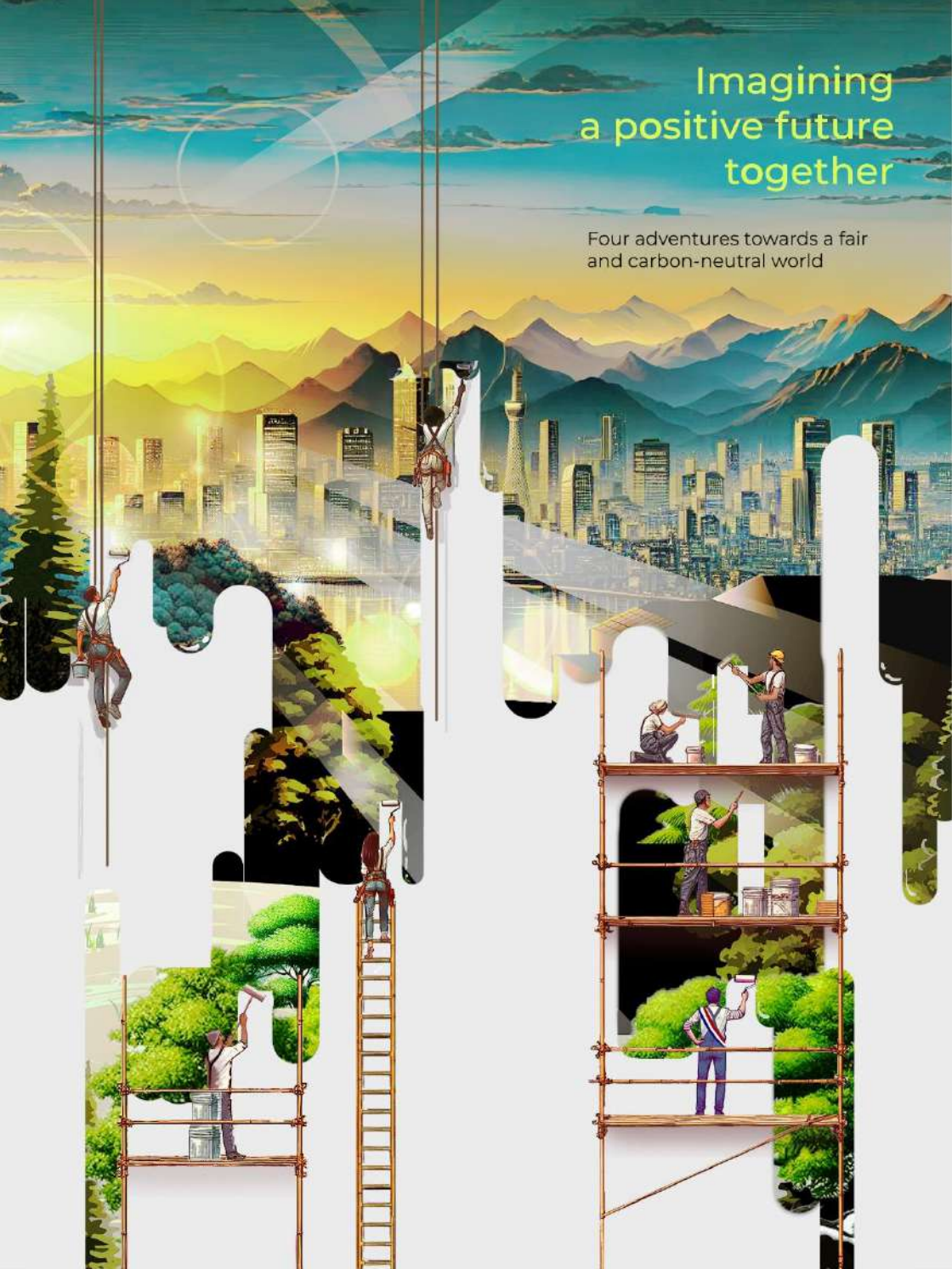


# Imagining a positive future together

Four adventures towards a fair  
and carbon-neutral world





"The imaginary can be the reality of tomorrow."

*Anne Philippe, Spirale, 1971.*

"Let's work on a positive imaginary,  
it is the imaginary that governs the real. »

*Jean Viard, 2020.*

"Everything that is possible was at first impossible."

Alice Carabédian, Radical Utopia, 2022





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# Foreword

Gilles Rougon, Stéphane Dupré la Tour.

This book is likely to astonish you. And we hope it will entertain you and make you think. The authors, committed professionals but novices to literary writing, offer you four short stories, four tales that are very different from one another, but all of them illustrate the same dynamic.

## ***A common set in motion***

What do a gardener in the splendid Villa Medici in Rome, two children playing in a dilapidated square in a small provincial town, the son and heir of a medium-sized food company and a journalist covering the opening of a car factory in Vietnam have in common?

All these characters, and those they come into contact with, are **at the heart of quests, large or small, triggered by climatic hardships, or by economic or political crises** – in the

Aristotelian sense of the life and conduct of the city. The Anthropocene<sup>1</sup> requires our generations to face these challenges simultaneously and intensely.

The four stories are all set in the year **2050**, in the West, into a future born of a climate gone haywire, with rising temperatures and all the consequences of climate change, accentuating inequalities on the planet, with access to water, materials and land having to be profoundly revised. To solve these problems, our characters embark on **an inner journey**, for some a radical conversion. Because the transition will not only be material and technical, it will also be in people's minds and hearts.

The four stories therefore focus on describing life trajectories, with endearing characters – or so the authors hope! - who are intended to be emblematic of the transitions necessary for the resilience of our societies. That's why these stories don't just send you a nice postcard of a utopian 2050<sup>2</sup>. They describe the journey to that point.

Because that's another thing our stories have in common: they're positive. "Design fiction" approaches have multiplied in recent years<sup>3</sup> and are usually dystopian. The intention, it seems, is to elicit from the reader a reaction and the urge to counter the apocalyptic threats described. But the announcement of such a hopeless future can also be paralyzing. Faced with a growing level of anxiety in our societies, the participants in the "Positive Imaginaries 2050" project wanted to work on new narratives of transition for our societies, striving to set everyone

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<sup>1</sup> The name given in 2002 by chemist and meteorologist Paul Crutzen to our time when humans have become the main transformative force on earth, surpassing geophysical forces.

<sup>2</sup> In reference to the book [Utopia](#) by the English humanist Thomas Moore, written in Latin in 1516.

<sup>3</sup> To name but a few, see the publications of the [Red Team Defense](#) or more recently [Black Trends: A World in Rupture](#), Editions des équateurs, 2023.

in motion through desire rather than just constraints, which are so many today.

That's why our four tales lead to positive outcomes for the characters, society and the world, at the cost of effort and sacrifice. There is no candor nor naivety here, but rather a desire to describe not only what we will have to give up for these transitions to be made - what everyone sees more naturally when they project themselves into the future - but also and above all **to imagine what these transitions can and must bring us in addition on other levels**: that of human relations, of the relationship with Nature, of meaning at work and in one's daily life. And this in a credible and pragmatic way. Because this "plus" won't happen by magic. Our characters will seek it out and build it.

### ***A range of possible stories***

So much for the common points. However with the same specifications these four stories were built by four different teams with many variations in the imaginaries and pulls that underpin them.

For example their perimeters range from that of a neighborhood, a public institution with a cultural mission, a company to that of an entire country within Europe.

Focusing on society and the planet these adventures address both urban and rural life. They seek to question our ecosystems of life (habitat, food, health, work, mobility, communication, etc.), our ability to decarbonize our uses, our definitions of comfort and happiness, our ability to live together (humans, fauna, flora and planet), our use of resources (water, energy, materials, land)...



The negative attitudes and feelings that have had to be combated are equally diverse: individualism, conservatism, fear of change, fear of the others, populism, etc.

The values deemed "positive" developed at the heart of each of the four stories are also varied: freedom, sharing, fidelity to an heritage and adaptation, transformative power of diversity, etc.

### ***A pioneering method***

The four stories shared here are the result of a collaborative approach initiated in September 2022 by Discovery, [EDF's R&D innovation facilitation team](#), with specialists from various backgrounds who are particularly committed to thinking about the future and who come from public and private organizations such as [CEREMA](#), [CEA](#), [ADEME](#), SATT [Toulouse Tech Transfer](#), from [the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Strasbourg](#) and a facilitator of the [2tonnes workshops](#).

Without formal contractualization so usual between organizations, companies and associations, the aim was to experiment with new modes of cooperation such as **the collaborative writing** of new narratives of societal transition to bring about the emergence of carbon-neutral societies by 2050, putting mankind back in its place on its only current vessel, planet Earth. Some recent competitions have focused on other art forms, such as comics or short films. The literary form of the tale seemed to us to be the most accessible for collaborative work in a limited time. Our tales are illustrated, as we see images as an additional medium for the imagination.

You may be surprised not to find directly addressed in one of the stories a subject that is largely in the news: artificial intelligence. Beyond the novelty effect and the promises of time savings and business-transforming potential, this

technology challenges us all, and is perceived as a threat by many professions, such as illustrators. Nevertheless, we have chosen to use it for the visuals of this publication. Not to test it and "be trendy" but by considering it as one more tool in the hand of man to be handled with awareness and high standards. All the illustrations and their compositions have been thought out by designers, prompts created by humans before an iterative creative process and the use of professional photo and design software lead to the final visuals<sup>4</sup>.

The methodological challenges have been and remain numerous for such an exercise. The definition of a "positive" transition is a very personal vision and is linked to each person's own definition of happiness. How can we converge and find common ground together? How can we overcome the difficulties of writing with multiple hands, especially for non-literary profiles? How can technological developments be scripted, while describing the human mechanisms essential in their appropriation and implementation?

We have tried to answer some **nagging questions** which we hear from the mouths of many witnesses of our time: How can we encourage the emergence of new engaging narratives to overcome the ease of inaction, passivity or the expectation that others will act for us? How can the creation of narratives help us to accelerate transitions to better inhabit the world, in this century of challenges?

