call vernacular forms-of-living – life that cannot be separated from its form. In this chapter, I focus my arguments on the conceptual clarification of vernacular forms-of-living. I leave to Chapter 4 – the fieldwork – to give empirical examples.

To shift the public debate from planetary or ecosystemic limits towards limits to tools, property, and scarcity is the political task of my generation. Ecosystem limits show how far we have advanced towards planetary devastation, while the second set of limits shows how close we are to recovering vernacular forms-of-living. I believe the discourse on sustainability has blurred the vision of those earnestly engaged with social-environmental reconstruction. This chapter is a call, following Illich's and Luiz Marques', for a reconciliation with the notion of limits.

3.3 To Hell with Sustainability!

3.3.1 The road to hell is paved with good intentions

On April 20, 1968, Ivan Illich addressed the *InterAmerican Student Projects* (CIASP) Conference in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The audience was mainly composed of North American volunteers, missionaries, and 'do-gooders' wanting to devote their time to helping the 'poor souls' of Latin America. Illich saw the dangers of any voluntary service activity and, above all, any intentionally universal service mission. For him, the United States has developed an ideology that supports "the belief that any true [North]American must share God's blessings with his poorer fellow men. The idea that every [North]American has something to give, and at all times may, can and should give it" evinces either deep hypocrisy or an unconscious naivete (Illich, 2018). It was to confront the profound damage to oneself and others when someone defines what one wishes to do as 'good', a 'sacrifice', and 'help', that Illich vehemently snapped: *To Hell with Good Intentions*[57].

The new missionaries saving us from technological doom wear green. They carry the 'good news' namely sustainable development or sustainability (many are simply cynics, but others are unconsciously naive). They walk around Universities, International Organizations, and State Departments preaching in the name of sustainable development. They also walk around Environment and Society programs, Green Parties, and Organic Food Industries,

[57] For more on the perversion of the commandment "*love one another as thyself*", see *The Seamy Side of Charity* (1967) and *To Hell with Good Intentions* (1968), both in *The Powerless Church* (2018).

preaching in the name of sustainability. Both together complement what I refer to as 'Green Good Intentions'. Like David Fincher's *Benjamin Button*, sustainable development and sustainability were born old. Hell is gradually becoming a material reality precisely because of the alarmingly high temperatures the planet is reaching. Year after year, a new record is broken. To put out its flames, we must embody limits.

Sustainability and sustainable development are not grounded on tools, property, or scarcity limits. On the contrary, they give a new face to the same old structures. No limits to tools but retooling (make it green). No limits to property; either increase public property and defend it with law and force or maintain the same private property domain but certify it with, for example, organic agriculture. No limits to scarcity; the *pax oecologica* is the new economy, green production of services and goods prescribed by green professionals. Above all, sustainability is the new name for old ghosts that have haunted the planet for some time: Progress and development.

The road to climate change, and therefore to a literal hell on earth, has been 500 years in the making. The recent history of social-biogeochemical degradation cannot but be understood through the crusade of Development. Its clean twin, sustainability, is now paving the dirty road of development. Thirty years of sustainability or sustainable development has not prevented a decimal from lowering the planet's increasing temperature. On the contrary, they are the main reason for its continued increase.

Sustainability or sustainable development is the new face of scarcity. After Illich's definition of development (see chapter 2), I argue that they perpetuate a way of living anchored on market and state dependence where a sense of guilt redesigns consumption. The rich can buy organic food wrapped in plastic, drive electric cars, and own Bayer's stocks. While the poor, who cannot walk or ride a bicycle due to the roads made to fit the new electric cars, buy poisoned food, and are blamed for not embracing conscious consumption. Bayer has a whole section of its business dedicated to sustainability. None of its actions promote the protection of traditional seeds, land reform, or limits soil exploitation. They have a zero-carbon policy based on carbon credits, the monetization of climate change. They also expect to create a sustainable product supply based on retooling all the actors within the chain supply towards an ecological footprint. This is what they call sustainable agriculture. Sustainability means that Brazilian land usurpers can continue to burn the Amazon as long as their tractors are electric and solar panels boost their offices.

The reader might know of experiences and social arrangements that I am unaware of, where sustainability has been the source for setting limits to tools, property, and scarcity, all of

which are scaled in proportion to the human form. There are innumerable arrangements that occur within these triple limits. It would be a category error to confuse these vernacular forms-of-living with sustainability. Tellingly, I could not find a single reference to sustainability in which the concept frames the political task of setting limits to tools, property, and scarcity scaled to the body. I could not find a single action framed in terms of sustainability whereby a whole community, society, country, or international treaty commits to limits that vernacular forms-of-living incarnate.

Roberto Donato da Silva Júnior, in his doctoral dissertation for the Environment and Society Program of the State University of Campinas, analyzed the scientific production on sustainability in the academic fields of Ecology, Economics, Sociology, and Anthropology, within the period between the two major United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development: the Rio92 (1992) and the Rio+20 (2012), both held in Rio de Janeiro – Brazil. He exhaustively analyzed the twenty-five most cited papers of each discipline in the Web of Science platform culled by the search terms sustainability and sustainable between 1990 and 2010 (Silva Júnior, 2013).

His dissertation framed an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability and its political propositions. It is a thorough investigation of the primary meanings given to the concept within the four disciplines. For this investigation, I want to focus on the political propositions that prevail in these social scientific fields.

Although the origin of the term sustainability, according to Leila da Costa Ferreira, traces back to the 18th century (Ferreira, 2005), the public debate on sustainability has been shaped by the newer field of Ecology, which has framed the so-called 'environmental issues'. Under the banner of "sustainability", several ecological epistemics have been amalgamated into 'complex adaptive systems' (Silva Júnior, 2013), understood as the correlation between natural systems and social systems (Berkes *et al*., 2003). Sustainability has also been the main concept within Ecology that addressed the relation 'society' and 'nature' in terms of 'socio-ecological complexes'.

Thus, sustainability within Ecology changed the course of a debate once heavily framed by neo-Malthusianism – per capita consumption versus limited resources – to one framed using a systemic approach, in which resilience determines how ecosystems function and survive (Silva Júnior, 2013). The pinnacle of such analysis was reached when the joint interdisciplinary effort of researchers from the Stockholm Environment Institute resulted in the publication of *A safe operating space for humanity* (Rockström et al., 2009). The main point of this paper was to identify the planetary boundaries within which humanity can survive. We will come back to

this point later, but the major argument of this publication was that human activity could not continue as usual because it could lead to crossing the tipping threshold of ecosystem stability. Within the branches of Ecology, sustainability has encompassed mainly two principles: the study of Earth-system processes, which refer to the dynamics of natural processes in relation to human action, and the study of the resilience of complex dynamics to identify the tipping points beyond which the Earth system becomes unstable.

When Alfred Marshall drew attention to economic externalities, economics began flirting with sustainability or sustainable development. It is only through the thread of externalities that neoclassic economics began to address, study, and analyze environmental problems (Silva Júnior, 2013). Within the neoclassic tradition, environmental devastation could be measured as the dollar cost of negative externalities. It was Arthur Cecil Pigou, a student of Marshall, who began to see the need for Environmental Economics. Grounded on the economy of welfare, Pigou formulated mechanisms of control to constrain adverse effects on the public good due to the action of private individuals or corporations (Pigou, 1962). Fees, taxes, fines, and other mechanisms of economic control were designed with the expectation that they would encourage economic agents to invest in reducing negative externalities.

Concurrent with this economic analysis, Harold Hotelling also began to sketch the first theory of optimal natural resources exploitation. He calculated the maximum exploitation of resources in the present to ensure the unlimited exploitation of a particular resource (Hotelling, 1931). Either classic, neoclassic, or critical Economics take resources as something scarce; therefore, measuring and protecting scarcity became the paradigm to avoid complete depletion.

Both approaches became the pillars for constructing the Economics of sustainable development. However, because these economic approaches to the environment were grounded in the axiom of scarcity, they assumed that the price mechanism would solve the environmental crises. Markets would make pollution more expensive and substitute increasingly scarce natural resources with manufactured resources. In this way, economics avoided the problem of a civilizational crisis (Silvia Júnior, 2013). The neoclassical economic approach to the environmental issue of finding market solutions is a style of thinking that is still the norm in that academic field (Solow, 1974; 1993). Some could argue, for instance, that many Economics programs worldwide have not yet embraced sustainable development and, therefore, even a minimal notion of ecological devastation. I say they are late and outdated because sustainable development or sustainability is the new economy. That is why we can say that the so-called ‘new green deal’ is just a mask for the old ‘dirty’ deal.

The Rio92 UN Conference for sustainable development was crucial for introducing the 'strong' sense of sustainability, contrary to neoclassic approaches – the 'weak' sense of sustainability (only market-based analyses). Economists such as Herman Daly, Joshua Farley, and Robert Costanza, to name just a few, elaborated on what is now called Ecological Economics. It is grounded in the insight that there is a limit to the substitutability between natural and man-made resources, which is uncritically assumed by neoclassical economics (Daly and Farley, 2004). For example, once the fish in the ocean are depleted, the level of fish catch cannot be maintained by replacing fishermen with capital-intensive fishing boats. Accordingly, in this variant of economic analysis, there is recognition that the 'carrying capacity' of the earth system is being stressed by economic activity and that the latter should be limited by the scale of the various components of the earth system. The stipulation that the level of global warming must not exceed a particular measure (2ºC) is an example of ecological economic thinking that specifies the safe levels at which the earth systems can carry the human activity. Accordingly, within Economics, sustainability is defined as weak when it is constrained to market dynamics (environmental economics) and as strong when it addresses the scale of human action in relation to the capacity of the Earth system to sustain it (ecological economics) (Rockström et al., 2009).

Leila da Costa Ferreira traced the origins of environmental Sociology to Ivan Illich when she argued that *Tools for Conviviality* opened the path to alternative epistemic on the relation between technics and society (Ferreira, 2006). Although not a formal social theory, *Tools* was a book that influenced a generation of social thinkers searching for a radical critique of modernization. Ferreira named this generation after radical political ecologists – Ivan Illich, Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Andre Gorz, and William Ophuls, to name just a few. The first three, according to Ferreira, developed a decentralized epistemic for socioenvironmental imbalances (Illich, 1973; Dupuy, 1980; Gorz, 1987), while Ophuls, on the opposite side of the others, advocated for a centralized political arrangement that could coordinate policies to harmonize society and ecology (Ophuls, 1977). As charted by Silva Junior, the emergence and establishment of environmental sociology did not stay on the path identified and even opened to sociologists by Ferreira. For over thirty years, she has tried to keep the spirit of radical political ecologists alive. Even if their strand of thought has not decisively influenced the mainstream of environmental sociology, this dissertation could not have been conceptualized or written without her pioneering work at the intersection of ecology and sociology.

It was only in the 1980s that environmental sociology found institutional presence. It was the period in which the appearance of a complex systems epistemology mingled social

theory with environmental issues and politics (Paelkhe, 1989; Cahn, 1995; Buttel, 1987). According to Silva Júnior, this was the pivotal moment for the rising of three perspectives that conceptually elaborated sustainability within sociology: ecological modernization (Spaargaren, Mol, Buttel, 2000), constructivism (Yearley, 1996; Hannigan, 2000), and risk theory (Beck, 2010).

Ecological modernization defines sustainability as the process in which ecologic phenomena can be measured and regulated by state and international treaties. In this perspective, ecological rationality must determine the decision-making governing economic and societal relations. Ecological modernization relies on technology as a panacea. In contrast, constructivism defined sustainability as the process in which scientific knowledge constitutes the fact of environmental degradation as a civilizational issue. Thus, the hard sciences (biology, physics, chemistry, geology, and ecology) reveal the multiple and complex risks of biogeochemical degradation and encourage the discourse of environmental sociology towards sustainability. Risk theory defined sustainability as a set of political processes and strategies that emerged from the relation between the definition of risks and governance. Environmental issues engender new modernity, which Beck called reflexive modernization after planetary catastrophes have demolished the traditional borders of early modernity (Beck, 2010). Accordingly, within Sociology, sustainability became a key concept for environmental sociology and, within these various perspectives, indicates the epistemic approach for producing scientific knowledge through studies of the relationship between the environment and society.

The encounter between Anthropology and sustainability is more recent. Silvia Júnior demonstrates that Social Anthropology, centered on the concept of culture, is framed by four major theoretical threads: (i) *evolutionist*, (Morgan, 1978; Tylor, 2005), (ii) *functionalist*, (Malinowski, 1986), (iii) *structuralist* (Lévi-Strauss, 1993) and (iv) what he generally calls *contemporary* (Latour, 1994; Ingold, 2000; Viveiros de Castro, 2002).

These perspectives rely on ethnographic methodology to analyze the interdependent processes of culture and nature and material and ecological aspects of social life (Silva Júnior, 2013). The studies of nature and culture as hybrids have drawn anthropologists to environmental issues (Latour, 2010; Ingold, 2012; Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, 2017). While Ecology tends to reduce the social to ecological, Sociology tends to minimize the environmental to social. Economics reduces both into the economy. Due to its origins, anthropology tends to approach and observe nature and culture as a correspondent relation, thereby avoiding reductionism. Accordingly, often within anthropology, the concept of

sustainability has usage and meaning far from the academic mainstream. Shaped by variables that emerge out of extensive ethnographic fieldwork (Wikan, 1995), sustainability in anthropology is a more malleable word and habitually comes with the need for a clear definition.