Our goal was therefore to produce positive and inspiring imaginaries both individually and collectively. For us too it was a **personal quest** to get away from technocratic planning and to experience the effort involved in order to work together in our diversity.

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<sup>4</sup> Creation and composition of illustrations made in Adobe® Photoshop and Illustrator with integration of images generated with Bing AI Image Creator.

## ***Exploit & Bounce Back***

These four accounts are by no means exhaustive and there is no doubt that there is room for improvement. We would like them to inspire you to take up the pen and imagine and share the adventures that you would like to embark on out of envy in the face of the many challenges that await us.

It is to ensure its wider dissemination and exploitation that the authors have decided to share this publication under a Creative Commons license<sup>5</sup>.

We have made a bold assumption: that the narratives of transitions elaborated and presented here could constitute a beginning. In companies, non-profit organizations and communities, they could contribute to producing faster changes in the face of the climatic, human and economic challenges of our time:

- by putting the desire to move ahead of the constraints experienced and by striving to identify the positive aspect of the changes,
- by encouraging the emergence of new collaborations between stakeholders whose differences would be such that they would not have thought of really working together before,
- and ideally by generating more coordinated innovation portfolios between organizations sharing these common imaginations and desires.

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<sup>5</sup> See details on the link on page 4.

After all isn't it about building commons... coming?

We share the thought of the American writer William Arthur Ward<sup>6</sup>: *"Optimists enrich the present, improve the future, challenge the improbable and achieve the impossible."*

Whether you are optimistic or not, do not hesitate to share your thoughts and proposals with us at [reted-discovery@edf.fr](mailto:reted-discovery@edf.fr).

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<sup>6</sup> 1921-1994





# Place of the Liberty.

Frédéric Descombes,  
Stéphane Dupré la Tour,  
Valérie Martin.

## Prologue

Today, I am serene.

Probably for the first time since I stopped being a child.

Probably for the first time since I became aware of the state of the world around me. Yes, I am serene.

Mom died yesterday. Peacefully. Happy to see us all together one last time, her grandson Liêm and his wife Nandini, her dear Leonardo, and me. She would have turned 80 in a week. I am so proud of what she has accomplished. The goal of her fight, the fight of her whole life, has been achieved. The same fight that was mine. And that is Liêm's now. And which nobody really believed in 30 years ago.

The figures from the World Environmental Control Authority came out 3 days ago. When I showed her the front page of my newspaper "La Virgule", Mom didn't say anything. But she smiled at me.

Just 3 years late - only 3 years! - France has succeeded in becoming the first fully carbon-free society. Mom had always known it was possible. And now the proof is in the pudding. All the other countries are going to have to follow suit. It's going to take another fifteen years or so. Because you don't transform an entire planet like a small country like France.

The newly formed Enlarged Federation of the European Communities will commit itself to this without delay, thanks to Liêm, who was elected to its head three months ago. He takes up the torch of our struggle and his task is as immense as it is beautiful. Bring Europe to decarbonisation as quickly as possible, as France has just achieved. And also to bring Europe to the complete regeneration of life!



Today, I'm really serene. Our actions have made it possible to support the in-depth transformation of our country to achieve carbon neutrality, to preserve our freedoms and to improve cohabitation with the living. We have been able to transform our country without sinking into barbarism. If this was fortunately avoided I want to do justice to the friends who fell by our side. To Charles, who inspired me so much. To Mom, who has just joined him.

It's September 12, 2053. My name is Emma, I'm 50 years old. My mother Françoise has just died, she was the symbol of the struggle of her entire generation. My son Liêm is at the head of the most powerful and open Federation of States on the planet. A new and promising era of humanity is opening up before us after 30 years of crises.

As fate would have it our family has been at the heart of all the transformations that have taken place over the past 30 years.

This is our story.

## **Chapter 1 – Françoise's journey**

### ***The 1970s generation***

My mother Françoise was born at the time of the 1973 oil crisis. By a kind of irony of history, after her studies at the Ecole Supérieure des Ressources Minérales et Environnementales, she joined France Pétrole. Perhaps because she had been unconsciously marked by this crisis in her childhood. She was a diligent and well-liked engineer.

Then I arrived. She gave birth to me in 2003. She often told me that the day after I was born, while she was resting, the news ran a headline about COP 9 of the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gases reduction, which was being held in Milan. The Protocol was validated two years later. It was a hope that was quickly dashed as no country had really respected it. Still she saw it as a sign of sorts. As she gazed at me in my crib this story about international climate protocol had been running through her head. She had thought of my future and of the world that her generation would leave to the next.

On her return from maternity leave Françoise decided to reorient her career towards environmental reporting. She became a worldwide expert in the field. By dint of tenacity and patience she was eventually appointed Director of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at France Pétrole.

At the same time I had just signed my first permanent contract! We had decided to celebrate this good news together. We had dinner on the second floor of the Eiffel Tower. It was September 13, 2033, yet I remember it like it was yesterday. It was like a moment out of time for both of us. We talked at length and shared our feelings.

My mother was happy with her appointment of course but she also despaired that the indicators produced by her team

masked the slowness with which France Pétrole ensured its "transition" as it was called at the time. She was worried about contributing to outright greenwashing.

For my part I had just been recruited as a full-time journalist in a large press group called Panache Médias. For me it was the end of the years of struggle as a freelancer and youtuber with no real audience and no regular source of income. I had launched my YouTube channel during my journalism studies, in 2023. I was trying to illustrate the concrete effects of climate change on people and to give a voice to those who were launching local initiatives. At the time this didn't interest many people, as the news was all about inflation, unemployment, economic warfare between great powers and the many political affairs, which the media loved. I was happy to be able to secure my income and no longer depend on my mother. But I was sad too because I knew I would definitely have to give up my ideals.

That evening in spite of the magnificent scenery of the city of Paris spread out beneath our feet, shining as brightly as if unconcerned about the future we were saddened. Tired of seeing that the system remained so fundamentally immobile and unchanged. We wanted to contribute, even in a small way to getting it moving. But we were a thousand miles away to imagine the whirlwind we were about to be swept up in!

The next day my mother took the Hyperloop to Barcelona for a conference on extra-financial reporting. For my part I was on an international flight to Vietnam for a report on the factories of an electric vehicle manufacturer that was all the rage in Europe. I felt sorry for my personal carbon footprint even though my press group had agreed to pay the climate surcharge because the plane only had half a bunker of biofuels.

Françoise didn't have a good memory of her Congress in Barcelona. In addition to the unbearable scorching weather it was always the same empty speeches and promises that

would never be kept. On the last day she had visited Gaudi's Sagrada Familia as part of an organized group, which still hadn't been completed, and she had been bored to death. It was on this occasion that she met a young Spanish researcher, full of passion and humour, Leonardo de Jouzelos, who was working on an original climate model combining climate, plate tectonics and biodiversity. She was immediately captivated by his intelligence and finesse of mind. They had then separated from the group to go to Park Güell and they told me they had had done nothing but talk about this famous model for hours... This model tended to show the urgent need to accelerate decarbonization in order to achieve carbon neutrality not in 2050 but in 2040. Otherwise, we would enter a zone of instability for the planet and accelerated degradation of biodiversity. But he couldn't make himself heard, worse he was mocked by the media in a noxious "Don't look up" atmosphere!

For my part I had not been in Vietnam for two days that a huge typhoon had devastated Southeast Asia and the Indian peninsula. The Super Typhoon of 2033 nicknamed Donny caused massive destruction and millions of victims. For two weeks I waited holed up in my hotel.

My mother had managed to reach me on Twit-Twot, Leon Mask's satellite-based social network. She was very scared for me. Shocked like all public opinions by what was happening, she had made the connection with what Leonardo had just told her. That's when she decided to help him make himself heard by carrying his message herself. It was courageous, especially when you are a director of France Pétrole. At the first lull in the traffic I rushed out to catch our limousine and head to the airport. That's when I met Liêm's eyes.

He was standing alone in the middle of the road. In rags, completely soaked, distraught, in a heavy warm rain that was knocking him out. Liêm was a ten-year-old schoolboy who had just entered sixth grade. He had been orphaned after the Super Typhoon wiped out his entire family. When our eyes met,

he looked at me intensely. And in his eyes, there was all the incomprehension and anguish of the children of the world. I was paralyzed. I couldn't run away like that even though as a Westerner I had my share of responsibility for climate change, of which this terrible typhoon was one of the obvious manifestations. So I decided to stay in Vietnam. Every day I went to see Liêm. I felt very close to this orphan and after several months of administrative struggles, in a country in total disarray, I was able to adopt him. Thus, I returned to France with him.

We moved in with my mother. Françoise's position at France Pétrole was becoming more and more delicate. It was inevitable that this would lead her to the breakup. The pretext was his intervention during a high-audience talk show on CFM, Panache Médias' national news channel. At the time, she represented France Pétrole at FAGGC the French Association of Green Growth Companies, the French branch of the GGG, the Green Growth Group. This association was chaired by the formidable Virginie de Lignite. With an inordinate ambition and a strong character, she continued to defend a green growth model that preserved large corporations and the financial world. She was beginning to forge an image as a possible candidate for future presidential elections. And she had her supporters.

Still upset by what Liêm and I had experienced in Vietnam and carried away by the work of Leonardo de Jouzelos, my mother clashed with Madame de Lignite during this talk show. Her emotion, her sincerity when she spoke about her own journey and the strength of her scientific arguments hit the nail on the head. Madame de Lignite was ridiculed and furious. What we considered a victory had cost my mother her job at France Pétrole. That didn't stop her. She began working in think tanks and advising policy. Her speech on this TV show gave her a certain legitimacy in the eyes of those involved in the fight against climate change. She became one of the muses of the

climate fight. And I was not a little proud to have convinced Panache Médias to dedicate to her the front page of our flagship weekly, "La Virgule".

Super Typhoon "Donny" marked the beginning of the massive displacement of climate refugees. It profoundly destabilized all European and the southern Mediterranean countries.