Silva Júnior's thorough investigation of several streams of scholarly literature on sustainability recognizes the polysemic definitions of sustainability. Thus, he argues for hybrid sustainability, born out of an interdisciplinary approach to facing the complexities of social-environmental issues (Silva Júnior, 2013).

Although Silva Junior argues that sustainability is polysemic and has many variations of usage, some contradicting others, none come close to an epistemic space defined by limits to property, tools, and scarcity that are scaled by the human body. Many of my anthropologists, sociologists, ecologists, and economists' colleagues have been conducting thorough and cutting-edge investigations on environmental issues. Yet, many have not found conceptual tools that can flesh out forms-of-living that can pose a true alternative to capitalism in the context of the ongoing planetary disaster.

However, it is beyond dispute that many others have seen the failure of sustainability and connected it to eco-development and eco-friendly growth. To name just a few, in Europe, for instance, the yet timid but topical Degrowth movement has been framing grounds for limits (D'Alisa et al., 2014). Silja Samerski has also shown a possible correspondence between degrowth and Illich's critique of technology. She urged the degrowth movement to "seek deliberate limits to manipulative technologies in general" (Samerski, 2016). Ecosocialism reframed historical materialism by stating that "nonecological socialism is a dead-end" (Lowy, 2014; Leff, 2021). As a project for overcoming capitalism, it promotes a break with capitalism and industrialism by aiming for a new way of life, here and now. Boaventura de Sousa Santos has also argued that sustainable development or sustainability are ways of perpetrating an epistemic that has been the very cause of the social-ecological catastrophe we are facing and thus evokes epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2018). Luiz Marques has argued that sustainable capitalism is just an illusion and has shown three main aspects of its impossibility (Marques, 2020).

There are several forms-of-living among original peoples grounded in the notions of limits that accord with natural thresholds. *Buen Vivir* or *Vivir Bien* that Alberto Acosta translated to Spanish, defines ways of living of the Kíchwa, Aymara, and Guarani peoples, for instance, that are apparent alternatives to development (Acosta, 2016). Gustavo Esteva has drawn the clear lines for commoning in the new society, and among the Zapotecans and the

Zapatistas has called for horizontal grassroots organizations grounded on commotion (to be moved together), instead of promotion (to move someone, as if one is stopped), in which living together means the practice of radical democracy (Esteva, 2014).

I propose vernacular forms-of-living as a conceptual tool – framed by an inseparable relation between theory and praxis – that can identify, recognize, analyze, and edify social arrangements that embody limits and therefore do not cross natural thresholds. I also propose that persisting with sustainability as a way to ecological health is analogous to insisting on socialism as the necessary political arrangement on the way to communism. The last is always a promise that is never fulfilled. I see the need for gradualism and political mediations, but I propose vernacular forms-of-living as the spearhead of such mediations. Lowy has wisely invited us to celebrate any small victory towards a social transformation that promotes ecological restoration. Following his hopeful spirit, I hope to fight this necessary battle against the most recent mask of growth mania: sustainable development or sustainability.

It has become evident that the discourse on sustainability cannot but generate intellectual confusion, political diversion, and cultural stasis because the term has lost any determinate meaning. The seventeen sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN – Department of Economic and Social Affairs) cannot be accomplished based on the premises on which they are founded unless in a science fiction movie. In absolutely none of the descriptions of each goal and none of their political statements will the reader find a single mention of property limits, limits to tools, and limits to scarcity that are scaled by the human body.

Take goals two (Zero Hunger) and six (Clean Water and Sanitation). The UN proposes rural development, food security, and nutrition through sustainable agriculture to rid the world of hunger. To guarantee clean water, the UN offers to ensure water availability and sustainable management. Goal eleven (Sustainable Cities and Communities) is framed by sustainable transport and strategies for safer, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable human settlements. Goal eight (Decent Work and Economic Growth) promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work. More generally, as Luiz Marques has shown, for example, in the final text of the UN Conference Rio+20, *The Future We Want*, "the word sustainable is repeated 115 times, without being linked to a single concrete action to make it effective" (Marques, 2020, p. 25).

Now, sustainable is the key word here. It seems to function as a magical word as if agriculture and management could transmogrify into something else when the word sustainable precedes them. Instead, I follow Illich's argument and understand it as an amoeba-word – what

Uwe Poerksen calls plastic words.[58] In a conversation with David Cayley, entitled *Life as Idol*, Ivan Illich defined amoeba-words as "a term with powerful connotations. A person becomes important when he uses it; he kind of bows to some kind of a profession[al] who know[s] more about it. He is convinced that he makes, in some way, a scientific statement. Using the word *makes waves*, but it doesn't hit anything[59]." Although a word such as sustainability does not designate anything precisely, it has many suggestive connotations.

As Samuel (2016) argued, scientific terms should not be understood as concepts. Instead, they are constructs. The difference between commonsense concepts and scientific constructs is fundamental. Concepts are grounded in a sensible apprehension of the world, whereas constructs are mental fabrications untethered to the sensible world. For example, 'the earth' is a concept whose intelligible content can be grasped by the hand, whereas 'the planet' is a construct whose intelligible can, at best, be visualized in models created by the mind. As Einstein said of scientific constructs, they "are not however they may seem, uniquely determined by the external world" (Einstein and Infeld, 1967, p.31). The distinction between concepts and constructs allows one to see why scientific terms easily lend themselves to becoming plastic words. Sustainability is polyvalent and plastic precisely because, as a construct, it is not grounded in felt sensation or perception.

The price paid for scientific constructs can be high. As Poerksen pointed out, plastic words "sound friendly, smooth, positive, and consensual, but, while not in themselves evil, they mask brutality. With a word such as 'development', one can ruin an entire region" (Poerksen, 1995, p. 7). Today, with a word such as sustainability, an entire public debate is being deviated from real alternatives towards planetary catastrophe. Stated simply, sustainability is unsustaining. I hope we can celebrate vernacular forms-of-living. I say: to hell with sustainability.

3.3.2 Third Watershed versus Planetary Boundaries

The 2018 *Special Report* of IPCC, "showed that (1) the impacts of a warming of 1.5 ºC put mankind clearly beyond the safe zone and (2) any warming above this threshold is threatening to the elementary functioning of contemporary societies" (Marques, 2020). That means we are all living at the edge of a planetary catastrophe. A vernacular fisherman living

[58] See Ivan Illich's *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1988), especially chapter seven, *From Taught Mother Tongue to Newspeak and Uniquack*, and Uwe Poerksen's *Plastic Words: the tyranny of a modular language* (1995).

[59] One can listen to their conversation here: https://www.davidcayley.com/podcasts/2015/4/19/life-as-idol. It is also available as a transcript here: https://www.davidcayley.com/transcripts.

within limits to property, tools, and scarcity by the Lake Trasimeno in Umbria, Italy, or a Zapotecan woman harvesting maize on the hills of Oaxaca, Mexico, are affected by warming to which they did not contribute. They are among those most aware of the loss of their ancestors' climate and the rise of a new one.

Following the arguments of the report, "to stick to 1.5 °C, however, would require reducing GHG [Greenhouse gases] emissions by 2030 to the levels of 1977, that is, reduce the emissions of GHG per capita to the levels of 1955, something implausible if we maintain the existing socio-economic and political structures" (Marques, 2020). So far, scientific efforts have shown that several planetary boundaries have been crossed. These scientifically established boundaries are taken as our common roof. I propose, after Ivan Illich, that social arrangement based on limits to property, tools, and scarcity that are scaled by the human body edifies a familiar dome of abundance in which vernacular forms-of-living abide. Although illuminating in scientific data, natural thresholds are the only signs we have crossed our social common roof. The violation of such limits cannot entail crossing planetary boundaries.

I do not see any alternative to reducing GHG emissions other than well-framed political propositions based on property, tools, and scarcity limits. These political propositions can only be achieved through radical democracy, changes that rise from the bottom of society, like the experience of the Zapatistas, the MST movement in Brazil, or the Mapuches in Chile. They know we stand on soil, not on planet Earth. *Pachamama*, *Madre tierra* is first their surrounding milieu. The hubris of sustainability development confuses planet Earth as our standing point.

Rockström et al., for instance, has proposed a framework based on planetary boundaries. They identified boundaries of the Earth system which cannot be crossed to maintain a safe operating space for humanity. These are the ten boundaries: climate change, rate of biodiversity loss, nitrogen cycle (part of a boundary with the phosphorus cycle), phosphorus cycle (part of a boundary with the nitrogen cycle), stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification, global freshwater use, change in land use, atmospheric aerosol loading and chemical pollution. According to them, the first three boundaries have already been crossed, and three others are at the edge of being crossed.

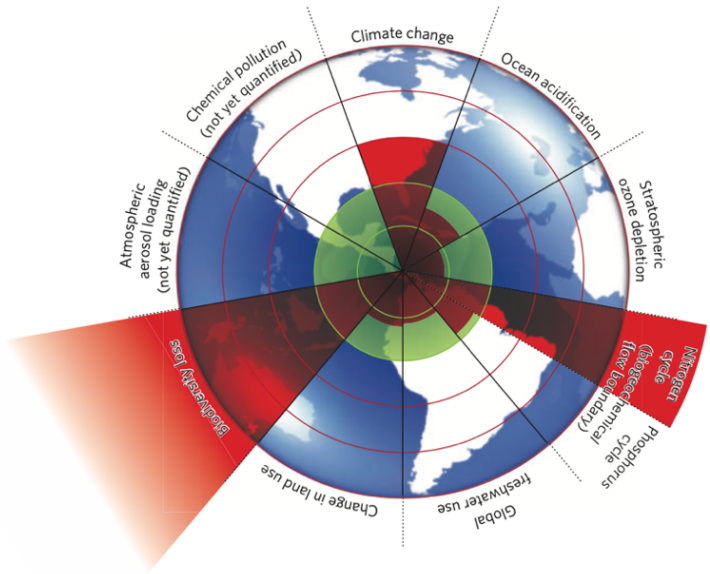

Figure 1 | Beyond the boundary. The inner green shading represents the proposed safe operating space for nine planetary systems. The red wedges represent an estimate of the current position for each variable. The boundaries in three systems (rate of biodiversity loss, climate change and human interference with the nitrogen cycle), have already been exceeded.

Figure 1: from the paper *A Safe Operating Space for Humanity*, of Rockström et al., in *Nature*, 2009.

What Rockström and his colleagues are blind to is that social watersheds have been crossed way before the crossing of planetary boundaries. The crossing of such watersheds is precisely why humankind is under threat. I can understand the recent pedagogy of showing planetary thresholds that have been crossed, but to take these thresholds as the lines which define our common roof is to leave out the social degradation that resulted in these ecological imbalances in the first place. We must agree on setting limits to how we live together, which is always a political task if we wish to avoid planetary catastrophes. Addressing a safe operating space for humanity by measuring how much the Earth system can take instead of setting limits to how we live together is a proposition that exemplifies what I call the crossing of a third watershed.

When Ivan Illich recognized the existence of two watersheds that every tool crosses within a society, he was aiming for the flourishing of convivial societies (Illich, 1973). Aware that natural thresholds are generally crossed after social limits are breached, he identified the two following watersheds.

The first watershed is crossed when new tools enlarge people's welfare in an efficacious way. Examples include penicillin for health, bicycles for movement, and the printing press for learning. However, when some tools grow beyond a certain scale, they begin to act against the very purposes they were meant to achieve. They then cross the second watershed, becoming damaging to both society and the environment. Too many cars can impede locomotion, just as too much health care can generate iatrogenesis. Moreover, Illich argued that the social

degradation due to the crossing of the second watershed happens faster than the ecological degradation (see Chapter 2). Ecological degradation is often the result of social degradation.

Illich referred to the double phenomenon of social-environmental degradation by counterproductivity. Let me use the example Illich provided in *Energy and Equity* to illustrate the argument. Counterproductivity is of three kinds: technical, structural, and symbolic. Technical counterproductivity refers to a tool subverting its intended purpose when too many cars cause traffic jams. Structural counterproductivity refers to the fact that over-engineered tools muscle out autonomous action. For example, the shape of cities and towns are designed for high-speed vehicles like cars, trucks, and other modes of transport it becomes dangerous or impossible to ride a bicycle or walk. Symbolic counterproductivity refers to the phenomenon of self-perception or understanding produced by overusing technologies. People with prolonged exposure to sitting in cars think of themselves as beings who need to be moved, as *homo-transportandus*.

What I suggest with the notion of a third watershed is when symbolic counterproductivity becomes so entrenched that it can no longer be perceived as such. Overusing a tool designed to ignore natural thresholds cements the symbolic counterproductivity to the extent that it becomes the object of veneration. In other words, the damages caused by excessive technology are sought to be remedied by more technology. It is a sign of crossing the third watershed when society believes that electrifying the means of mass transportation is a solution to the problem of too much transit.

The symbolic dimension of counterproductivity entails the loss of the imaginary space and, consequently, the capacity to imagine natural alternatives to societal imbalance. After decades of living under symbolic counterproductivity, the third watershed becomes the "new normal". That a solution to climate change is the shift to electric cars occurs only after walking is understood as a mode of transportation. Instead of politically addressing the issue of energy in terms of too much power, the solution of sustainable development is to continue living under the same power dependence (no limits to energy or tools) and expect that solar energy, for instance, will soon save us from both limits and ecological devastation. Ozzie Zehner has shown, almost a decade ago in his book *Green Illusions: The Dirty Secrets of Clean Energy and the Future of Environmentalism* (2012), that shifting from fossil fuels to the chimera of clean energy is a result of what I am calling the crossing of the third watershed when the tool becomes a system.

Suppose every country, above all the ones that pollute the most, agrees on shifting to clean energy starting today without any commitment to setting limits to energy consumption:

"a global solar program would cost roughly $1.4 quadrillion, about one hundred times the United States GDP. Mining, smelting, processing, shipping, and fabricating the panels and their associated hardware would yield about 149,100 megatons of CO_2" (Zehner, 2012, p. 9).

Solar energy can only become a genuine alternative when it is framed by conviviality. To promote a planetary shift to solar panels under the sustainability or sustainable development rubric is to insist on unlimited growth. Sustainability is the engine that confirms that societies are crossing the third watershed. In this third watershed, tools become systems that cannot be shut down. In Illich's words, a system is "an extraordinary complex arrangement of feedback loops. The fundamental characteristic of a system is to seek survival by maintaining an informational balance which keeps it viable" (Cayley, 2005). The fact that we cannot fathom a society within limits to energy and instead have been committed, for the last thirty years, to sustainable development, that is, to have unlimited but cleaner energy, exemplifies the inability to put down our tools. We cannot even conceive ourselves separated from the electric current.

In the 1980s, Illich had already seen the shift from the Age of Tools to the Age of Systems. He identified the Age of Tools as one of the *causa instrumentalis* – an unintentional cause – a subcategory of the Aristotelian notion of the *causa efficiens*. Such notions compose the clear separation between the user and their tool (to better express human intentions), since this relation is also separated from its milieu. To this clear separation, Illich gave the name of distality. In other words, a tool is something one can only conceive apart from oneself, something one can or cannot use (Cayley, 2005, p. 158). When I take melatonin as a sleep aid to combat the exhaustion from hours of writing in front of the computer, I act from what I feel. But when I take Prozac to shut down my system because of the risk of compromising my immune system, I act as a sub-system within a system. There is no possibility of doing or not doing something.

Crossing the third watershed is reflected by the age of systems when our imaginary space has been shaped by counterproductivity to such an extent that we cannot see alternatives to social and ecological degradation outside unlimited tools, unlimited scarcity, and unlimited property because we are incorporated into systems. Renouncing the system and regaining conviviality is a far more radical political task than any political proposal agreed by nations at the last thirty years of environmental summits.

Thinking with and after Ivan Illich, I hope that celebrating such awareness can reanimate our minds and reopen an imaginary space for cultivating ways of living within limits. I am convinced that vernacular forms-of-living can be a contagious experience for regaining the trust

in our ability to (re)shape the surroundings under limits of proportionality. There is neither freedom nor abundance without limits.

3.4 A call for vernacular forms-of-living

3.4.1 A posthumous correspondence

The vernacular is the fabric that spins forms-of-living. A call for vernacular forms-of-living is how I imagined an encounter between Ivan Illich – vernacular (*Shadow Work* and *Gender*) – and Giorgio Agamben – form-of-life (*The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*). Both resuscitated these terms from Latin antiquity and ancient Roman law. Illich traced the vernacular back to the codification by Theodosius, while Agamben found reference to a form-of-life in Cicero, Seneca, and Quintilian, way before the Franciscans (Illich, 1982, p. 68; Agamben, 2017, p. 963).

Ivan Illich breathes new life into the word vernacular, knowing that its ancient meaning carries the seed for what he intends to define. Vernacular designated everything is woven, cultivated, and made at home, as opposed to what was sought through the exchange (Illich, 1981). Thus, vernacular, after Illich, names a range of activities born out of structures of mutual reciprocity, inscribed in each aspect of existence, that are non-market oriented. Vernacular activities can encompass the definition of use-value activities, such as cotton fishing net making or growing one's food, and reproduction activities such as dating, exercising or reading. The scope of the vernacular encompasses styles of thoughts in which science is not defined *for* people but rather *by* people when knowledge is not a scarce resource but a shared commitment to support one another in beautifying the surroundings of communal life (Samuel, 2016).

Giorgio Agamben thoroughly analyzed the monastic rules within the Christian tradition to flesh out a life that is not separated from its form. By freely and willingly committing themselves to the coenobium (where one lives in common), the Christian monk adheres to a *regula vitae* (rule of life), which is not applied to their life. Instead, he produces their way of living since it is produced in it. The faith in Christ, the person, the word made flesh, generated a rule that conforms to His way of living. Even though Tertullian's *regula fidei* (rule of faith) later fed the lines written in the Nicene Creed, the rule was not meant to be a dogma but expresses the effort to follow the nude Christ (Agamben, 2014, p.75). Saint Francis of Assisi insisted that a rule of life is less a prescription of something than the act of following someone. Thus, a form-of-life is not the enforcement of a prescribed norm on life but rather living a life that, while being lived, takes the form that it ultimately seeks – what Agamben names the

coincidence of life and form. Saint Clare's 'last will' incarnates the definition of a form-of-life: "I … wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ" (Agamben, 2017, p. 967)[60].

Therefore, after Illich and Agamben, I propose that vernacular is the forms-of-living that presupposes limits to property, limits to the power of tools, and limits to scarcity that are scaled by the human body. Such limitations are not a set of prescriptions that must be imputed into living as an enforced norm; on the contrary, they flesh out the abundance that emerges from vernacular activities and that con-forms a living that cannot be separated from what I now refer to as the *regula vernaculum* (rule of vernacular) – limits to tools, property, and scarcity scaled by the human form. The *regula vernaculum*, limiting tools and property, coincides with forms-of-living when people reduce their dependence on the market and the state (scarcity).[61] Thus, limits can foster vernacular forms-of-living, if, and only if, they are lived and set while experienced, not imposed, not prescribed. To live within limits attuned to bodily thresholds embodies vernacular forms-of-living. A call for vernacular forms-of-living is an invitation to celebrate the abundance that can only be found within such limits. More precisely, a call for vernacular forms-of-living is an invitation to opening a social imaginary of thought and fostering peoples' ingenuity to invent ways of living within limits to scarcity (vernacular), tools (conviviality), and property (commons).

3.4.2 Vernacular: limit to scarcity

The (sustainable) economy enforces scarcity while the vernacular recognize abundance. The first shifts from managing human 'Life' to managing planetary 'Life' to address ecological devastation, while the second foster forms-of-living that do not cross natural thresholds embodied in social limits (to property and the power of tools – *regula vernaculum*). I believe that a political commitment to vernacular forms-of-living is an alternative to the economy, whether shadow or formal, whether sustainable or not.

Within the premises of sustainability or sustainable development, living continues to be a scarce resource. Now, it comes in the shape of an economic condition retooled as 'green',

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[60] Agamben's argument is that the rule is grounded in the act of following the form-of-living of someone. He also refers to the origin of the rule as a sort of *regula fidei* (rule of faith), in which the monk, living by faith, embodies the wisdom of listening/reading the holy Scriptures (Agamben, 2014, p. 76). The correspondence between the rule and the Scriptures, from where the monks drew the waters which nourished their quest for truth, is unequivocally expressed in the words directed to those who claim to follow Christ, which appear in the first Epistle of Saint John: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

[61] I recognize that I am using 'vernacular' both to describe one dimension of the form-of-living (limit to scarcity) and to name the forms-of-living that occur within all limits. The use of vernacular to name both a part and a whole could be changed later.

from womb to tomb. The following is what I mean by scarcity: abiding is scarce, a product of the [‘green’] housing industry; taking care of yourself is scarce, a service of the health industry; coming and going is scarce, a product/service of the [‘green’] transport industry; learning and knowledge are scarce, a product/service of [‘green’] schools and the professionalization of [‘green’] specialists; empathy and sympathy are scarce, a product of the [sustainable] culture industry and life coaches; breathing is scarce because air pollution is suffocating millions of people; dying is scarce because you can no longer bury your dead but depend on the services of the funeral industry. Dressing, eating, and having fun, are all aspects that make up the human condition and are scarce, either in the form of products or services, be they ‘dirty’ or ‘green’ (Leão Neto, 2020, p. 236).

Living is made scarce and transformed into a series of economic commodities, services, things, and actions to buy and sell. Living is thereby transformed into ‘Life’ – a national resource, a right – and made almost impossible outside the boundaries of the market or the planned [‘green’] economy. ‘Life’ is the object of government and legislation. Everywhere, biocracy[62] – managing ‘Life’ through the mechanisms of the State and market mechanisms – has become the norm. The illusion that capitalist societies are kingdoms of abundance should fall apart is to mistake abundance for excess.

On the other hand, abundance is recognized when people ingeniously construct autonomous ways of living. Their activities usually do not impose restrictions or oblige others to live a certain way. Thus, the vicinity surrounding abundant living bears the marks of their hands; they imprint the gestures of those who do for/by themselves and/or others. Confusing abundance with the number of yachts or cars in the garage, that is, excess of few producing more scarcity is capitalism’s signature (Leão Neto, 2020, p. 237).

Sadly, modern industrial societies have castrated both the sense for and the ability to live abundantly from vernacular activities. The war against the vernacular, as we thoroughly investigated in chapter 2, enforces scarcity throughout all the aspects of existence, from womb to tomb. Today, for instance, to give birth to a child at home and to find comfort in a personal doula is mostly a privilege for the rich, just as building one’s own house with ‘traditional’ materials or living so close to work that one can walk to it. To recover vernacular forms-of-living neither as a fashion nor a luxury is a political task for those committed to balancing the environment and society. They are the most radical arrangements – in the sense of reaching out to the roots – of people living together and shaping their territory without crossing ecological

[62] A term coined by Illich, to designate a specific form of medical-sanitary power, in an article entitled: *Brave new biocracy: health care from womb to tomb* (NPQ, 1994).

thresholds. I agree with Luiz Marques' argument that there is no alternative to planetary eschaton besides overcoming capitalism (Marques, 2020). And to overcome capitalism, we must limit property and reestablish the commons as places within reach of walking distance since we must limit high-quanta energy dependence and the power of tools. This is no easy task and requires an awareness far from naiveness. Overcome capitalism has been a social struggle since the Paris Commune (1871), and, after a century, continues to be the political task of each generation. Nevertheless, I believe we have reached the zenith of such a struggle when social and ecological degradation has inevitably led humankind to multiple catastrophic events.

In the context of the COP26 in Glasgow (2021), the OXFAM Organization and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) presented a study titled *Carbon inequality in 2030: Per capita consumption emissions and the 1,5ºC Goal*, pointing out that "the climate and inequality crises are closely interwoven". They concluded that the World's richest 1% threatens the Paris Agreement climate goals by showing, for instance, that emissions from jets and space travels exceed 30 times the limits needed to keep global warming below 1,5ºC. Again, the Paris Agreement sets no limits to tools, property, and scarcity, but it sets a limit to Carbon emissions based on ecological thresholds – what Planet Earth can support. Unless we start reframing the goals to rebalance the environment and society, scarcity and the war against the vernacular (the origin of brutal inequality) will continue to fuel the environmental summits, and sustainability will continue to be a fashion for billionaires.

Henceforth, we must address an inconvenient truth and expose, for instance, that Elon Musk and his Tesla/SpaceX, Al Gore, his 'green' business, and Richard Branson and his Virgin Group are not paladins of a new era of ecological renovation. They are the mask of a renewed capitalism, best understood as the foundations of sustainability and sustainable development that produce, promote, and defend the most sophisticated apparatuses as instruments of ecological modernization. They see no limits to property, tools, or scarcity. On the contrary, as their trips to the orbit of the planet show, they have extended the predations on the commons to outer space. Their *hubris* has no limits, they seek universal scarcity.

Many, if not most of my peers within the field of Environmental Sociology, have dedicated their time to investigating and proposing policies focused on reducing methane to the level that the Planet can suffer (the newest achievement of the COP26) Glasgow, 2021). I suggest, however, that we shift the focus towards imaginative ways for setting limits to property, private and public, and to the power of tools, renewable or not. We must stop looking up towards Planet Earth and start gazing down towards the soil we stand on. I propose we pay less attention to climate summits and start gazing down towards vernacular forms-of-living.

Since language became a scarce resource under the quill of Nebrija (see chapter 2), the industrial mode of production, or capitalism, has enforced a fiercer war against the vernacular. The vernacular names real activities; it is not restricted to theoretical analysis. A call for vernacular forms-of-living is neither a call for a utopia nor the prescription of a recipe. They are ways of living that resisted colonialism and capitalism and can still be appreciated not only around the numerous groups of original peoples but also among a diverse number of modern social-political arrangements. I address the materiality of these ideas in chapter four, which is dedicated exclusively to fieldwork that fleshes out vernacular forms-of-living. There I document the resistance of a thoughtful community to the depredations of capitalism.

But what about the people living in big cities, small towns, or distant villages where scarcity is the rule? How could they regain the trust in their ability to do for/by themselves and/for others while dependence on the market and the state only increases, especially now under sustainability or sustainable development? I believe the road towards vernacular forms-of-living is painful but rather urgent. Withdrawing from the unlimited property and unlimited tools is distressing, but mostly for members of the generation that must endure the transition to vernacular forms-of-living, and above all, to those hooked up on high quanta energy dependence. This transition does not mean the recovery of a lost past nor a program for a neo-Luddite society. Instead, it is a shift to modern yet balanced ways of living when high technological tools – like solar panels, trains, and bicycles, for example – are under well-established limits to property.