In France, social movements were very brutal, especially in the summer of 2034. The heat wave was unbearable. Bodies and minds were overheated. This led to the resignation of the President of the Republic who was re-elected in 2032 for his 4th term. A new election was somehow organized. And a political team of extremes prevailed, establishing a new regime a year later: the Sixth Republic. An ultra-authoritarian regime whose objective was to restore order and establish a society of rationing fossils and all products containing them. That is, pretty much everything.

In an indescribable political disorder and a revolutionary atmosphere the likes of which we've seen in French history, Françoise had been appointed president of a National Committee of Ecological Salvation, with the idea of planning and organizing a brutal and drastic reduction in the consumption of fossils in France. My mother had hesitated a lot before accepting because she did not share at all the ideas of the new government, combining several political extremes. She had opened up to me about it and I had begged her to go anyway because I thought she was the right person in the best position to ensure that the actions taken were effective for the climate. Moreover, it was either her or Virginie de Lignite who had opportunistically turned her jacket and seemed to be in the new president's good books. Françoise had finally done so with a heavy heart, out of a sense of duty, even if it meant risking the disavowal of a good part of those who had supported her until then.

Madame de Lignite was furious that she had not been chosen.  
She had not said her last word, as we shall see later...

## **Chapter 2 – My Commitment**

### ***The 2000s Generation***

At the beginning of this dark period for the country, I was propelled to editor-in-chief of "La Virgule". There was no jostling at the gate for an exposed position. It was a very complicated time. The measures taken in the name of the climate emergency, after the opinion of the National Committee of Ecological Salvation on their effectiveness, had led to the brutal loss of many freedoms. Citizens' habits were profoundly shaken up and this generated a lot of frustration. Entire industries had been forced to close, driving unemployment to unprecedented levels. There were many privations.

Everything was managed by a system of personalized digital ration tickets, called DABEM, "Droits d'Accès au Bien-être Matériel" (Rights of Access to Material Welfare), set up by the Government. You couldn't pay for anything without having the corresponding DABEMs, which each one had according to its theoretical needs, and which you could exchange in an application developed by an American tech company FreeOpenMind. The latter had won a call for tenders and installed data servers in France at the request of the Government. Technically, it worked. As a result of imposed and endured sobriety, greenhouse gas emissions had begun to fall.

You could even earn DABEMs if you offered additional services to the community for free. All activity then began to become commercial, if not in money, then in DABEM. Transactions between individuals were made very easy with the FreeOpenMind app. The new social norm was to pay in DABEM for services rendered, between neighbours, friends and even within families. FreeOpenMind, through the configuration of its application, was beginning to supplant the National



Committee for Ecological Salvation and this did not please Françoise.

When Virginie de Lignite was appointed president of the French subsidiary of FreeOpenMind, my mother and I were shocked. Soon after FreeOpenMind experienced a dazzling growth. In addition to managing the DABEMs, it provided everyone, young or old, with ultra-personalized content free of charge: news, courses, documentaries, movies and video games whose script and images were generated entirely by an Artificial Intelligence according to our tastes, without actors or real sets. FreeOpenMind also provided personal advice and organized our whole life: our purchases, our rentals, our travels, our appointments, our friendships...

In fact, little by little, the gift of self was disappearing. Human relationships were withering. Political life was dying. At the newspaper, we couldn't understand the reasons for this general anesthesia. Our magazine "La Virgule", which had been a reference for so many years, had an audience in free fall, even in its digital version. I began to doubt my ability to run it.

My mother had suggested that I go and investigate the famous FreeOpenMind company and the relationship between Virginie de Lignite and the Government, which seemed strangely reconciled with the influence that FreeOpenMind has taken on our lives.

I had managed to get a meeting with the big boss of FreeOpenMind, Leon Mask, in his high-tech neo-Le Corbusier villa, in the middle of the Texas desert. Leon Mask presented himself as the champion of personal fulfillment and social justice. I immediately disliked him, even finding him rude and Machiavellian. He even tried to poach me! How could France have fallen into the clutches of such a guy?

Back in Paris, I spoke of this meeting to Leonardo de Jouzelos, who was with my mother. Leonardo had joined the European

think tank "Ethical Science" in Barcelona, as director. This think tank had acquired a certain notoriety in academic circles. He had invited me to meet his new president, a well-known English philosopher, Lord Charles Monteskwew.

We met at Oxford College where he taught. What a contrast to Mask's Texan villa! Lord Monteskwew was having tea with one of his nieces, Nandini Khan his sister's eldest daughter, who was married to an Indian. Admidst the old books, wooden shelves and Gothic windows, Charles explained to me his analysis of Léon Mask's insidious hold on consciences. According to Charles, FreeOpenMind's leisure company was just another "opium of the people" that stuns and enslaves. Charles was the founder of a movement for "New Citizen Empowerment" which involved education from the family to higher education, without forgetting the major role of the school. He wanted a popular reaction that would lead in France to the advent of a new republic giving power back to the citizens. I was struck by his foresight and suggested that he act together to denounce the addictive effects of FreeOpenMind, he in the educational environment and me in the media.

Following this, I published a first article about my encounters with Leon Mask and Charles Monteskwew. This led to hackers from Anonymice contacting me. They had infiltrated the FreeOpenMind application and they revealed the truth to me. Virginie de Lignite had obtained from Leon Mask to be able to bias the algorithms of the FreeOpenMind application in France to offer free passes to the ruling caste. As a result, she had access to more DABEMs and was able to afford material goods that were inaccessible to ordinary mortals. Thanks to Anonymice, I had a list of all the beneficiaries. Charles advised me not to publish it just yet, as the immediate risks for me were too great. It was necessary to wait for more favourable circumstances when public opinion would be ready to change the system. He would give me the signal.

On September 13, 2040, Françoise, as part of the National Committee for Ecological Salvation, Lorenzo, at the head of a scientific delegation and I for the media coverage all met at Mont Saint Michel to accompany a UNESCO inspection mission. The aim was to evaluate the actions of France to fight against the exponential invasion of green algae in the bay that surrounded the Mount, to the point of having to prohibit the access of tourists because of the toxic gas emanations.

In the Salle des Chevaliers where the control room for the air quality measurement network had been set up, Lorenzo and I had a very heated discussion with Françoise.

I reproached my mother for the fact that the Sixth Republic had been focused exclusively on reducing CO2 emissions. It did nothing for other ecological issues such as water, biodiversity or soil management. The lamentable state of Mont Saint Michel was a scandalous demonstration of this.

Françoise retorted that I had pushed her to accept the presidency of the National Committee for Ecological Salvation. And that just in a few years, she had succeeded in drastically reducing carbon emissions, which was an absolute challenge. Three-quarters of emissions had been eliminated and almost all fossil fuel consumption.

Lorenzo reminded us that despite this, the inertia of the climate machine that we had completely gone haywire meant that we were at +2.5°C this year. Meteorological disasters were multiplying with ever greater violence. The decline in biodiversity had accelerated. Canada's last free-roaming beaver had just died. There was an increasing struggle for access to water resources and food.

I tried to explain to Françoise that technological solutions alone - prohibitions and obligations and a computer application like FreeOpenMind - could not be enough. The last 25% of greenhouse gas emissions held up. There was no further

decline. Rationing decisions, coupled with the rapid and massive arrivals of climate migrants, had created enormous tensions in French society. I was also outraged that freedoms had been trampled on to such an extent. Ecology cannot be achieved by forgetting the fundamental principles of human societies. I dreamed that we would be able to cooperate strongly, to change our relationship with nature, to put human relations back at the center, to recreate spaces for discussion and the conditions for adhering to the new collective rules and to work on the regeneration of living things. For me, it was the only way to keep moving forward. I dreamed that the ecological transition would also be a cultural transition, also based on joy and the constitution of a new win-win social contract, and frankly at that time it wasn't going down the road at all!

My mother had been troubled by my arguments. What was to be done? Lorenzo advised me to ask Montesquieu to devise the principles of a new democratic organization. It was at this time that Charles finished writing his now famous treaty "The Spirit of the Law." When Charles' treaty was published in all the languages of the world its success was immediate.

Inspired by this book, a democratic and participatory process of reflection led to the emergence of new rules. Local associations promoting the strengthening of the bonds of solidarity between people were formed according to these rules. These associations had given courage to many citizens who stood up in opposition to the government's totalitarian rationing and the virtual links of FreeOpenMind. Clusters of resistance and resilience were created. The media including Panache, created a buzz about this trend. Revolt was brewing. All that was missing was a spark for a revolution to be ignited.

It was in education that it began. Teachers were exasperated by the heresy of the reforms that had slowly degraded the spirit of the fundamentals of education. The apotheosis of stupidity had been reached when, on September 1, 2039, the

new minister decided to introduce compulsory distance learning to avoid the travel of students and teachers. The teachers went on strike and took to the streets with the students and their parents. Processions of several million people swept through all the cities of France.

It was then that Charles Montesquieu called me and gave me the signal: "Emma, it's time to publish!" With one click, I published on the website of "La Virgule" the list that the Anonymice had provided me. Full light was shed on the ones who had benefited from voluminous privileges in the DABEM system. After all these years of deprivation in the name of the climate, the sense of social injustice was at its peak. People were outraged. Revolt broke out across the country.

On September 13, 2039, schools' teachers invaded the Ministry of National Education and deposed the minister. The uprising was of such magnitude that the government, largely tarnished by the DABEM affair, resigned massively. New elections brought the French branch of the New Citizen Empowerment movement to power, with a mandate to redistribute it more efficiently.

An emergency law changed the conditions for consent to the retrieval of personal data. FreeOpenMind was forced to bankrupt its French subsidiary. Leon Mask was enraged. He died of a Crystal Meth overdose a few days later in his futuristic home in the Texas desert. Virginie de Lignite was kicked out of FreeOpenMind. She had lost everything and vowed revenge.

The Committee of Ecological Salvation and the system of rationing by the DABEM were dissolved by Françoise herself, which was a very welcome sign. She explained that the time had come to change the philosophy of action to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality beyond the drastic reduction of fossil fuels, which she had just carried out.

As for me, I took over the management of the Panache Médias group. I had my hands free to act. I organized a large citizens' forum in which Leonardo recalled the scientific facts on Climate and Biodiversity and Charles expounded the principles of his treatise "The Spirit of the Law".

They inspired the new Parliament which set about drafting a new constitution for a true eco-democracy. Republic 7.0 was founded in 2043 by People's Referendum. The constitution and the law no longer remained static but constantly evolving, like a piece of software. Republic 7.1 was released a year later to fix the inevitable bugs in any new version of an organization.

As a result of my action, in support of Lord Monteskwew's influence, the foundations were laid for a new society designed for sustainability and primacy in conflict resolution and a new relationship with the living world.

France was shining again! And thanks to an Englishman.

## **Chapter 3 – The Rise of Liêm**

### ***The 2020s Generation***

Liêm's life had been marked by the impossibility of travelling or expressing himself, by rationing and deprivation, but this had not prevented him from discovering the beauties of the world, his fragility also thanks to books, tales but also to his grandmother Françoise's collection of documentaries. He had acquired an unusual maturity forged by the hardships he had gone through in Vietnam and France.

When Liêm was a teenager, he begged my mother to tell him for the umpteenth time about his battle against Virginie de Lignite. Leonardo de Jouzelos and Lord Charles Monteskew had moved to Paris and became close friends. Liêm questioned them incessantly. Thus, both the secrets of mathematical modelling and the subtle balances of power no longer held any secrets for Liêm. He lived up to his first name, which means "integrity" in Vietnamese.

In 2043, when he entered ScienCité, the successor to Sciences Po before the Great Reform of Higher Education in 2041, Liêm was at the age of 20, one of the youngest and brightest students. When he graduated, he turned to Françoise and me. His mischievous eyes pierced me like the day I had met him for the first time in the rain of Vietnam. He whispered mysteriously "Now it's my turn!"

Liêm was fascinated by the implementation of French-style eco-democracy by the Republic 7.1. By the Constitution the organization of France had abandoned its historical centralized model and had become federal, with power fundamentally restored to local communities. Citizens were required to vote very frequently on both local and national issues. The Government had to listen to the expectations and reflections of citizens who took part in political discussions

organized in person and at the same time on the digital platform called "the New Agora".

This platform was amazing! Lorenzo had been entrusted with its development and had brought together researchers from different disciplines. This platform identified false information, cognitive biases, logical fallacies, bad faith, and oratorical manipulations through open-source algorithms supported by AI. In this way, it succeeded in guaranteeing respect for everyone in the debates and made it possible to overcome disagreements and conflicts for a more rapid convergence towards solutions of common interest. The government had thus become like the citizens' partner, where sincere listening replaced pretense or violence. Citizens could decide on local actions according to certain rules that could then be replicated throughout the country.

France had made great strides in decarbonization, first through coercion with the National Committee for Ecological Salvation, then through cooperation with the new eco-democracy. This new democratic system made it possible to make progress on behavioural issues that had resisted the coercive measures defined by the central level, such as eating habits, leisure travel, chosen sobriety, reforestation and halting the land artificialisation... Step by step, in a little more than 5 years, the carbon footprint of France was tending towards zero. The 25% of net emissions that authoritarian planning and technocracy had not been able to defeat were disappearing.

Liêm listened with fascination to Lord Montesquieu who had the idea of applying the principles of Republic 7.1 at the level of the European Union. And tomorrow, why not, to the whole world, by modernizing the UN, completely paralyzed by two decades of a new "cold war" between the USA, China and Russia. And he wanted to make it emerge from the field, through decentralised cooperation between local levels.



By 2050, Lord Monteskew had converted his Movement into the Party for a Federation of the United Communities of Europe, still inspired by his treaty "The Spirit of the Law". Liêm immediately joined him. He had effectively assisted him thanks to his mastery of social networks. He succeeded in mobilising millions of people in all the countries of Europe. Charles de Monteskew had announced that he would run in the European elections the following year with Liêm as spokesman and third on the list. Françoise was getting tired but offered to take over the animation of the community and NGO relations committee.

Polls pointed to Lord Charles Monteskew as the clear favourite to be elected President of Europe. Liêm exulted. On September 12, 2052, the day before a great founding speech that Charles was to deliver in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate, Charles, Françoise, Leonardo and I shared their joy at being favourites. Our hearts were swollen with this new hope. Alas, it was very short-lived.

The next day, Charles made his way through the huge crowd gathered around the rostrum. He approached an old woman, curled up, who held out her gaunt hand to him. The moment he grabbed her, she sprayed a liquid in his face with her perfume diffuser that she was hiding in her other hand. It was a violent and deadly poison. Charles collapsed. The security service seized the woman. It was Virginie de Lignite, her face distorted by a sneer of hatred and madness.

We were devastated. With the passing of Charles, we lost a friend and a teacher.

His body was repatriated to France. The emotion was palpable in the huge crowd of those who had accompanied his coffin to the Invalides. For this elegant English aristocrat was the father of our new Republic! This paradox suited him so well, a man who professed and applied self-deprecation.

Following the disappearance of Lord Monteskwew, Françoise no longer had the energy to resume her fight. It was Liêm who took over the leadership of Charle's party and replaced him in the European elections.

He had to face Pol Cokenstok, president of a region in Eastern Europe. In the name of localism, ethnic identities and absolute freedoms, he defended a program for a drastic reduction in the power of states and Europe. By multiplying virtual meetings and in less than 2 weeks, he had become the new favorite in the continuous polls. It is true that he was a veritable tribune, whose simplistic slogans resonated with European populations who had suffered greatly from the privations and disorders of the last twenty years.

The election seemed lost for Liêm and the German police investigation into Charles' assassination was not advancing, despite the means deployed. The origin of the sophisticated poison and the false papers that had allowed its murderess to pass all the checks immediately made one think of the mafias that had flourished throughout Europe in recent years. But Virginie de Lignite's interrogations yielded nothing, as she had definitively fallen into madness.

When Nandini Kahn, Charles Monteskwew's niece, insisted on seeing me as soon as possible, specifically asking for Liêm to be present, I had no idea what she could bring to the table. I hadn't seen her since I first met Charles at Oxford 15 years ago. I barely recognized her. She had grown up a lot.

Nandini revealed that she worked for Interpol in Lyon. She and her team coordinated an investigation into the criminal and drug underworld. Nandini had uncovered documents that proved that Pol Cokenstok was funded by lobbies, including FreeOpenMind, mafias and drug trafficking. And that he was the mastermind behind the murder of Charles Monteskwew, which had become an embarrassing obstacle on their road to

power. They had found in Virginie de Lignite, obsessed with her vengeance, the perfect executor.

A few days before the European elections, Liêm was able to reveal, with supporting evidence, Pol Cokenstok's crime. The scandal was enormous. Of course, I made sure that the images of his arrest by Nandini's Interpol team were played in a loop on CFM and on all the big screens set up in all European cities.

Thus, in June 2053, a great surge of enthusiasm brought Liêm to the head of the old European Union, with the program of transforming it as soon as possible into a federal organisation inspired by the French Republic 7.1, and with the objective of Europe being the first carbon-neutral continent by 2060, with the full support of its citizens.

I can reveal today that Liêm and Nandini had in fact known each other very well for a long time. Lord Monteskeu had introduced them, unbeknownst to me. Even after his death, he continued to act for the triumph of his ideas and of Liberty.

## Epilogue

This, in a nutshell, is the whirlwind of events that Mom and I have experienced since our dinner at the Eiffel Tower. I feel like the last few decades have gone by so fast. I just realized I'm the same age as my mom, when she encouraged me to start my YouTube channel 30 years ago.

That, in a few words, is what I will say tomorrow, September 13, 2053. I am due to deliver a speech in tribute to Lord Charles de Montesquieu at the United Nations in Geneva on the first anniversary of his assassination. Charles was the soul of this incredible transformation. He was the one who inspired Liêm, myself and so many others. Surrounded by Leonardo, Liêm and Nandini, I will also honour the memory of my mother, Françoise, who supported me throughout my life.

In the years to come, my dear Liêm will be able to roll out the programme that got him elected. It is no longer a question of creating a society completely free of the use of fossils. It is in France and will soon be in other European countries and elsewhere.

There is no doubt that we will need to implement new technologies to accelerate the descent of the carbon concentration of the atmosphere and thus the temperatures. But we finally understood that technology alone could not save us!

The challenge of the new generation is not technological. It is to go a step further than what my generation and Françoise's generation have managed to do.

Its challenge is to establish a materially sober society, with total circularity based on constant resources.

Its challenge is to grow an overabundance of human relationships, because happiness is not in the possession of goods, but in the benevolence of those around us.

Its challenge is to maintain the balances that have been achieved with such difficulty in the political decision-making process.

Its challenge is to ensure a society that will finally regenerate life and be fundamentally restorative. Because our relationship with Nature and the Living has changed.

These are the challenges facing the generation at the helm today.

These are Liêm's challenges.

And I don't know anyone with as much determination as he does.

That's why, today, I'm confident about the future.

Création et composition réalisées par Elodie Sudol sur Adobe Photoshop avec intégration d'images générées avec Bing AI Image Creator



# **Agromeat pivots to feed people better.**

Thierry Braine-Bonnaire,  
Agathe Boulet,  
Philippe Ducci,  
Gilles Rougon.

My father Charlemagne and I often talk about our roots which merge with those of our family business. In the 2020s, anxiety about the consequences of climate change and alarmist predictions for human life in 2050 were obviously of concern to business leaders. They did not spare my father who had just taken over the company.

My name is Iliana. I was called to join the top management of the company in 2050 following the brilliant and salutary managerial exercise carried out by my father for 25 years to transform Agromeat, a producer of animal feed for meat production, into a champion of permaculture.

It is thanks to my father that our business is thriving today, while all the other players in the meat industry are suffering or have disappeared.

It wasn't easy. What a journey it has been!