The *regula vernaculum*, when people willingly decide to collectively recognize, set, and live under limits to tools and property, can foster a variety of surprisingly malleable forms-of-living. Each region, territory, and social arrangement may find ingenious ways of living that are rarely identical to one another, rendering various forms-of-living. In other words, once we begin to live under these limitations, an imaginary space is [re]opened, and people [re]gain their creativity, inventiveness, and ability to shape forms-of-living that do not enslave others, be their trees, animals, or persons. That is precisely when the sense and materiality of abundance begin to flourish among people when they recognize that the whole of creation is under a dome of abundance, where there is no waste nor excess.

Every catastrophic event is the crossing of thresholds, a sort of excess. It took millennia for planet earth to stabilize its climate and reach the balance that nourishes human life, what geologists call Holocene Era. The history of planetary imbalances due to human action is quite recent, what today has been called Anthropocene, Capitalocene, or Chthulucene (Crutzen, 2002; Moore, 2017; Haraway, 2016). I call it the long war against the vernacular, the historical

condition of violently forcing scarcity upon peoples across the globe, first as services and later as products. While the economy has perpetrated scarcity and planetary degradation, vernacular forms-of-living still abide underneath a dome of abundance, where limits are celebrated and thresholds embodied (proportionality) as the condition for a *buen vivir* [good living]. I insist that vernacular forms-of-living are happening here and now; they are much closer to our hands than the newest Tesla.

3.4.3 Conviviality: limit to tools

To address the notion of limits to tools may cause an immediate negative reaction. People tend to mistake such a limitation for a new era of sticks and stones, above all those who have only lived under a technological shell. However, in chapter two, I analyzed the meaning of conviviality coined by Ivan Illich. It is far from a Luddite proposition and carries no traces of an idyllic vision of the past. Following the footsteps of Hugh of Saint Victor, Illich formulated a multi-dimensional analysis for critical technology and disclosed the social watersheds that, once crossed, ruins both society and the environment.

There is an inseparable and interwoven relation between society and the environment. Tools are constitutive of sociability, and they can either extrapolate natural thresholds or balance the weft of this tapestry. I take tools in the wide meaning of Illich, such as utensils, whether shovels or sieves; as machines, whether lathes or cars; as factories that produce tangible goods, assemblers, or electric currents; as productive and service systems that produce intangible services, whether schools or healthcare. All in all, a tool is every means people can express their ends (Illich, 1973).

Conviviality is how Illich envisioned modern yet proportional societies, a multitude of social arrangements where people are committed to the political task of setting ceilings to the power of tools and high-quanta energy dependence. For Illich, proportion reflects natural thresholds that separate one sphere from another, such as the veins limiting blood circulation. Conviviality is the path for [re]gaining proportionality, separating what fits and what is unsuitable for balancing the relation environment and society.

In the 1970s, when Illich wrote *Tools for Conviviality* and *Energy and Equity* as pamphlets, the so-called energy crisis – that reached several countries worldwide – opened a window for a public debate on the dependence on fossil fuels. Many countries in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States experienced a ration of electricity, a ban on flying, driving, or boating on the weekends, the cancelation of Christmas, and commercial lighting together with many other restrictions. The imposition of such involuntary limitations was an opportune

moment for Illich to analyze high-quanta energy and the power of tools dependence critically, but, above all, to summon people to engage themselves with a convivial reconstruction politically.

I believe that now, under the threat of a planetary *eschaton,* a new window has been opened for summoning people to focus once again on directing the public debate on environment and society towards a critical analysis of high quanta energy dependence and the power of tools. The most recent Covid-19 pandemic, when something akin to planetary social confinement and the collateral suspension of almost all social and economic activities took place, has evidenced the complete dependence of modern industrial societies on commodities and high quanta energy tools. Satellites have shown the sharp drop in pollution generated by China in 2020; California residents reported the excitement of seeing stars in the sky for the first time; and fish were seen after decades in the Venice canals. Such reports demonstrate the violence that the industrial mode of production and a 'Life' fully dependent on high quanta energy tools has on the environment (Leão Neto, 2020).

Conviviality discloses the political task of collectively setting limits to tools. Following Illich's propositions, tools can be defined as industrial or convivial. The most disabling dualism is differentiating tools as either good or evil[63], the trap of Manicheism. Cars boosted by fossil fuels are bad while electric cars are good, or even worse, any type of cars is bad/good. A fundamental enabling distinction when addressing limits to tools could be to frame them as high quanta-energy dependent (industrial – cars, hospitals, or fishing nylon nets) or low-quanta energy-dependent (convivial – bicycles, libraries, or canoes). Jean Robert phrases this as generators of positive or negative synergy between autonomy and heteronomy (Robert, 2019).

Every industrial mode of production, be they capitalist, socialist, or communist, requires the assumption of man as a worker and consumer and, therefore, eventually crossed the second watershed. For Illich, industrial tools cannot but reverse the man-tool relationship. Since Marx's dream that we will all live in a paradise on earth if machines take men's work and replace human-based labor, many of the Left remains blind to critical technology. Manipulative tools have reproduced people's life, that is, those industrial tools whose purposes are predetermined

[63] I must clarify this statement, especially in an age of atomic energy. Following Illich's silent argument (see the essay, *The right to Dignified Silence*), atomic energy, atomic bombs or other apparatuses of mass destruction are *genocidal machines*, they are not weapons (tools). Genocide, however, is nothing new. It appears in some of the pages of the Jewish Bible, in the history of Roman conquerors and late Antiquity inasmuch as in the Christian crusades, when entire cities were decimated. But, as Illich sharply pointed out, "our ancestors committed genocide with means which also had normal uses – clubs, knives, or fire. These objects were used for peaceful purposes, for example, the preparation of food, but also for the horrendous acts of torture, murder, and genocide" (Illich, 1992, p. 28). This is not true of atomic bombs or of nuclear power plants, or of any other machine of mass destruction. Their exclusive purpose is genocide. They are not useful for anything else, not even for murder.

beforehand and engineered by others – such as cars and highways, schools, hospitals, and public transportation. All these tools require a remote intervention of actions and interactions of those who operate them. When I take the subway in São Paulo city, there is an inverse relationship between my intentions and this traffic tool; ultimately, the railroad is both the end of my journey and the fact that I am simply carried from point A to point B. The predominance of manipulative tools engenders a new mental topography in which this kernel distinction that separates me from a bicycle – distality – is erased and replaced by a logic of systems functioning – subway passenger – where one becomes an element in a complex social-ecological system. Conviviality is a more painful process for immune systems than for incarnated persons who have not yet lost their sense of proportionality and can grasp conviviality more intuitively.

What is now happening in Oslo, Norway, is paradigmatic. Exclusively bus lanes are being taken by electric cars. If you have an electric car in Oslo, you can access the legal privilege of driving on a bus lane and speeding up your trip (needless to say, for the sake of slowing down hundreds of others). Another massive benefit of having an electric car is the discount on road tolls, which you are largely exempt from if you own one. This new transport rule is one of several incentives for people to dump their fossil fuel cars and join what the Norwegian Parliament has decided, as a national goal, that all new cars sold by 2025 should be zero-emission. In 2019, in an article by Simon Browning of BBC News[64], a Norwegian citizen told him his favorite thing about having an electric car: "you don't need to queue, you can just bypass the queue. It is a great feeling!".

To be emphatic, I must repeat that sustainability is the new scarcity. Not only that, but it is also the new prestigious certification that opens the future roads for those privileged by it. It is probably becoming embarrassing to drive a diesel car in Oslo. Instead of addressing climate change and personal disability due to the radical monopoly of manipulative tools – all sorts of cars – the Norwegian Parliament is restricting a 'bad' high quanta energy-dependent tool to replace it with a 'good' unlimited high quanta energy-dependent tool. I am not even considering the high GHG emissions for producing electric cars and the whole issue of high quanta energy dependence[65], which would render the 'good green' car argument ridiculous.

I refer to this as the crossing of a third watershed when people cannot fathom a solution outside manipulative tools dependence. The core problem is too many cars, period! Be they run on diesel or electricity. The whole city of Oslo is designed and will continue under sustainability

[64] See the full article here: https://www.bbc.com/news/business-48400271.
[65] See, for example, *The Alternative-Energy Fetish*, chapter eight of Ozzie Zehner's book, *Green Illusions: The Dirty Secrets of Clean Energy and the Future of Environmentalism*.

for manipulative tools, pushing convivial tools out of the traffic. To make 'dirty' cars subservient to 'clean' cars is the signature of sustainability or development (the third watershed). We must limit manipulative tools (diesel and electric cars) and make them subservient to convivial tools (bicycles, skates, scooters, proper walking shoes, or barefoot). Only conviviality can frame the limits for tools so that we can truly begin to rebalance decades of social-ecological degradation.

The mayor of Oslo, Marianne Borgen, when asked by Simon Browning about the 'innovative' implementations of electric cars, stated: "This is about our grandchildren's future, it's about the health of the people in the city because the planet and climate change can be quite abstract for many people. But it's not. It's about our daily life. It's about health. It's about the future". As a member of the Socialist Left party, I thought Borgen was aware of a famous old saying in Latin America, *socialism will only arrive by bicycle*[66].

Climate change is indeed about our daily life, and today, more than any day, it is about our grandchildren's future. But the future Marianne Borgen wants, to confront the concreteness of climate change, will only arrive by bicycle. Sustainability is the abstraction! It is far more radical to renounce the power that sustainability has given to managers and politicians and, for the sake of our grandchildren's future, to reframe the goals of the city of Oslo, for example, by limiting every kind of manipulative tool. Let the bus lanes be free of cars and limit the speed of the other lanes to 25 km/h, so bicycles and other kinds of convivial tools can transit among manipulative tools. Mayor Borgen mentioned health, well, there is nothing healthier than moving around by one's metabolic energy (the bicycle, for example, transforms such energy into a speed motion beyond the reach of our legs alone).

If a person in Oslo has a heart attack and requires emergency transport to the nearest hospital, summon an ambulance, not a bicycle. But we should not need to be carried every day and for every occasion. There are many alternatives to convivial transit outside the radical monopoly of manipulative tools. Traffic, divided by transport (manipulative tools) and transit (convivial tools), could be the spearhead of ecosocialism in Norway, where transportation is a subsidiary of transit, where limits to manipulative tools enlarge conviviality.

One of the fundamental challenges of conviviality is that once one is symbolically castrated by counterproductivity, conviviality may sound utopic, romantic, or hippie. It is quite the opposite. Conviviality has been, alongside the commons, the key factor for (re)gaining vernacular forms-of-living and for [re]gaining the sense of proportionality. To fight climate

[66] The famous phrase was said by José Antonio Viera-Gallo, assistant Secretary of Justice in the government of Salvador Allende, Chile (1973).

change and diminish the social-ecological degradation generated by decades of scarcity, we must limit high quanta energy tools, and we must restrict the regime of property, public or private.

3.4.4 Commons: limit to property

Illich used the term scarcity in a precise sense when addressing the regime of property, which has also been the predominant usage among economists since Walras: it is the field in which the laws of economics-related subjects, institutions, and commodities "within an environment in which the commons have been transformed into resources, private or public" (*Gender*, 1982)[67]. Today, we must rephrase the question once posed by the Academy of Dijon in 1753 – "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by Natural Law?" I propose the following question: what is the origin of climate change, and is it interwoven with social inequity? The enclosure of the commons into the regime of unlimited property is the foundation of social injustice and the origin of climate change. Every key actor of the environmental cause must confront climate change from the standpoint of at least one common ground: to dismantle the regime of unlimited property. Without this fundamental common ground, environmentalism is an empty discourse.

Let us disclose this argument by taking the example of meat consumption. Luiz Marques has shown that: (1) meat = climate change, (2) meat = deforestation, land-use change, and soil degradation, and (3) meat = water depletion. First, Robert Goodland and Jeff Anhang of the *Worldwatch Institute* consider the conservative results presented in the two reports (2006, 2013) by FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN] regarding the estimation of agribusiness' CO_2e [CO_2 equivalent] emissions; 15% to 18% of total anthropogenic emissions per year (Marques, 2020). For them, "livestock and their byproducts account for at least 32,564 million tons of CO_2e per year, or 51% of annual worldwide GHG emissions" (Goodland and Anhang, 2009). FAO's results reveal that "livestock production generates more GHG, measured in CO_2e, than the transport sector" (Marques, 2020).

Second, the same FAO report of 2006 showed that "pastureland occupied 34 million km^2, or 26% of dry land. This is more than the total area of Africa, 30,2 million km^2". Even more alarming is that "an average of 27,600 km^2 of forests are replaced by pasture each year" (Marques, 2020). The extensive plantations of soybean – principally to feed livestock —are also responsible for the deforestation of 6000 km^2 per year. Thus, the destruction of the Amazon

[67] See footnote 11 in *Gender*.

rainforest is strictly related to meat-eating since deforestation is firstly for pastureland and secondly for extensive agriculture of crops (Meirelles, 2005; 2014). According to Jonathan Foley, about 36% of the world's crop calories are fed to livestock (Foley, 2014).