Let me tell you about his battles, starting with the ones he had to fight against himself...

\*

Published in 2023, the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report was clear: *"It is today's and near-term decisions that define the extent to which current and future generations will live in a warmer and more different world."*

Charlemagne had already heard this phrase dozens of times, and it did not move him much. Since 2022, my father has been the young CEO of Agromeat, the large company that produced livestock feed from cornfields it operated in several regions of France. The group's activity was very profitable although clouds were looming on the horizon, such as the steady decline



in meat consumption, the frequent blacklisting of maize cultivation in a context of increasing water scarcity and the concern, which could become noisy, of the tenants of Agromeat's land about the risk of interrupting their leases.

On April 1, 2024, the Group's Annual General Assembly was held at its Paris headquarters. Some members of the Alsatian association TERTER (Tous Ensemble pour la Régénération de la Terre et des Ressources - TogethEr for the RegeneraTion of the Earth and its Resources), tenants of Agromeat and led by their president Cosette, had come to express their fears for the future.

In front of the shareholders, the floor was given to Cassandre, then Director of Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). She presented the final conclusions of the IPCC report. She insisted on the most recent damage caused by global warming, alarmist forecasts of future droughts, the increase in risks linked to land artificialization, and the carbon impact of meat consumption. As with each of her presentations in the company's various governance bodies, for some time now, the key messages were there, the urgency was undeniable and yet Cassandre systematically had the unfortunate impression of speaking into a void, without managing to make herself heard.

After brief and superficial exchanges about initiatives proudly launched by the management and deemed insufficient by Cassandre (sorting in offices, carbon offsetting of emissions, or improvement of the efficiency of production systems), the general assembly continued with the vote on the resolutions. On that day, one of them called for a change in the Group's climate strategy with a view to intensifying actions on the subject. This resolution received a few weeks earlier and coming from a coalition composed of a handful of minority shareholders with whom Cassandra had been able to exchange, had surprised Charlemagne, but had not worried him more than that. Indeed, he knew well that he was coming

of age and knew that his economic interests were far too important to encourage any kind of strategy likely to jeopardize the growth of the company founded in 1981 in Nouvelle Aquitaine by his father, whom he had succeeded two years earlier at the age of 34. And yet, what a surprise to discover the results of the vote, which were really not an April Fool's joke: 51.7%! By a majority the resolution had just been adopted. It wasn't possible! Charlemagne was flabbergasted! He had not seen such broad opposition coming even though he imagined that he could stifle the internal sirens of CSR for a time by relying on an overwhelming rejection of the resolution. On the other hand, Cassandra was relishing the moment, at the conclusion of which she was not a total stranger... But that's another story.

This decision, taken at the Annual General Meeting, required Charlemagne to rethink the Group's climate strategy. Furious, he ruminated for some time before proposing to reorganize Agromeat's CSR department by strengthening it. To save time, he proposed that more resources be invested in it. This made it possible to recruit new employees who were responsible, among other things, for dialoguing with stakeholders impacted by the company's activity.

A consultation was launched with associations of actors currently in conflict with the company's policy, including the Alsatian association TERTER, chaired by Cosette. Cassandre proposed to the latter that she led a series of meetings and adversarial meetings for six months, during which time any project to exploit the group that would be in conflict with the interests of local actors would be put on hold. The first measures formulated such as the sharing of the farm's harvest with stakeholders, the voluntary reduction of the yield of agricultural land in order to preserve water resources, the implementation of an "animal feed tax" to be paid to local authorities, and many others... were rejected by Agromeat's

board of directors as too drastic and detrimental to its economic interests.

Although he felt in his heart that these developments would be inevitable sooner or later, Charlemagne questioned his legitimacy in bending an industrial trajectory nourished by family tradition. He admired and deeply respected his father for his entrepreneurial spirit, energy, convictions and the many battles he had to fight to ensure the existence and development of the group...

At a meeting of Agromeat's executive committee, Cassandra felt compelled to sound the alarm once again about the worsening climate situation. Summer was about to end, and conditions had been even worse than the historic drought of 2022. That year, 343 communes had to send tanker trucks to ensure their water supply, while 196 others distributed bottled drinking water to residents, not to mention the drop in agricultural yields of up to 30% and the severe impacts on the livestock sector. For the summer of 2026, forecasts predicted that average heat records would be broken. The planned water restrictions were such that a drop in yield of up to 50% was already expected in some areas. Although the measures presented so far had been deemed too drastic, Cassandre continued to insist that they would help limit the company's vulnerability to current and future water management issues.

Cassandra felt it was time to really take action. She proposed a new approach based on experimentation. The "*Agromeat goes green!*" pilot program aimed to test solutions at the scale of a territory by involving the actors concerned, who had carte blanche within the limits of a fixed budget. The only direct referent for this innovative project for the company would be Charlemagne, in order to facilitate decision-making. Cassandra recommended that he hires Cosette who co-authored the proposal for this project with her. She would thus be the "relay" of the program within her territory which would host this pilot experiment.

Charlemagne gave Cassandra permission to prepare everything for the launch of the "*Agromeat goes green!*" programme. She had more than 18 months of preparations. But at the end of the day Charlemagne was still hesitant to launch the experiment and procrastinated, much to Cassandra's annoyance.

It was then that Charlemagne became a father for the first time, in 2026. Her awareness of a necessary and profound transformation of the company was certainly helped by the arrival of her adorable daughter, me Iliana! Thinking that he could not be satisfied with small steps that would always be associated with greenwashing, he decided to give this program a chance by setting its maximum duration at two years.

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Cosette's experimental area in Alsace was one of Agromeat's locations. The commune of Vertcité and its 2,500 inhabitants were located on the edge of large cereal farms. Here, almost all people knew each other and kept their town alive with many initiatives such as the TERTER association, created by Cosette and which worked for an exploitation of the land that respected the living. For several years TERTER had been renting a plot of agricultural land from Agromeat in order to grow, in permaculture, food that benefited all the members of this cooperative.

The two farmers involved in the "*Agromeat goes green!*" experiment were initially highly reluctant to the idea of the radical change in business model brought about by it, wishing to maintain the same volumes of feed for their livestock. Charlemagne was very aware of these economic impacts, so much so that the first step of the experiment was

to bring together the farmers and the agricultural cooperative around the table in order to listen to their respective concerns.

With Cosette's help, Charlemagne relied on the exchanges and possible solutions raised during these discussions to make the following proposal to the two farmers: Agromeat would devote half of its local agricultural area to permaculture, and the farmers would halve the size of their livestock and convert half of their pasture area to permaculture, also operated by the TERTER cooperative in return for a rent paid to the farmer. Agromeat in turn undertook to buy the cooperative's crops in full at a fixed price so that the risks of the project would be shared between the players involved. In addition, for the duration of the project, Agromeat promised to cover the losses of the parties involved.

Even before the end of the two-year trial, in September 2028, the pilot project proved to be a triple winner:

- Agromeat had increased its resilience because it was sourcing products from its own land as well as from the agricultural cooperative. The company had also increased its security against natural hazards impacting agriculture.
- Farmers had strengthened their resilience by diversifying their sources of income and securing rent to offset the reduction in their livestock farming activity. They had also benefited from the cooperative's agricultural waste which was invaluable for feeding their livestock in winter.
- The cooperative had kept land to farm, safeguarded jobs and ensured that its crops would be sold at a fair price. In addition, it was able to use manure supplied by the farmers to enrich the substrates.

This project demonstrated that it was possible to share risks between actors in the sector, increasing everyone's resilience while having a positive social and environmental impact.

But nothing was won. The effectiveness of the "*Agromeat goes green!*" programme still had to convince internal stakeholders before it could be deployed beyond a pilot project. Contrary to what he had expected, Charlemagne faced here the most intense and vigorous "battle" he had ever had to fight.

Indeed, with this radical change in business model, many of Agromeat's employees feared they jobs would disappear due to the evolution of the skills required by the company. Selling large volumes of maize grain to livestock farmers is very different from setting up distribution channels for fruits and vegetables. What's more, the older generation were quick to suggest that this development was tantamount to a betrayal of the work of Charlemagne's father, something that particularly affected him. He was no longer the only one to wonder.

Agromeat's unions put up a fight, provoking a strike during the second year of the experiment. Thomas Combaz, Secretary of the Sauvegarde Union, was particularly aggressive and virulent. After a week, faced with this resistance and despite the initial evidence of viability provided by the Vertcité experiment, Charlemagne brought Cassandre and Cosette together to share his concerns and questions and to try to break the deadlock, convinced that it was now time to transform the Agromeat model. Cosette raised the question of the company's purpose. What was its original purpose when Charlemagne's father created it? What was it today? And tomorrow? As for Cassandra, she drew on her own experience to emphasise the need for employees to have additional knowledge, so that they see not only the risks, but also the economic, ecological and human opportunities that this transition could bring.

At the end of this crucial meeting for the future of the company, Charlemagne took two decisions. Firstly, he instructed Cassandre and Cosette to launch a project to formulate Agromeat's purpose, involving the unions, in particular Thomas Combaz, employees and stakeholders in the experiment and other territories. Secondly, he asked the human resources department to launch a study for a training plan for all employees impacted by this transition of the company. The aim was to offer training in the new professions required by the change in the company's business model, in order to avoid any redundancies. These two actions put an end to the strike. The new skills required were identified and a number of employees volunteered to be trained in these new areas. As soon as possible, they were invited to talk about the relevance of the training they had received and the satisfaction they felt in their new roles. Seeing Charlemagne's dedication and commitment to its employees, all Agromeat employees gradually became involved in this corporate project.

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2029 marked the formalization of the pilot's full success and the launch of a brand new strategy for Agromeat. The resources released following the General Assembly five years earlier, the dialogue initiated by the CSR department with the stakeholders affected, and the work resulting from the "*Agromeat goes green!*" programme led by Cosette had highlighted a completely new possible and sustainable path for the group.