Third, Luiz Marques calculated, based on the concept of 'water footprint'[68] and relying on the data provided by the Brazilian National Water Agency – *Agência Nacional de Águas* (ANA) – that "the production of 1 kg of meat requires the use of 20,000 liters of water" (Marques, 2020). This number is relatively higher in David Pimentel's calculation, which considers that agriculture in the United States accounts for 87% of all freshwater consumed yearly (Pimentel, 1997). If one includes the "water used for fodder and grain, the amount of water used increases dramatically, […] each pound of beef consumes 100,000 liters of water" (Marques, 2020).

Luiz Marques's thorough analysis unfolds what he calls 'extreme carnivoration', the inseparable relation between climate change and land use (strictly bonded to water depletion). Extensive pastureland typifies the crossing of Illich's second social watersheds, which cannot but lead to environmental degradation. It is well-known that agribusiness is the leading cause of biodiversity collapse (Gibbons, Morrissey, and Mineau, 2014; Hallmann et al., 2014 and 2017). We must not forget that meat production is inseparable from the regime of property in countries depleted by colonialism.

In Brazil, according to the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa), 95% of the beef comes from pastureland[69], which is equivalent to 1,670.000 km^2 of soil concentrated in the hands of less than 1% of the Brazilian population – roughly 210 million inhabitants. To give us some perspective, 1,670.000 km^2 of the private property exclusively used for livestock (which we all agree is one of the leading causes of climate change) is equivalent to 32 Costa Ricas, 18 Portugals, 10 Uruguays, 6 New Zealands, or 4 and a half Germanys, or roughly 3 States of Texas. According to the latest report of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), by the end of the year 2021, Brazil will be responsible for approximately 20% of the global production of beef and, together with Argentina, they are responsible for 50% of China's import.

On top of that, a study from the *Instituto Escolhas* – entitled *Do Pasto ao Prato: subsídios e pegada ambiental da carne bovina* (*From Pasture to Dish: subsidies and*

[68] The concept of water footprint includes the total volume of fresh water that is directly used and the 'virtual water', that is, the water indirectly used to for instance, produce, commodify, and transport the final good.

[69] For more data on pastureland use in Brazil, see the technical report made by Embrapa: https://www.embrapa.br/documents/10180/21470602/SegurancaAlimentoCarne.pdf/71de9327-7649-a22d-15ad-ffe18c8772fd

environmental footprint of beef) – has shown that, between 2008 and 2017, subsidies, incentives, rural credits, tax waiver, taxes, amnesty, and debt relief applied to the supply chain of the beef agribusiness cost R$123 billion to Brazilian Federal Reserve. Regardless of the recent tragic years of Bolsonaro's government, the Brazilian fiscal system has structurally financed deforestation and social and ecological degradation.

The Amazonian rainforest is known for its important role in the planet's climate, biodiversity, and unique biogeochemical condition. Suppose I address the protection of the Amazon rainforest or climate change's interwoven relation to CO_2e emissions without centering my argument on limits to the property. In that case, I find myself in an aporia. We must name what agribusiness means in Brazil: it means extensive pastureland and humungous latifundium (plantations in the hands of a few), and it means that approximately 62% of Brazil's CO_2e emissions belong to pasturelands for livestock (1/4 of total emissions) and land-use change. Accordingly, there is no solution for climate change outside land reform. We must stop setting our environmental goals based on, for instance, how much livestock fart the planet can support and reframe them in terms of social ceilings.

The current Brazilian Constitution of 1988, under Article 186, requires that property serve its social function, which is suitable for land reform. One of the five requirements for social function is the good use of available natural resources and the preservation of the environment. Following the Constitutional requirement, the Supreme Court should rule to remove the ownership of roughly 1/5 of Brazil's territory (1,670.000 km^2) due to their direct threat to the environment (meat = climate change) and subject these lands to land reform. What is even more fascinating about the legal process of agrarian reform in Brazil is that, once the law is enforced, the land is given not as property but as the right to use the soil, which families can inherit if they continue respecting the land. For all their differences, social movements dedicated to the environmental cause in Brazil could agree on this common ground of action: limit property.

I invite my fellow researchers to share the common ground of limits to property and tools from the standpoint of our investigations. Those engaged with the preservation of the Amazon rainforest, for instance, must join forces with those struggling for land reform in Brazil. I urge you, once again, to gaze down towards grassroots movements. There is no future for environmentalism outside the political task of limiting tools and property; otherwise, it will continue to be a gathering of well-intended people joining costly gala events where organic vegan meals are served.

Every regime of property, public or private, has its historical process and mostly, if not always, is related to territorial characteristics. In the case of Brazil, since 1500, it was occupied by Portuguese invaders who first enslaved original peoples to forcibly labor on their ancestor's territory and later joined the slave trade of original peoples in Africa. The history of a soil exploited for mercantilism, colonialism, and primitive accumulation to feed the European markets. Every rule determining property limits must be grounded on each territory's historical and geographical conditions. Limiting property cannot be an engineered solution or a standard rule. The ceilings that suit the coastal northeast of Brazil may not fit the characteristics of the inland in Goiás state. Different measures might frame the limits for property in southern Norway compared to the limits recognized in central Vietnam.

The example of the MST movement in Brazil fleshes out a political struggle that ingeniously created a regime of communality that suits the historical-geographical conditions of the country. The *Comunas da Terra* (Land Communes) is based on the common use of territories subject to agrarian reform (Golfdarb, 2006 and 2007; Raggi, 2014). The land is divided in the shape of a bicycle wheel where the portions of each area between the spokes are designated for common cultivation and work. Their production is agroecological, and their tools rarely cross natural thresholds since they are convivial – limited by the *regula vernaculum*. Not only the production for personal sustenance is in everyday use, but common areas also draw *Comunas da Terra* for people's reproduction, such as spaces and places for leisure, administration, hospitality, and socialization.

Most importantly, they do not mean that people cannot have a space or place, even if much smaller than the common areas, for the exclusive enjoyment of each family – where they can abide their privacy. I find it vague, imprecise, and a mockery to frame this social-ecological arrangement under the rubrics of sustainability or sustainable development. The right to use in common opens a space for conviviality. People [re]gain a vernacular form-of-living when their existence and the human condition are mainly produced and reproduced outside the realm of scarcity.

People need only have a portion of their lives in the economy (scarcity) when they have the soil to cultivate their food, the lake to fish and clean their nets, the air to breathe a gentle breeze, and the climate to protect the crops and seasons. In many places, these ideas can only be translated into materiality through agrarian reform, the kind that reduces the need for private land to the extent of people's dwelling and enlarges the common use of agricultural land outside the realm of ownership – like many, if not most of the *Comunas da Terra* from the MST movement in Brazil. In many places, land reform must be the spearhead of environmentalism.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter is an attempt to think after Ivan Illich. The rigorous yet joyful commitment of reading a classic and an *oeuvre* of thinking has led me to questions and ideas of my own. In the next chapter, chapter four, I hope to flesh out these questions and ideas, namely, the vernacular forms-of-living that abide under a dome of abundance.

This chapter has covered two pivotal yet contrasting lines of thought, one in which 'Life' is a scarce resource (sustainability or sustainable development) and the other in which living is filled by abundance (vernacular-forms-of-living).

Sustainability or sustainable development – I trust the reader understood that I do not see any difference between these twin constructs – are the new scarcity. They create an epistemological frame that addresses social-ecological degradation through unlimited manipulative tools (retooling) and unlimited property (certification). Together with an epistemic of hubris, they define the human-nature relationship in terms of an ontological condition in which regimes of property and high quanta energy tools, even under the *eschaton* of climate change, remain intact. In other words, sustainability or sustainable development is how capitalism, once again, has found its way to survive the very crisis it has been generating.

I could continue writing a handful of pages to the extent of analyzing industrial [over]fishing in the sea, lakes, and rivers, aquaculture, noise pollution, mining, industrial fertilizers, deforestation, spills from ships and offshore platforms, coal extraction, plastic industry, industrial education, biocracy, global tourism or climate refugees. They are all defined by or result from the unlimited property, public or private, and unlimited manipulative high quanta energy-dependent tools.

I distinguish between framing the public debate on climate change by planetary boundaries (sustainability) and ceilings to property, scarcity, and the power of tools (vernacular forms-of-living). The first defines the scale of planetary thresholds as the common roof of humankind, that is, to take how much stress the planet can endure as the measure of how much we are allowed to waste. The second recognizes that, after crossing a watershed, the regime of property and the scale of manipulative tools produces the social degradation that ultimately results in environmental degradation. To confront such social-environmental degradation requires setting limits to manipulative tools and property, so these ceilings become the common roof under which we live together.

Therefore, I argue that using planetary boundaries as the ruler of human action is characteristic of societies that have crossed the third watershed. According to Ivan Illich, the

first watershed is when a new tool is efficacious. In contrast, the second is when such a new tool gains a scale that damages the very purposes it was meant to reach (counterproductivity). I define the third watershed as the point when the tool mutates into a system and when people cannot fathom alternatives to manipulative tools. Only societies which can not envisage life outside unlimited ownership, tools, and exchange would define their alternatives to social-ecological degradation by propagating manipulative 'green' tools.

As vivid and real alternatives to social-ecological degradation, I invite the reader to relish vernacular forms-of-living. To begin fathoming the [re]construction of social-ecological justice and thus the [re]balance of environment and society, we must cease the war against the vernacular and frame our political struggle in terms of limits to high quanta energy dependence, scarcity, and to the regime of property. Vernacular forms-of-living are grounded on limits to property, scarcity, and limits to tools, what I define as *regula vernaculum*. They are traditional yet modern ways of living since they are modern yet proportional social-political-ecological arrangements that incarnate the *regula vernaculum*.

For limiting tools, conviviality is both a theoretical and practical concept insofar as it is a definition for low-quanta energy-dependent tools. For limiting property, public or private, commons defines the spaces and places for the usage of peoples without the regime of ownership. Commons and conviviality are predominant over property and manipulative tools within vernacular forms-of-living.

Thus, I call on my fellow researchers, especially my peers within the field of Environment and Society, to systematically abandon the concepts of sustainability or sustainable development and to engage with a call for a vernacular form-of-living. I am convinced that many research, studies, and actions within our field of investigation can find the most suitable conceptual tool in vernacular forms-of-living. I also call environmentalists to stop framing the international debate in terms of how much the planet can support and start [re]framing it in terms of limits to tools (conviviality), property (commons), and scarcity (vernacular). I urge my fellow researchers and environmentalists to reframe GHG emissions' goals in limiting the radical monopoly of manipulative tools and the monopoly of ownership regimes.

Lastly, I invite activists, politicians, artists, intellectuals, workers and militants, anyone whose actions in the world are grounded on social-ecological justice, to step down the stage of high agreements, those of international environmental summits, and to come to visit the low agreements (*regula vernaculum*) of grassroots movements, of original people's communities or of other several social-political arrangements that incarnate vernacular forms-of-living. Come

to see and experience the smell of abundance, the celebration of joyful sobriety and liberating austerity, and come to fathom alternatives to yours'. Just do not come here to help. Come to [re]gain your hope!

4 Chapter 4: Celebrating vernacular forms-of-living: an immersion in living together within limits

> "*A grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies it bears a rich harvest*."
>
> Gospel of St. John

4.1 Preamble

4.1.1 A bookish encounter

During the winter of 2016, I was sitting on a triple sofa in an English school for kids and adolescents, having recently finished my master's thesis on Illich's early life and thought. I was looking for a job to raise the money for our yet dreamed sojourn around the world in search of Illich's friends. I knew my journey with Illich's *oeuvre* of thinking was just beginning, so once my scholarship reached its end, together with my defense, I needed to find a way to sustain both my studies and my belly. I had an interview scheduled with the director of the school and was waiting for her to summon me for the interview. While waiting, I fetched my copy of *Ivan Illich in Conversation* by David Cayley and continued reading it from where I had left it.

I was rereading some parts of chapter four, *A Flame in the Dark*, in which Illich addressed his relationship with Dom Hélder Câmara. A young woman was sitting on the other end of the sofa when I was reading the following words by Dom Hélder Câmara as told by Illich: "You must *never* give up. As long as a person is alive, somewhere beneath the ashes, there is a little bit of remaining fire, and all our task is" – and he put his hands, funny, skinny hands, around his mouth and blew and said, "You must blow... carefully, very carefully, blow... and blow... you'll see if it lights up. You mustn't worry whether it takes fire again or not. All you have to do is blow." When he said these words to Illich, Hélder Câmara had just been in a meeting with a general from the Brazilian army, who became a notoriously cruel torturer during the dictatorship (Cayley, 1992, p. 148).

The reader will soon understand why this waiting room story remains a vivid memory. I remember precisely what I was reading and recall the sound of the sighs that drew the woman next to me to ask about what I was reading. I had the book in my hands, the front cover facing towards my left. The woman, a stranger, was sitting on my right and could not see the title.
– "What are you reading?", she asked in a sweet yet pragmatic tone.

– “A book about Ivan Illich, a mind-blowing thinker that unfortunately nobody knows of”, I gently replied.
– “Seriously!”, she reacted exceedingly surprised, “I know Ivan Illich, I loved his book!”
– “You must be confusing him for Tolstoy’s”, I said with a bashful smile. I had once held a course on Illich in which, despite the synopsis, nine out of ten participants thought I would talk about the romance *The death of Ivan Ilyich*, so I had reasons to doubt her.
– “No, not really, I actually mean the writer of *Tools for Conviviality*”, she enthusiastically yet soberly answered while gently approaching the edge of the middle seat of the sofa, mostly by leaning her torso towards me.

I abruptly jumped to the middle seat towards this mysterious woman, flabbergasted by her answer, confused yet thrilled by the slight possibility of finding a rare young reader of Illich in the waiting room of a job interview at an English school in Campinas, Brazil.

I finally introduced myself, still moved by the excitement of the last seconds of my interaction with Rubia Gaissler. As I discovered, she had just finished her doctoral dissertation on Environment and Society about the media coverage of science and environment in the United States and Brazil from 1944 to 2014. She was also waiting for an interview for the same job position. Although her investigation was not centered on Illich’s ideas or concepts, she had read him during her studies, more precisely in the program’s first year for the Social Theory discipline offered by Profª. Leila da Costa Ferreira. There, she was introduced to Illich, a thinker Ferreira recognized as a radical political ecologist.

I was fascinated by the way she spoke of Illich and by how Leila da Costa Ferreira had approached *Tools for Conviviality*. We spoke for less than five minutes, which felt like hours. I completely forgot I had an interview and the original reason why I was sitting in that room, to the point that, when my name was summoned, I felt rudely interrupted and glanced with a disapproving gaze towards a tall woman, who later became my boss, with a disapproving gaze. I had time to kiss Rubia’s hand and thank her for that surprising encounter. I entered that interview with an inflamed spirit, internally laughing about the encounters I had been making after Illich and glad that I had not owned a cellphone.

I could not get Rubia’s contact nor find her when I left the shortest interview I had ever had. I was filled with a touch of grace and lightheartedness. As soon as I arrived home, I quickly searched for Leila da Costa Ferreira, encouraged by Rubia’s remarks, and realized the significant impact she had on the Environment and Society field.

Three days later, I got an email with a positive answer and with the expectation that I could start teaching effective immediately. The day after, I returned to the school and found

Rubia in the teacher's room, to my delight and wonder. It turned out that the director appreciated the two of us and was rather happy to give us both a job. I saluted Rubia, and we revived our conspired conversation. She told me about her research, her experience with the Doctoral on Environment and Society from the State University of Campinas, her travels to Africa, and Leila da Costa Ferreira. She was convinced I should write to her and suggest a meeting to discuss my master's investigation on Illich. After all, I was considering applying for a Ph.D. but was skeptical about the freedom I would find to continue my inquiries conducted closely with Isabelle's, my companion (the Gaze Project, art & science). She shared her contact but warned me not to expect a quick answer since Dr. Ferriera was always busy.

On August 8 of the same year, I wrote to Leila da Costa Ferreira explaining my research on Illich and Political Ecology and requested a meeting. I had been an outsider since my graduate studies and was unsure about what to expect from this encounter. Leila replied on the 15th, we met on the 23rd, and the rest is history. She openly invited me to do my research under the umbrella of her many projects, aware that my investigation would lead me to lands far from her territory. Nevertheless, for the last twenty years, Leila has been a guardian of Ivan Illich at the State University of Campinas, the only place I have ever heard the name Illich in academia.

Since my first year under Leila's supervision, she had been convinced that I should flesh out my ideas by conducting fieldwork. She has given me the space, the freedom, the many references, the sage counsel, the instigations, and, above all, her unconditional trust in my journey as an outsider. What else could I ask for in a supervisor? I dedicate this chapter to Rubia Gaissler and Leila da Costa Ferreira, for trusting their gut. I also devote this chapter to every bookish person who continues to walk through the vineyard of the text. After all, I would have never been writing this thesis if it were not for this bookish encounter. To quote Illich, "reading the man-made book is an act of midwifery, far from being an act of abstraction, is an act of incarnation" (Illich, 1993, p. 123).

4.2 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is quite straightforward: to present the richness of the analytical concepts of conviviality, commons, and abundance as tools for recognizing, framing, and fleshing out vernacular forms-of-living, that is, ways of living that have been politically shaped by limits to tools, property, and scarcity so that natural thresholds are rarely crossed. I hope that the practical stance that derives from the analytical concepts analyzed in chapter 3 can foster researchers of various academic specializations, above all the ones under the umbrella

of environment and society, to frame their fieldwork by the *regula vernaculum*, that is the socio-political arrangements that flow from setting limits.

The agreements of vernacular forms-of-living are the most radical political arrangements for balancing social and ecological life. They correspond with the past yet are not trapped by it (the sap of tradition). They confront the challenges of how to live together in the present. The *regula vernaculum* is their common ground so that people are committed to setting limits to the regime of property, public or private, to the power of manipulative tools, whether industrial or green, and scarcity – exchange value. Conviviality, commons, and vernacular are analytical concepts that open ways to limit tools, limit ownership, and limit exchange value, respectively. They are theoretical concepts that emerged from practical experiences (*sensus communis*).

In the last chapter, I have given the precise theoretical meaning of vernacular forms-of-living and how they reside underneath a dome of abundance. I contrasted them with 'Life' managed under sustainability or sustainable development, in which every aspect of one's existence is scarce (see chapter 3). In this short chapter, I flesh out vernacular forms-of-living, so that the reader can finally grasp what is underneath the concepts and ideas, namely, the inseparable relation between theory and practice. I have fleshed out vernacular forms-of-living in a territory where the common ground of the *regula vernaculum* can be observed within its cultural, historical, and geographical particularities. I am referring to a community in southeast Brazil. The fieldwork corresponds to the immersion into the *Comunidade do Marujá* [Marujá Community] in *Ilha do Cardoso* [Cardoso Island], state of São Paulo. I limited the scope of the fieldwork solely to one territory where a small community of fishers live, in the southeast of Brazil, aware that I would not have gotten any close to mapping all the vernacular forms-of-living I could illustrate even after ten years of research. I am convinced this is also true for many other territories around the six continents.

The sojourn with the *Comunidade do Marujá* is the result of friendships. This territory was not previously chosen as a place and space for scientific research, nor was it selected specifically to unearth my ideas. It was through the experience of living among them that the concepts of vernacular forms-of-living and *regula vernaculum* emerged. That is, I was not looking for places to frame scientific constructs. I was instead taken to places, through the hope and trust of friendships, to celebrate ways of living.

Thus, what I call fieldwork must not be confused with qualitative research experiments or with ethnography. If I had to classify these experiences within the scientific process of data collection, aware that a few could come closer to the spirit that nourished those encounters, I

would select *participant observation*, especially the kind that was practiced by Joseph Howell when he wrote *Hard living on Clay Street: Portraits of blue-collar families* (1973). Howell proposed a scientific method by encouraging the researcher to become friends with the community members they are visiting. He talks about blending in with the field so the observation can come from within people's real lives and stories (Howell, 1973).

Nevertheless, the immersion into ways of living within limits reflects closely what Hugh of Saint Victor described in a letter to his dear Brother Ranulph: "I was a foreigner and met [them] in a strange land[s]. But the land[s] w[ere] not strange for I found friends there. I don't know whether I first made friends or was made one" (in Illich, 1993, p. 27). I was a foreigner when I visited the territory of the *Comunidade do Marujá,* but the lands gradually became familiar, for I found friends there. It was through the invitation of Natália Borek that I was introduced to the *Comunidade do Marujá*, alongside a troupe of artists such as Isabelle Cedotti, Deni Lantzman, Ernesto Bonato, Marina Faria and Vinícius Cruz.

People were always aware of my studies when I was welcomed into their vernacular forms-of-living. I had openly spoken about them and clarified that I was researching for a Ph.D. in Environment and Society. Yet, I never intended or approached this territory as a researcher conducting fieldwork. I was instead brought into their ways of living as a friend. The invitation to live together with them opened an imaginary space from where the analytical tool of vernacular forms-of-living emerged, that is, from the *praxis of living together*.

The stories I share now represent ingenious ways of living together within the limits of property, tools, and scarcity. They are stories of real people making tough decisions to find proportional ways of living through recognizing social limits and natural thresholds. Besides sharing the *regula vernaculum*, which is tinged by the abundance they find within limits, they all share their unique sense of celebration. But to celebrate what? Well, perhaps to celebrate, as Illich once said, "our awareness that we can make our life today the shape of tomorrow's future (Illich, 1971, p. 6)".

4.3 Comunidade do Marujá, Ilha do Cardoso – Brazil

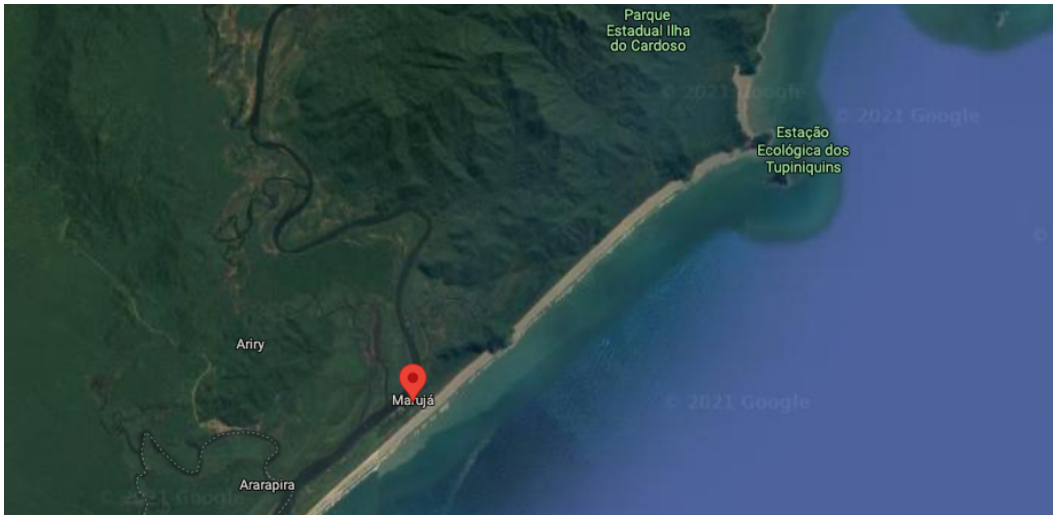
4.3.1 General information

Marujá is a village located in the south of *Ilha do Cardoso* [Cardoso Island], both encrusted at the farthest tip of *São Paulo* bordering *Paraná* state. It belongs to the municipality of *Cananéia*, which is situated on the continent. *Cananéia* is known to be one of the first towns of Portuguese and Spanish colonizers, where Amerigo Vespucci docked in 1502. The island is

separated from the continent by the *Ararapira* channel and the bay of *Trapandé*. It has been a State Park since 1962, *Parque Estadual da Ilha do Cardoso* [Cardoso Island State Park], and has an area of approximately 132 km². Most of the territory is covered with well-preserved *Mata Atlântica* [Atlantic Forest].

If one is going to *Cananéia* from *São Paulo*, one crosses the BR-116 highway and arrives in the sea town after traveling through 258 km of asphalt. Then, to cross the waters towards *Ilha do Cardoso*, one can take the local public ferry that reaches the *Marujá* community three times a week or arrange with local fishers to embark on their boats. From *Cananéia* to the *Manrujá* community, the trip varies from one hour to up to three hours of navigation, depending on the means of transit.

Ilha do Cardoso is host to one of its furthest southern communities, *Marujá*, of approximately 256 people. A short portion of landmarks is the topography of the terrain where the village is settled, approximately 420 meters of flat terrain, between the open sea on one side and, on the other side, a mixture of seawater and freshwater from several rivers (*Ararapira* channel). If one stands on *Marujá*'s shore facing the continent, one stares at the robust Atlantic Forest, roughly 260 meters away. Although located on a narrow land, the flat terrain extends for roughly sixteen kilometers, where the south meets the sea, whereas the north meets the hilly portion of *Ilha do Cardoso* (see the map below). The territory where the village of Marujá is located, therefore, is a narrow yet long portion of sandy soil (Carvalho and Schmitt, 2012).



Map 1: satellite showing the shore of *Ilha do Cardoso*. The red dot locates the *Marujá* community.

The island is known to have been inhabited before the colonization, above all by the Guarani of the *MByá* ethnicity. However, "the first records of land possession in Cardoso Island date from the second half of the 19th century, with the advent of the Land Law in 1850

(Marinho, 2013, my translation)". Today, most of the people living in the *Marujá* community are descendants of ethnicities of the *Guarani* people mixed with formerly enslaved Black people and Portuguese. They are known as *caiçaras*, traditional people who live on the coast of the states of *Rio de Janeiro*, *São Paulo*, *Paraná,* and *Santa Catarina*. Initially, their main activities were low-scale agriculture, fishing, and the use of forest products (Mendes, 2009).

Until the early 1960s, tillage was the predominant activity in Marujá, whereas fishing was a complementary activity. The research of Mauricio de Alcantara Marinho has shown, above all based on his interviews, that, before *Ilha do Cardoso* became a state park in 1962, the practices of *mutirões* (one day of collective work on the soil) and *fandangos* (the celebration after a day of work, nourished by dancing, singing, and playing music) were habitual. People harvested beans, manioc, sweet potato, rice, and yam; traditional fishing was meant almost exclusively for their consumption (Marinho, 2013, p. 82). Only with the advent of industrial ice production did the markets in Brazil begin to sell fresh fish. In the late 1960s, fishing became not only a vernacular activity but also an economic exchange value activity. However, industrial fishing, funded and encouraged by the government, became an imbalanced predatorial competitor.