The promising results of the pilot set up at Vertcit  having convinced Charlemagne, he decided not to extend his farm with a view to increasing the production of maize to feed

livestock. Agromeat was to continue to grow, but by diversifying its activities to serve healthier, less meat-based diets. From then on, the company decided not to keep the TERTER association off its land. Instead, it was decided to encourage the practice of permaculture, by allowing the collective to grow and to bring together new farmers on new land made available by the company.

After clearly redefining its purpose, the group decided to include it in its status by becoming a mission-led company. From then on, its goal was no longer to feed animals to feed people, but to feed people with respect for territories, actors and biodiversity. Agromeat became Agromeet.

The new strategy called for the Alsace pilot project to be replicated in other regions, systematically taking account of specific local features. The financial results of this diversification of the business and the reduction in vulnerability to climatic hazards encouraged the group to accelerate the movement.

Agromeet set itself the goal of gradually migrating its land use to permaculture: 15% in 2030, 40% in 2035, 65% in 2040 and 100% in 2050. These goals were extremely ambitious.

At the same time, the government and local authorities, having closely followed the pilot project, decided to promote the Agromeet approach. A support service for players in the agri-food industry wishing to make a similar transition was created and attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty..

Armed with this role and aware that companies had a real capacity for internal and external transformation as long as they listened carefully and unfiltered to all their stakeholders, in 2038 Charlemagne, with the help of Cassandra and Cosette, invited his CAC 40 peers to a two-day colloquium on the



subject, at which the most inspiring testimonials were shared, discussed and put into perspective.

\*

I was lucky enough to participate in this event, as my father was able to invite me as a listener. This event had a profound impact on me.

Now it's up to me to write the new pages of Agromeet...

Keeping in mind the thought of Albert Camus: "Each generation, no doubt, believes itself destined to remake the world. Mine knows it won't do it again. But my task may be greater. It is about preventing the world from unraveling. »



Création et composition réalisées par Elodie Sudal sur Adobe Photoshop avec intégration d'images générées avec Bing AI Image Creator



# The rebirth of the Villa Medici.

Audrey Saint-Lary,

William Gras,

Guilhem Maire,

Elodie Sudol,

Gilles Rougon,

## Villa Medici in Rome - Gardens – August 2040

The scorching days follow one another relentlessly in this month of August 2040 on the Pincio hill. The floors are creaking. As a result of a spring with little rainfall and now this week there's a hot wind from North Africa.

At the end of this Sunday Antonia is on her knees, tending to a flowerbed whose resilient species are surviving the temperatures as best they can. Pausing for a moment to appreciate the serenity of the Renaissance gardens of the Villa Medici, which she cares for with such passion, she meticulously observes the space spread out before her eyes. Lost in her thoughts, as she tries to estimate what remains to be done, a pungent smell reaches her nostrils. Concentrating on her task, she paid it no mind at first. Then, in the distance, she heard a repetitive, shrill noise; the sound of a siren. Turning abruptly as she realized what these two elements put together meant, she saw great plumes of dark smoke and a glow in the sky that had nothing to do with the setting sun.

That glow is close, much closer than she could have expected, and it takes a few seconds of incredulous amazement before she realizes the situation. The trees on the borders of the Renaissance Garden are in flames. On this Sunday, there is hardly anyone on the site of the Villa. Driven by the wind, the fire spreads at high speed. Whereas a few minutes earlier nothing was visible, now a heat that has nothing to do with the high temperature of this day jumps in Antonia's face. Dropping her tools, she frantically grabs her mobile phone as the first flames erupt on the apartments in the Villa's wing.

It will take hours of working for firefighters to contain the fire at the Villa and several days to extinguish the other fires that broke out in the city and in the park.

## Villa Medici - Director's Office

Tired of fatigue, Isabelle, who holds the position of director of the Villa de Medici, awaits the arrival of the Cultural Attaché of the Embassy of France. Her mind wanders as she thinks back over the course of events, to Antonia's call last night, informing her of the fire in a knotted voice, to the way she was stunned, frozen in place. Then disbelief gave way to concern. She asked her friend about her health, whether she had been hurt and she reassured her that she was fortunately far enough away from the fire. Relieved, she asked about the people present and the extent of the damage, while hastily preparing to go to the scene. Regaining her composure, she thought quickly, while listening to Antonia, about the immediate steps to be taken. The night had passed in a series of calls, crisis discussions and decisions about the situation.

What an abrupt way to start in this position, she thinks. She stares distractedly at the TV screen in the living room. The sudden and tragic nature of the event provoked the usual media hype. Images and testimonies are played in a loop on the news channels.

Some of the footage was taken by people who were present at the scene during the incident. The videos are jerky, taken on the spot, saturated with screams and tears. This is followed by the movements of city dwellers and tourists fleeing the area. In the background flames, plumes of dark smoke, blackened buildings...

Already there, journalists armed with cameras hold out their microphones to capture the distress of the inhabitants.

*"My shop is destroyed, what will become of me? How am I going to pay off my debts?" said one shopkeeper.*

*"It's a disgrace!! To detach the volunteer firefighters to go and save old stones and luxury shops rather than houses, as if by chance, in the less well-off neighborhoods of Rome!" protests a group of young people.*

*"I had to leave everything: suitcase, passport, money..." a woman exclaims indignantly.*

*"My daughter, where is my daughter?" asks an anguished father.*

*"We came as fast as we could," said a firefighter, "but all our forces were already deployed on the neighborhoods surrounding the Villa Borghese park."*

The TV goes off. Turning around, Isabelle sees Antonia with the remote control in her hand. She smiled at her, understanding her gesture. Dwelling on events would not help her cope with what lay ahead. They have known each other long enough to know what this Villa means to each other.

They had met in France when Antonia was trying to gain experience by working in various Monuments Historiques gardens. Isabelle, meanwhile, was working on her dissertation on heritage issues and her research led her to cross paths with the gardener. They quickly hit it off, sharing the same vision and values and both being passionate about history. It was Antonia who, a few years later, having kept in touch, told her that the post of Director of the Villa was about to be open.

\*

## **In front of the Villa Medici**

Fabien, currently occupying the role of Cultural Attaché of the Embassy of France in Rome, quickly arrives on the scene. The situation is also affecting him and it is noticeable despite the serious look on his face. Shaking a few hands for the cameras, he then comes up to the director.

- "Good morning, Madam Director. I did it as fast as I could. How are the residents of the Villa?"
- Fortunately, few boarders were present on Sunday. We were able to carry out the evacuation in time and no one was injured. As for the damage, thanks to the rapid intervention of the firefighters, it was contained to the gardens and the East wing of the Villa. The fire went through the roofs and the first-floor apartments were severely affected.
- The French Government will be behind you, rest assured.
- It's going to be billions.
- We'll find a solution... I refer the matter to the Ambassador, and I will get back to you very soon."

### **Embassy of France in Rome – office of the Ambassador**

The Ambassador had just finished an exhausting day, the situation requiring coordination, decision-making and referral despite the fact that some of the staff were on leave.

- "Mr. Ambassador, I'm back !
- Fabien, what's the situation ?
- No-one's been hurt, but there's a hefty bill to pay. What's the position in Paris?
- As for Notre Dame. We let the patrons come. And the first and not the least is Rodrigue Montepulciano, related to Cardinal Giovanni Ricci di Montepulciano.
- He was the founder of the Villa, wasn't he?



- Yes, that's right. The youngest son of one of the country's great fortunes. The eldest brother had a string of successes in the pharmaceutical industry, building on what was already a flagship company. The younger brother has taken a back seat, or rather the choices he has made have cost the family money. He's likely to be particularly involved in rebuilding the Villa. Be flexible. I've been called back to Paris and Mr Montepulciano arrives tomorrow. I'll leave it to you to make him meet the Director of the Villa, and to deal with any media enquiries.
- Very well, Mr. Ambassador.”

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## **Villa Medici – showroom and director's office**

Isabelle had the exhibition room emptied to facilitate coordination between the teams of Roman citizens who had volunteered to clear up the damage caused by the fire, drawing on the expertise of the “protezione civile”.

Fabien, the embassy's Cultural Attaché, enters. He was followed by a man in his forties. Dressed elegantly, as only Italians can be, he walks quickly past the Cultural Attaché to introduce himself to Isabelle.

- “Good afternoon, Madam. My name is Rodrigue Montepulciano. I've come to give you the means to rebuild what was destroyed so that this fire and the destruction it caused have no impact on the magnificent heritage founded by my grandfather. Is there somewhere we can discuss this in private?”

Isabelle's gaze quickly flicked to Fabien, then back to the patron. He had briefly told her about the relationship between this person and the founder of the Villa Medici.

- "Gladly, follow me."

The three of them leave the exhibition room and go straight into the director's office. On the walls are portraits of previous directors, including the painter Balthus and the renowned exhibition curator Sam Stourdzé.

- "Dear Director, begins the Cultural Attaché, I told you that France would find the funds to revive the Villa. Mr Montepulciano is here to guarantee these funds.
- Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, Mr Montepulciano.
- You can call me Rodrigue.
- Thank you very much Rodrigue."

Isabelle looked at Rodrigue, not knowing how to continue. She was used to philanthropists subsidising art galleries, but the sums involved here sound much higher. So, she wonders what was motivating this person to help. Could such a distant hereditary relationship be the only reason? But she is not in a position to refuse any funding whatsoever. She does, however, want to make sure that she gets more information about this 'white knight'.

- "I imagine you'd be interested to see how your money is going to be spent. Would you like to see the key elements of the call for tenders we are going to issue?
- A call for tenders?

- Of course. Even if the money you bring is that of a private individual, the Villa belongs to the French State. There are certain rules to follow.
- Obviously. "

Rodrigue began to go through the first draft of the tender. Several tics and frowns punctuate his reading.

- "I'm curious about a few things, he began in a neutral voice. What do you mean when you write that the responses to the call for tenders for the landscaping of the gardens and the buildings will have to include both environmental and social components?
- As you know, replied Isabelle, happy to respond to what she saw as a mark of interest, certain tree species such as pines, for example those planted by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, are not local and are less and less adapted to climate change. The director Balthus worked on new species in his time. We're going to have to do the same. As for the social component, for several terms the directors have been trying to open up the Villa to the Romans, and not just the residents. For a long time now, the Villa Medici has had a reputation as an establishment reserved for the elite, and it's an image that I want to change by opening the place up more to the public."