4.3.2 The regime of property in Ilha do Cardoso: a short journey through its history

For this research, we must linger on some historical data on the process that turned *Ilha do Cardoso* into a state park (1962) to better understand the property regime under which the people in *Marujá* live. First, since the island became a state park, every villager has dwelled on public property. There is a deep controversy surrounding the process of turning the island into a state park. On the one hand, this conversion's main purpose was to preserve its biome. On the other hand, the legislation regarding public parks prevents people from dwelling in them by interfering with the surrounding milieu, such as taking a tree down or having a four-square meter garden. Though the original villagers were allowed to remain there, the first two decades after the expropriation of the commons into the public property were marked by an intense conflict with the public agents.

Moreover, the region suffered many expropriation attempts by real estate agencies in São Paulo. In the 1960s, a new fashion began among the upper classes of building a second house at the beach for leisure purposes, buildings that contrasted abruptly with the traditional local homes (Assis, 2003). These real estate agencies divided *Marujá* on paper into lots sold as private properties. A few houses were built and later dismantled, by the state court orders, due to a lawsuit (see the picture below). In this period, as reported by some of the villagers, a guard

of the park named Jonas Magalhães became known, between the early 1960s and late 1970s, for persecuting the villagers and falsely accusing them of deforestation or malpractice of fishing and harvesting (Marinho, 2013, p. 70). There was relentless pressure to remove the traditional villagers so the area could be expropriated for economic speculation. These actions occurred during the dictatorship in Brazil (1964 – 1985). It even included an attempt by the national Navy to appropriate the island for 'strategical purposes'. These sorts of aggressive actions continued until the beginning of the 2000s.

Pictures 1 and 2: ruins of a summer house facing the ocean. There are a few other examples of such attempts of luxurious private occupation of the shore of *Ilha do Cardoso*. Photos taken by Vinicius Cruz.

Concomitant to these conflicts, the island became a tourist attraction at the beginning of the 1980s, once the highway and local roads allowed people to arrive in *Cananéia* faster and easier. The relationship among villagers became tense since, with the influx of tourists, some villagers could rent out rooms while others were not. This transformation of some dwellings into rentable housing units created a social separation between those inside and outside the tourist trade. The 1980s and 1990s were crucial for the village, and the conflicts ranged at all levels – from disputes over ways of living to question fishing and cultivation practices to arguing over limits to tourism to conflicts about expropriation of communal land and real estate speculation.

It was mainly through the leadership of both Ezequiel de Oliveira, a local fisherman and peasant from *Marujá*, and the priest known as João 30, a clergyman close to liberation theology from the parish of *Cananéia*, that the community was able to protect itself from these violent attempts of expropriation coming from the outside. They organized themselves internally according to social-ecological arrangements that would render a communal way of living anchored in their traditional ways and customary laws (Marinho, 2013, p. 100).

In 1993, the villagers of *Marujá* began to draw the first lines of their Community Management Plan. After a long and tough process of intense dialogue and strong local leadership, the villagers agreed, for instance, on setting limits to the number of rooms which one could build to rent for tourists, on limiting the areas and places designated for restaurants and visitors, on dividing the profits according to the needs of each family, on creating certain areas designated for camping and on so many other activities related to how to live together (Marinho, 2013, p. 99).

It was also in the early 1990s that the villagers decided to change their strategy concerning the public administration of the park. They began to prepare their local people to become guards, monitors, instructors, and managers within the formal institutions. Thus, they would have people from the community participating and leading many activities related to the island. Once they began living inside a state park and facing continued attempts of expropriation for real estate speculation, they learned to use the legislation in their favor and have been able to block and defeat every single onslaught against *Marujá*.

The ambiguity of living inside a territory that became a park, above all the prohibition of maintaining their ways of living – from harvesting to seining (that is, for instance, the usage of the soil and the extraction of wood) – was partially resolved with the creation of the extractive reserve (RESEX in Portuguese) of *Ilha do Tumba* [Tumba Island]. Located on the continental side of the *Ararapira* channel and relatively close to the Marujá community (despite almost 300 meters between them), this public territory integrates the *Jacupiranga* Conservation Unity and is designated for the traditional use of the communities of *Marujá* and *Ariri* (Marinho, 2013, p. 8). In this RESEX, the villagers of *Marujá* could cultivate their agroforestry system for harvesting and extracting natural resources insofar as many other traditional activities forbidden by law within the limits of what became the territory of a state park.

4.3.3 Vernacular forms-of-living: the case of Marujá community in Ilha do Cardoso

We arrived in *Cananéia* around seven o'clock on a July morning. It was an unusually cold winter. The average temperature for the fifteen days we stayed in *Ilha do Cardoso* was 10ºC. The region is located further south and thus much colder than I was used to. The sea breeze was cool, and the open blue sky made the day even colder, whereas the sun was strong and warming our skins. We spent a few hours in Cananéia with a local fisherman, woodworker, and musician, Amir Oliveira. He enthusiastically told us about the *fandango caiçara* and how he learned to play *rabeca* or *rawé guarani*, a kind of fiddle played by the traditional people of this region in their festivities, celebrations, and, above all, after *mutirão* [one day of collective

work – originally related to tillage]. He showed us his studio, nets, and some of the native bees he gently handles. He was our first entrance to the world of the *caiçaras* in *Cananéia,* and *Ilha do Cardoso*.

Picture 3: Amir's workshop in *Cananéia*. Photo taken by Vinicius Cruz.

Two hours before lunchtime, Amir took us to the docks and arranged with local fishermen a trip to take us to *Marujá* in *Illha do Cardoso*. He lives on the continent but has a close bond with the villagers of the Island. He was glad he could find one of his close friends to take us through the waters of the *Ararapira* channel. His friend could guide our eyes towards the village of the Guarani of the *MByá* ethnicity, towards *Ilha do Tumba* [where villagers from *Marujá* can harvest their crops and extract forest resources], and towards the families of *botos* who live in those waters [*boto* is a type of freshwater porpoise].

We gladly fulfilled Amir's wishes and contemplated the three things he wanted us to see. The *botos* were relatively easy to find. They simply dance and jump across the mixed waters of the channel, and one eventually sees them throughout the journey. However, the snaky channel is surrounded by the Atlantic Forest, covering the mountains and hills on both sides. Only a local seaman could point us to the RESEX of *Ilha do Tumba* and to the village of the *MByá*. If it were not for the mountains, one could easily imagine entering the far areas of the Amazonian River. The preserved exuberant nature was lush and abundant. The boat could go much faster than we imagined, and the cold wind whipped every little naked part of our well-

covered bodies. We took roughly one hour and a half to arrive at the main pier of the *Marujá* community, located in the center of the village.

Picture 4: a *boto* jumping above the waters of the *Ararapira* channel. Photo taken by Vinicius Cruz.

There, we were welcomed by Ezequiel de Oliveira Júnior, one of the sons of the respected elder Ezequiel de Oliveira, who had been an important leader within the community. He met us at the main pier and gently led us to a shelter in the center of the community, a building made by the villagers where they welcome artists, researchers, and people engaged in collaborating with the community. We settled down and prepared ourselves for the long and vibrant journey ahead.

Ezequiel Júnior and his brother Ilton de Oliveira invited us for a walk through the village. They are members of the community council. Ilton was mainly engaged with community-based tourism activities, while Ezequiel Jr. was involved with fishing and harvesting activities. We had lunch together and began to walk while stories and accounts were shared.

All the buildings spread around the village are located on the continent's side. They are mingled within the thin line of Atlantic Forest that separates the shore facing the continent and

the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, they are protected from occasional rough winds and heavy seasonal undertow. Most aspects of social life, the assembly room, the school, docks, restaurants, houses, and the football field, are located within the area that faces the continent. People live closer to the calm waters of the *Ararapira* channel. This is also due to the traditional fishing in those waters. People in *Marujá* inherited the practices of *pesca de cerco* [encirclement fishing] from the *Guarani* of the *MByá* ethnicity.

Pesca de cerco has nothing to do with seine fishing. It is a practice of manufacturing a structure made of wood fixed near the shore of the channel, where the waters are calmer and less deep. The fishermen build a maze with wood sticks, a path capturing fish as soon as they enter it. This maze leads them to a larger area encircled by wood, creating a pool. After a period, the fishermen approach the encirclement on their canoes and throw their fabric nets to easily catch the fish that are good for eating or selling and give back to the waters that do not fit these purposes.

Ilton and Ezequiel Jr. took us to the area further north from the center of the village, where we could see the final fine adjustments of the wood preparation used for the encirclement. Every encirclement is either made by a family that works from the extraction of wood to the manufacturing of the structure or by partnerships made between fishermen of the village. Since they live on a territory that became a state, the villagers cannot extract one single piece of wood inside *Ilha do Cardoso* to make the encirclements. Thus, they must cross the channel and extract from the RESEX *Ilha do Tumba*, a public property designated for extraction, tillage, and many other land-use activities.

Pictures 5 and 6: on the left, wood is prepared for the encirclements, and on the right, two handmade canoes are sitting on the shore facing the continent, whereas, in the back, it is fixed an encirclement. Photos taken by Vinicius Cruz.

In *Marujá*, the fishermen have two major practices: *pesca de cerco* and net fishing. The first is made for the channel and the second for the open sea. In both cases, their tools are low-quanta energy-dependent, can be easily repaired, and can last for a certain period before they naturally decompose. The encirclements are mainly wood and sticks, and their nets are cotton. Fishing is mainly practiced by convivial tools. Both practices respect the natural cycles of reproduction, and the limits of the tools generate a balanced social-ecological relation.

However, both Ilton and Ezequiel Jr. alerted us to the dangers of industrial fishing that was becoming dominant in that region. In the last ten years, they have seen a substantial drop of *tainha* [mullet]. While convivial tools are in balance with the commons (sea life and water, for example), unlimited industrial tools deteriorate the commons. The example of *Marujá* is a cipher. There is no alternative for protecting the commons outside a clear analysis that recognizes limits to the power of tools.

Although the people in *Marujá* dwell on public property, a territory owned by the state of São Paulo (state park), one of their main activities today is still fishing. This activity depends completely on a relationship with the commons. *Pesca de cerco* and fabric nets engenders conviviality not only due to traditional uses but above all because it is a practice that sets a social limit to the power of tools to a point in which natural thresholds are not crossed. People could have been mesmerized by the power of tools as no one in the village is forbidden to buy nylon nets and fish with motorboats. So far, few families prefer to use nylon nets and powerboats, and they must respect the seasons and the silence. A sense of proportionality borne of their bodily experience with their milieu keeps most of these people grounded in their convivial tools.

One clear example of this embodiment of proportionality can be found in their process of collective decision regarding the arrival of electricity into the community. It was after the national public program "*Luz para Todos*" [*Light for All*], which was officially initiated in the first year of President Lula's administration (2003) that people in *Marujá* confronted the possibility of unlimited energy. This national program was built assuming every Brazilian territory should have electricity access. Until 2007, *Marujá* remained a territory without electricity. Several communities around *Marujá* had embraced the power grid, that is, unlimited energy. *Ilha do Mel*, *Superaguí,* and *Ariri* are places where unlimited electricity was taken for granted.

In *Marujá*, the council of representatives visited these places to assess the impact of unlimited energy. Since they are all in the vicinities of their territory, community members knew these territories before and after electricity. All of them were shocked by the depth of the

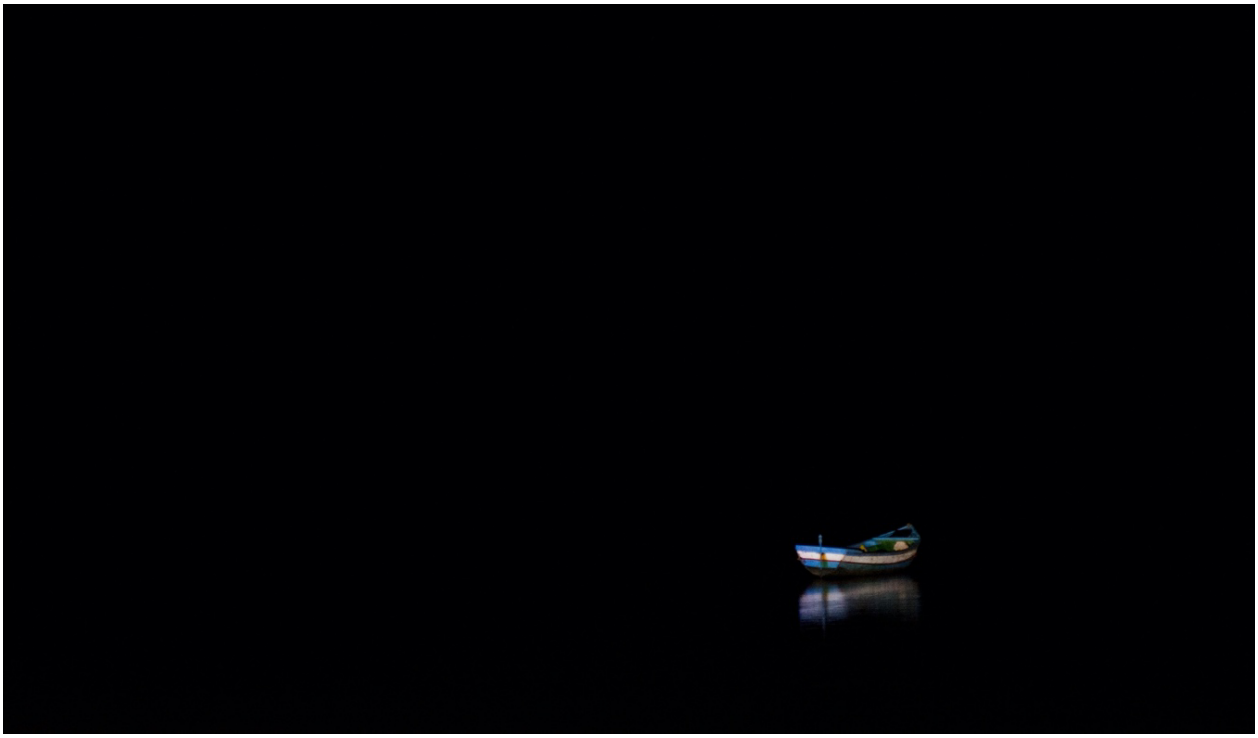
fragmentation generated by unlimited power. Inequalities started to seep into the community. Tourism almost instantaneously shifted from participatory and community-based visitations to predatory consumption of services and products. Having hot showers, hairdryers, cable TVs, and air conditioning became a source of competition among villagers to attract tourists. People began to forget the difference between full and new moon nights. Light post poles were on until dawn for no purpose than to blind the eyes of those used to navigate darkness skillfully.