This last statement caused the patron to tense up. This reaction went unnoticed by Isabelle, who continued:

- " The Romans are deeply attached to this place. You can see in the exhibition room that many volunteers have come to help with the clearing up. It would be particularly inappropriate to exclude the local population from a process of reflection, co-construction

and even co-decision-making on how they can benefit from the Villa Medici on a day-to-day basis. We need to do more to combat the segmentation that is taking place in the neighborhood and the tensions that this creates. The Villa can become a pivotal place where people can meet and share.”

Rodrigue can't help but interrupt her on hearing this.

- "We have to be careful not to damage our history, Madam Director. I hope that the chosen project will incorporate the need to take care of my ... our roots.
- Obviously. That's why, as a patron of the arts, I'm inviting you to join me on the jury to select the final project.”

Sometime later, their discussion over, the two people parted. Isabelle, satisfied with the way things had turned out, was positive about the future of the collaboration. For Rodrigue, however, this exchange encouraged him to take things in hand in the future jury to ensure that the result met his expectations.

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## **In Rome's Trastevere district**

Alessandro, a freelance architect, scans the tenders with interest. Suddenly, the one he was looking for, for the Villa Medici, appeared before his eyes. He doesn't know what to expect, but as he reads on, surprise gives way to overflowing joy.

Excerpt from the criteria:

[...] To make the Villa Medici a place that meets the needs of the Romans.

Renovate the building while respecting the historical visual while using the most ecological materials possible.

Integrating the issues of planetary boundaries, [...]

He remembers Alma, a friend of his, speaking out when she highlighted the discrimination suffered by certain neighbourhoods when it was necessary to prioritise where the fire brigade would respond. In fact, it had concentrated its efforts on well-off areas, leaving behind more outlying and working-class neighbourhoods. He has no doubt that the Villa reconstruction project will speak to him. The impoverishment of neighbourhoods, over-tourism and the increase in accommodation allocated to tourists are all distancing people from their culture and roots, and these are things to which he is sensitive in his approach to architecture.

Alessandro refocused his attention on the call for tenders, determining precisely which elements needed to be taken into account. Without missing a beat, he began to sketch out a few ideas, drawing inspiration from certain craftsmen whose approach he admired. Over the next few weeks, he put all his energy into making the project a reality, finding the necessary players and drawing up the plans and stages. It's more than a project, he knows; it's a vision that is taking shape. When he submits his application, he hopes that the jury will understand the strength of his project.

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## Villa Medici - Library

That morning, at the Villa Medici, Isabelle greeted Rodrigue at the central gate and led him to the library, where a pile of files awaited them. Several weeks had passed since Rodrigue's first meeting with the patron, and they had agreed to meet to go through the projects they had received.

- "We have 24 respondents to the call for tenders. I'll give you half of it. Here is a grid with the criteria to be evaluated for each file. Place the ones you are holding on to your right.
- With pleasure. See you at the end of the day in your office?
- Let's do it like this."

Rodrigue goes through the evaluation sheet. Several criteria caught his attention:

- 1- Respect for the original aesthetics
- 2- Use of low-carbon materials and short supply chains
- 3- Shared spaces with the needs of the Romans [...]

What need is there to use low-carbon, local materials? he asks. This is an important site! The materials should be as noble as the history of this place, he thinks. All we have to do is find the quarry that provided the stones for the construction and buy them there. We travelled all over France to find the 1,000 most beautiful oak trees to rebuild Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris! "Local", "low carbon" and "taking care of biodiversity" are just a few of the buzzwords we use to make ourselves look good. And why not recycled paper while we're at it?

He then turns his attention to Alessandro's project. While he was pleased with the visual rendering, the description was less so.

[...] Honeycomb cardboard will be used to make the roof and walls. Cardboard in this form is 3 times more thermally insulating than glass wool or rock wool and mechanical tests demonstrate the ability to ensure the load-bearing capacity of a two-storey house. [...]

A smug sigh escapes him. What an idea to offer this kind of thing! Without going through the file any further, he places it on his left and moves on to the next one.

Shortly after, as the 6 p.m. strike the clock, Isabelle comes to meet him, offering to close the day and meet the next day to discuss the selected candidates.

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## **Villa Medici – Director's Office**

Refreshed and rested, Rodrigue and Isabelle meet in her office. They start with a real Italian coffee. Starbucks did try to set up shop in 2018, but the Italians quickly decided that it wasn't real coffee: after 4 years, only one stall remained. A second attempt was made in 2023 with a concept combining olive oil and coffee, but again it didn't work. Coffee is Italian coffee!

As Isabelle rereads the forms filled out by Rodrigue, one observation strikes her.

- "Funny, we don't score in the same way. You have a lot more extreme grades: zeros out of five, fives out of five. It's very clear-cut... Can you tell me more about this project, for example, what led you to give it this note?
- The way this architect seeks to proceed does not pay homage to the Villa. It is a place for which the quality of its materials has done a lot for its reputation. I hear that the notion of modernity is important, but that is going too far."

Isabelle stays silent for a moment. She understands the problem that this proposal poses for the patron, but she can only find it excellent. This would be a first step on the path she wants the rebirth of the Villa to take.

- "So in your opinion, this material, which corresponds in every way to the expected mechanical criteria, with insulation standards that are among the best in the world, coupled with great lightness and a low price, would not be adequate to be used in a non-visible and non-visitable space?"

Rodrigue considers these arguments; he must admit that the documentation on this subject seemed extensive and complete.

- "I hear what you're saying, but you'll understand that it bothers me all the same, given the original spirit of this place.
- And did the initial spirit integrate the development that humanity is experiencing? That we would have to fight against and for ourselves, against our desires, against the way we have organized trade, our societies and human activities so as not to destroy the planet?
- Don't you think that what you're saying is excessive? We're talking about the framework, not the future of humanity, he said, raising an eyebrow.
- What I'm trying to say is that every new project must be designed with sustainable development in mind and must incorporate as far as possible the criteria that limit its impact on the environment. I'm the director of a historic building that has just been partially destroyed by fire, a phenomenon made more intense and more frequent by human activity. I can't turn a blind eye to this and ignore my responsibilities, both as the director of this site and as an individual."



Isabelle lets a few seconds pass.

- "Resources are finite. The stock of resources is limited. Yes, with a few billions, you can open up a new career with very advanced techniques. But the Villa Medici has been trying for decades to be better connected to the world's issues. We cannot allow our own desires for greatness, for respect for history, to blind our current choices. Let me ask you again: does his proposal visually detract from the Villa Medici's aesthetic appeal? Does this architect's proposal visually disrespect the work of Nanni di Baccio Bigio?"

Rodrigue looks at the proposed plans, the sketches and photos of the simulations and then looks back. He has a hard time admitting it, but many of the points in this woman's speech make sense. Although reluctantly, he admits defeat.

- "No.
- Very well. So we can push this project through with the selected ones?
- ...
- And what I propose is that for the defenses of these finalist projects, we will ask them to bring samples to see the appearance, the particle size, the color, the light of the materials. Is this okay with you?"

Rodrigue nods and the two get back to work. It takes them the rest of the week to come up with a final ranking of 5 finalists.

Two more weeks pass before the winning projects go before a jury. For about thirty minutes, Alessandro answers questions and clarifies his approach with Alma. Then they leave, knowing that the announcement of the decision of the selected project will not be made public for several days, at best.

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## **Traverse district in Rome**

Alessandro is waiting impatiently. He's been going round in circles at home ever since he presented his project. He knows that he defended his proposal particularly well in the face of questions from one of the jurors, who was particularly sceptical and looking for the slightest flaw. But he couldn't say whether he had convinced him enough. The sound of an incoming email notification pulled him from his thoughts. He hurried to his computer. Here's the email he's been waiting for! He's finally going to get his answer. He took a deep breath and opened it.

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## **Villa Medici – clearing site**

A few months later, several Roman inhabitants were gathered in the exhibition hall, mixed with the residents. The “civil protezione” has just validated the security of the entire site, any threat of structural non-integrity having been removed. The next step for volunteers is now to clear what is on the ground, whether it is rubble or furniture damaged by fire, smoke or water. Some of the stonework, primarily on the facade, has turned black but has retained its cohesion. In their workman's uniforms, Alessandro and Rodrigue are present.

The latter is not particularly happy to be there, especially dressed like this. Although he and the director finally agreed

on this project, a part of him remains opposed to it. This is what motivates his presence in the morning alongside the architect who finally won the competition. He had asked to be able to observe Alessandro's first steps but did not think that he would be present on the site from the cleaning stage when the start of the reconstruction is only expected in several weeks. He shares his question with him.

- "That's right. You see, what I particularly like about my job is not so much designing as doing. And while doing it alone is boring, doing it in a group is a real blast."

Somewhat taken by surprise by the familiarity of the tone used, Rodrigue does not notice and wonders more about the substance of his statement. He doesn't understand how it can be fun to work in a group.

- "Really, he asks.
- Yes. There are a lot of people who feel and say they are unable to carry out tasks that are even remotely manual and yet who discover their talents on a construction site. Simply because there are good tools, very competent people who explain with pedagogy how to do things at each stage. In short, it's the perfect setting to learn how to do everything in simplicity. And then there are the human encounters. Even if you don't have an affinity with everyone, you meet people, you discover parts of their lives. And the best is yet to come, the meals we have together. Sometimes it's organized, sometimes it's casual, sometimes everyone brings something to the table. In short, there are lots of ways to experience moments of conviviality."

Rodrigue remains silent. He asks to see. Maybe it's like that at first, he thinks, but it only lasts for a while before conflicts arise.

- "And you, why did you want to observe my first steps?"
- I'm here to make sure that every gesture is respectful of the heritage of this place, its history. I'm not comfortable with the idea of moving the Villa into the 21st century. If it were up to me, nothing would change!"