Thus, the representatives convened a general assembly to discuss matters concerning electricity openly. They openly briefed the community with notes, observations, and conclusions they had formulated about unlimited energy, that is, a power grid. They concluded by suggesting that the best way to introduce the benefits of energy would be through a collective agreement to limit power. They finished their assessment and opened the assembly for questions, concerns, and suggestions. They rapidly reached a consensus that no one wished to light the community during the nights publicly, everyone was happy with their night bonfires and the soft brightness of stars and the moon.

The challenge was to find an agreement concerning domestic energy consumption. How to find a proper limit that fits the forms-of-living in *Marujá*? How to balance the benefits of this new tool that ultimately renders the possibilities of having light, refrigerators, internet connection, TVs, and computers – to name just a few – with the social arrangements that have nourished "*o bem viver*" among people, such as community-based tourism (control over the number of people entering the Island and their relation to locals and the territory), collective fishing, traditional celebrations, storytelling evenings, and several other activities that would be directly or indirectly affected by electricity?

Roughly after weeks of brainstorms and collective thinking efforts, debates, and adjustments to people's concerns and views, they sealed an oral agreement that defined the use of energy within the surroundings of the *Marujá* community. First: they chose solar cells as their source of energy. However, and most importantly, they also decided to limit their number of solar panels. They wanted enough panels to keep refrigerators running uninterruptedly (above all due to their fishing activities), for families to use energy in their houses for daily chores, to maintain restaurants, camping, visitors' house (where we were staying), the assembly room, the school and eventually a night football match. To keep energy usage within the limits of those panels and considering the designation of such usage based on what was collectively agreed upon, some tools were not allowed in the community, and some were limited. Microwaves, hair straighteners, heaters, and air conditioners were banned. Hot showers were allowed only during winter and could take no longer than seven minutes for each bath; watching

TV was limited to two hours a day per house, and every visitor had to adapt to the forms-of-living of the villagers; that is, tourism is welcomed as long is under the same limitations.



Picture 7: boat lies waiting on the calm waters of the *Ararapira* channel, backlighted by the full moon. Photo taken by Vinicius Cruz.

People in *Marujá* abide under a common social roof created by an agreement to limit the energy that ultimately engenders a set of limits to tools. They chose solar panels not because they are 'sustainable' but because they contain the proper measure for limiting tools. In other words, they could have chosen several panels to allow them to live with unlimited power. Only people who have felt abundance in their flesh understand the joy of renouncing power. I am convinced that the high political agreements, which base their goals for social-ecological balance on how much the Earth system can support human-generated impacts, threaten conviviality, commons, and vernacular. They cannot but exacerbate climate change. Natural thresholds are only globally crossed once social disintegration reaches the planetary scale, the crossing of the third watershed. Planet earth should not be the reference for our common roof, "we stand on soil, not on earth", as Illich once said. To rebuild social common roofs is one of the main political tasks for my generation. That is why I am in search of vernacular forms-of-living. They are today's most radical (in the sense of reaching for roots) social-ecological arrangements.

I believe that social-political arrangements such as *Marujá*'s flesh out Illich's idea of modern yet proportional ways of living. None of these people ever heard of Illich or

conviviality; nevertheless, their ways of living together illustrate the concept of conviviality. Once Illich's coinage of conviviality [1973] was accepted to the stance of analytical concept through his immersion into the ways of living scattered throughout several territories of Latin America, even after roughly decades of progress and development, we can still recognize conviviality embodied by people's way of living.

It was only after visiting *Marujá* that conviviality, for me, became grounded in the soil where it originally came from. That is why I insist on vernacular forms-of-living as an analytical tool brought from the encounter between my readings of Illich and the immersion into, for example, the *Marujá* community. They live under clear and well-defined limits to tools – conviviality – they are collectively committed to keep finding how to balance their condition of living on public property by using the RESEX and maintaining their fishing activities – commons – since to limit scarcity by balancing community-based tourism, economic exchange value, with vernacular activities.

In *Marujá,* people celebrate living under a set of limits that I call vernacular forms-of-living. They embodied what I call *regula vernaculum* – conviviality, commons, and vernacular – because they never took the certainties imposed by development and sustainability for granted. They have been committed, for decades, to keep sewing a tapestry of social-ecological arrangements that allow them to see, recognize and incarnate the true meaning of abundance. Limits are not impediments but rather the proper fit of what is good and proportional. In *Marujá*, one can feel the warmth of the fire and listen to the tales sparked by it. Electricity has not put out the source of mystery.

Picture 8: a typical night in *Marujá*; bonfire, music, and storytelling. In the back, the window of a house powered by electricity. In search of the proper fit! Photo taken by Vinicius Cruz.

4.4 Conclusions

I am convinced that the world is full of places where vernacular forms-of-living abide. For the scope of this work, I have fleshed out the ways of living of one community sustained by the *regula vernaculum*, perhaps the ideal type of vernacular forms-of-living. I hope that nourished by the stories of *Marujá*, many other places and communities can find ways to discover communally set limits proper to their social-ecological particularities. I consider the *regula vernaculum* as the rule that recognizes limits scaled by the body to foster a proportional balance between environment and society.

There is nothing idyllic about vernacular forms-of-living. They are not a call for returning to traditional living, nor do they romanticize the past. In *Marujá*, it became clear that people were aware of and excited about the benefits of electricity (the cipher of modernity). It was their sense of proportionality, grounded in the body, their decades of struggles to create a community that lives together under limits that are not only impediments but, above all boons, their innumerous discussions and debates for reaching consensus and their resistance against external and internal threats against their ways of living, all and more shaped their clarity in becoming a modern yet balanced community.

They have exchange value relations, but these are subordinated to vernacular activities. They live under a structured property regime because they live on public territory. Yet, they fought for the right to use the land within the RESEX of *Ilha do Tumbá* without the need for ownership since the commons balance their fishing activities. And they set a limit to the energy that created a common roof, under which everyone abides, where the power of tools is balanced by conviviality. These are precisely the fundamental limits that define vernacular forms-of-living.

One could rightly question the strength of my arguments by confronting the fact that in most places of the world, this balance was lost decades ago, above all in those territories where development has been the spearhead of well-being, in its conventional or sustainable form. The stories of *Marujá* might sound like Thomas More's Island of Utopia, but they are happening here and now. They remind us that we can still fathom a modern yet proportional society. The challenges and struggles, the pressures and mechanisms for recovering this balance are particular to the history of each territory. *Regula vernaculum* is not a model but a mode, not a rule to obey but an activity to live by. Most importantly, it is not an engineered solution that will fit a planetary scale. It is the measure of what is good and proportional, the rule that fosters an awareness of property limits, tools, and scarcity.

Abodes where vernacular forms-of-living are formed within the crucible of the commons, the convivial and the vernacular, are tinged by various colors and come in various shapes and sizes. They are forced to exist in the interstices of our industrialized world. Yet each resembles the others because they are all proportioned by the human form and scaled within the triple limits to property, tools, and scarcity. I hope to dedicate the next years of my research to celebrating vernacular-forms-of-living.

Conclusion

Against the emerging *pax oecologica*

On December 1st of, 1980, under the invitation of Professor Yoshikazu Sakamoto, Illich gave the opening address of the first meeting of the *Asian Peace Research Association* in Yokohama. He entitled the speech *The De-linking of Peace and Development*, which later appeared in *In the Mirror of the Past* as the book's first essay (1992). The heart of Illich's address is quite straightforward: "under cover of 'development,' a worldwide war has been waged against people's peace" (Illich, 1992, p. 16).

Peace is as vernacular as languages, as modes of abiding and being. It carries a range of historically and culturally shaped meanings and therefore finds little correspondence with one another. Ivan Illich demonstrated that peace was not a universal and abstract idea but a unique specific, and particular spirit enjoyed by each community. The Roman *Pax* announced the annexation of a conquered territory to law and order of Rome's imperial city. The Jewish *Shalom* refers to the grace flowing from heaven like oil dripping through the beard of Aaron, the forefather. The Athenian *philia* speaks of the friendship between free men of a city. The Japanese *foodo*, the Chinese *Huo'ping,* and the Indian *Shanti* have incomparable meanings, though all are today usually translated as 'peace.' Each people, each *ethnos* had its *ethos* of peace; each culture claimed its kind of peace; each community had its way of being left in peace. Illich named this *pax populi* [peoples' peace] that originates from every grassroots and defines the 'I', which is related to a specific 'we'. Historically, what now goes under the name 'peace' was neither related to economics nor war. The contrast between these varieties of people's peace and what he named *pax economica* could not be greater.

Pax economica refers to the aggressive spread of economic trade, which destroys cultures by folding them into the homogeneity of markets. In modern times, this 'peace through economics' has been prosecuted, first under the name of 'progress', 'development', and more recently, under the banner of 'globalization'. The imposition of a global market, a worldwide regime of property, and the monopoly of manipulative tools has come to mean peace, that is, *pax oeconomica*. *Pax oeconomica* is the planetary 'peace keeping' program that has served as a most efficient weapon of the war against the vernacular, the commons, and conviviality. Until now.

Today, 'sustainable development' and 'sustainability' are transmogrifying *pax oeconomica* into *pax oecologica*. Both protect production, the first protects the 'dirty' industries whereas the second protects the 'clean' industries, the first aims at peace within society even at

the cost of nature, while the second promises peace among humans and between humans and nature.

Green New Deal is the best name to define the emergence of *pax oecologica* and its high agreements. The first New Deal was meant to save the capitalist economy, the second one, becoming more like a hoax, was also meant to save nature by economizing it. That is, to continue with the unlimited production of cars – as long as they are electric – with unlimited energy (not enough power instead of too much power) – as long as they are renewable – with unlimited ownership – as long as they are sustainable and protective of the environment – with unlimited meat – as long as the quanta of its production remain under what the planet can support, that is, the safe operating space for humanity.

Pax oecologica is the new cover of the war against the vernacular. I borrow the words of Illich to say it with more precision, it is the planetary mission that spreads the "technological imperative transformed into normative responsibility" (Cayley, 1992, p. 287). Driving an electric car will soon become an act of universal responsibility. *Pax oecologica* is the main threat against vernacular forms-of-living. It is grounded on the assumption that sustainable capitalism is the locomotive speeding us towards social-natural peace. Therefore, it runs over limits to scarcity, tools, and property because it takes them as archaic notions that deter the progress of humanity. Vernacular forms-of-living, like in Walter Benjamin's analysis of revolutions, are the emergency break of this locomotive. They cultivate their unique and colorful meanings of peace that keeps the playful balance between society and nature. Contrary to these modes of violence, *pax populi* protects vernacular forms-of-living.

As Illich once called for de-linking peace and development, I call today for the complete disassociation of peace and sustainability. The abundance of species – seeds, insects, trees, plants, mammals, stones and minerals, gases, waters, and peoples – spread across the various territories will never be 'left in peace' under the crusade of sustainable development or *pax oecologica*. There is no hope, rather total collapse with the invention of a new kind of *homo oeconomicus*, that is, its transmogrification into the *homo oecologicus*. Both are embedded in scarcity, and universal men are made "to live on the consumption of commodities produced elsewhere by others" (Illich, 1992, p. 23). Both proclaim the insane mechanism of universal ownership. Both play with planet earth as if it was a ball that they could juggle around.

The *regula vernaculum* names the forms-of-living that emerge when people set limits to scarcity (vernacular), property (commons), and tools (conviviality) – each scaled by the human form. The manner of living keeps the spirit of people's peace alive. It constitutes the most radical challenge to *pax oecologica* because it reflects the multifarious arrangements of

modern yet proportional societies, each of which protects people's peace. *Regula vernaculum* is the sword against *pax oecologica.*

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