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The morning has only just begun and several volunteers are already lining up to remove the last rubble of the apartments on the first floor of the Villa. The walls, floors and stairs had been protected beforehand to prevent any deterioration that may be caused by the building work.

For several days now, Rodrigue has been going to the construction site, at first, to accompany the architect, then on his own. He can't deny enjoying the atmosphere. He is also amazed by the determination of these people who get up at the crack of dawn to work for free. It's something he can't quite grasp. There he is, positioned on the spiral staircase and surrounded by two residents, a man and a woman. Wearing gloves, they pass objects to each other, bags containing dust or fragments of objects that cannot be reused.

When the flow slows down, a break is arranged and the three of them sit down on the stairs. Quenching his thirst, he listens to the conversation of the two people next to him. He quickly understands that the young woman, Anna, is a resident, unlike his interlocutor, Julio, who is a boarder.

- "So, he asks, do you know if your project will be able to be done?"

- I arrived a short time ago and I was supposed to stay for 4 weeks. I can't see how the activities will be able to take place normally over the next few weeks. And then I'm supposed to leave my place to someone else. In the end, I have no idea, and I doubt that the director has this in mind at the moment."

Rodrigue is surprised by the exchange and turns to the young woman.

- "I thought the residents would stay for a year?
- These are the boarders who stay for a year, like Julio. Residents like me stay for a few weeks. There are two components to the artists' residency part. On the one hand, there are 16 boarders who are housed at the Villa and who occupy a studio for a year. They get their place through a competition. On the other hand, there are about thirty year-round residents. They usually don't last more than six months and it can even last only a few weeks, like for me. The idea is rather to have a place to help us develop our own projects. It can revolve around musical composition, visual arts, literature, digital technology, cinema, art history, research projects to document or improve restoration protocols...
- So, the events are turning everything upside down?
- Completely."

As she said this, however, she didn't seem annoyed.

- "And at the same time, she continued, it's ideal for changing the way we look at practices."

A frown appears on Rodrigue's face. Sensing this, the young woman explains:

- "It's always been that way. Times of crisis make us reconsider what we have achieved. Architectural techniques for building bridges, painting styles, music styles... Look: Bach and U2. One might imagine that this music is incompatible, but there is a French conductor by the name of Sylvain Audinovski who is just brilliant. I remember one of his concerts at the Grand Rex in Paris with his orchestra... Odino. It was just insane. This man has a particular vision of music and his daily life is to build bridges between styles by finding how to harmonize them. It's incredible, as if we could broaden our vision and love each other, separately as much as together.
- And music is your subject of study? Rodrigue asks, surprised by his knowledge of the subject.
- It isn't", she finishes before the three of them get up to continue their work.

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### **Villa Medici – Director's Office**

- "So what do you think?" the director asks.

Rodrigue can't help but wince.

- "Tell me again what you intend to do, if you please.

- We will be organizing a participatory workshop in the coming days. The aim is to get around fifty residents to think about how the Villa Medici will interact with their everyday needs. The first phase is divided into two parts. The first involves four very simple questions to assess what contributes to their well-being."

She hands him a sheet of paper on which are written several questions:

[...] What contributes to the quality of life in my neighbourhood?

What activities do I like to participate in?

What could improve the quality of life in my neighborhood?

What additional activities would I like to participate in?  
[...]

- "A second axis, Isabelle continues, will allow them to determine the main categories of needs: basic physiological needs, security needs, needs to belong, needs for esteem, need for fulfillment. At the same time, these inhabitants will make visible the resources they can share, offer to the commons. These resources can be tools, materials, skills, relationships, available time...
- Do you realize, I hope, that their grievances are going to be numerous?
- If the aim was to be exhaustive, it would probably be quite long and tedious. On the other hand, if it were a list of grievances to be handed in to the person responsible for answering them, I'd feel sorry for that person. Isabelle let a few seconds pass. This first phase

is the emergence phase. The second phase consists of sharing what has emerged: everyone's desires, needs and resources. By making all this visible, new conversations are born and concrete ideas can be put forward. At this point, we quickly see whether the proposals are just those of one person or whether they have the support of the group. Once concrete proposals have been formulated, they will have to carry them out themselves within the limits of the space that we agree to allocate them, with a participatory budget, and therefore a small one, that Rome has put in place for each of its neighbourhoods.

It's a very interesting approach, she continues, which allows us to rediscover the pleasure of doing together, to give back the power of doing and this, in the service of the commons. If you're interested, it's the result of an approach created by a French company called Solucracy. And as it's under a free license, you can make it your own. The downside is that the client must be supportive rather than controlling, which requires trust.”

Decidedly, Rodrigue thinks, Isabelle never ceases to propose things that are unknown to him. However, this proposal, which had been the subject of a publication, had been congratulated by all, both the city and the inhabitants. The few protesters quickly fell silent in the face of the general enthusiasm. It remains to be seen how it would play out.

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## **Villa Medici – The Court**

The scheduled date for the workshop is approaching. The weather is good and they plan to do this in the courtyard where tents and chairs have been set up. From the forecourt, standing with a drink in his hand, Rodrigue watches the participants flock in. A woman whose badge indicates her name Alma approaches Isabelle to shake her hand, they talk for a few moments and then the workshop begins.

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## **Villa Medici – Exhibition Hall**

A meeting was held following this event in order to take note of the elements that came out of it. Residents and boarders of the villa, actors of the project, citizen representatives - about thirty people - were present in the exhibition room.

- “I'd like to thank you all for coming, begins Isabelle. As you know, the purpose of this meeting is to present the elements that we have learned from yesterday's workshop. This aimed to propose different ways to open the Villa to the Romans. One part will remain private, reserved for the exclusive use of residents, while another will be more accessible to the public and above all to locals. After that, we will review with Alessandro here, the different stages of the reconstruction. To conclude with a topic of the utmost importance, we will discuss the future of gardens. Antonia, our head gardener, will be the referent. If there are no questions, we'll start.”

The facilitators who are in charge of the citizen consultation are responsible for carrying out their reports. Different proposals stand out, ranging from an open library coupled with multimedia, with artistic workshops and even events around a market of products in short circuit.

Rodrigue, for his part, watches this outpouring of ideas without knowing what to think. Although his brain is sifting through all these ideas and changes, he can't manage to imagine them in concrete terms. His vision of the Villa is far too different from the one that is beginning to take shape before his eyes.

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees the portrait of his ancestor. What had he wanted to achieve by founding this place? he wondered. Who really knew what values he had wanted to pass on? Was keeping it as it was in the past really the right decision? Lost in his thoughts, he listens vaguely as Alessandro talks about the progress of the project and the repairs to the roof.

Then he notices a detail on a plan that makes him jump out of his chair.

- "What is this?" he exclaimed.

Taken by surprise, the architect took a few moments before responding.

- "As I said just now, this is a proposal that Antonia, the head gardener, would like to make. The idea would be to build a greenhouse in the form of a new wing to support both an edible forest, seedlings and plants for the surrounding neighborhoods and residents."

Placed on an easel, a plan seen from above clearly shows the L-shape of the Villa. To this is added a second row, creating a U-shaped building. This is more than Rodrigue can handle.

- "And you really think," he said icily, "that it is acceptable to disfigure the shape of a historic building in this way?"
- In any case, it is feasible, and it responds to real current needs.
- Well, I object to that."

An angel passes by. Rodrigue takes a brief breath. It's not like him to lose his temper like that. He thinks out loud:

- "It's all ridiculous!"

Turning on his heels, he leaves the room, leaving the other actors stunned by his dazzling performance.

After the patron leaves, Isabelle suspends the meeting and tries to reach him. Not without speaking with Alessandro and Antonia about this proposal and agreeing that it would certainly be too disruptive. They will look for another solution.

Alma and the other representatives of the inhabitants leave without knowing how things will develop.

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## **Rome - Campo Marzio district**

After leaving the Villa, Rodrigue went down to the city of Rome, perceiving here and there the black traces of the ravages of the fire. Walking allows him to put his thoughts in order. His steps guide him automatically, taking these alleys, treading on the cobblestones that had formed the landscape of his childhood. He remembers that his mother was particularly fond of the market in this area, and the first time she took him there, he

understood why. This place exuded authenticity, whether it was through the fresh and spicy smells, the bursts of voices of the vendors, the colors and the brightness. Everything came together to create this distinctive atmosphere.

This is how he arrived at the square, which was once full of life and is now deserted. Yet, lost in his memories, his mind creates afterthoughts that fill the place. He smiled wistfully. Why hadn't he come back sooner? Out of curiosity, he checks his phone, wondering which days the market is taking place. On the screen is a notification of a missed call from Isabelle, he will call her back later. Returning to his questioning about the market of his childhood, he goes back to searching and ... can't find any information. Perhaps the custom was informal enough that only the locals knew about it. Walking out into the square, he sees an elderly lady sitting at the kitchen window, looking almost directly onto the square. He walks over to her.

- "Hello Madam, I hope I'm not bothering you?"

A simple smile and a shake of the head encourage him to continue.

- "Would you by any chance know when the market is held in this square?"

She looks at him in surprise.

- "It's been a few years since the producers came," she says in her frail voice.

It's his turn to be surprised.

- "Really! But why is that?"
- You see, these are difficult times for farmers. Many have sold their land, unable to repay their loans. And those

who were still coming moved to more touristy places with more traffic and were able to increase their price.”

She pauses for a moment, her eyes lost in the vagueness...

- "You'd see their distress. The relationship with the land is important. These are our roots. They have sacrificed so much: their health, their family life. And why is that in the end? No recognition was given to them. The pleasure of doing something essential has gradually disappeared to be replaced only by end-of-the-month questions and ever-increasing regulatory requirements. So yes, the market that existed just a few years ago is no more.”

The words of the old Italian woman came as a shock to Rodrigue Montepulciano. He remains stunned. Abruptly, he leaves the place with a determined step towards a destination that only he knows.

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## **Villa Medici – Gardens**

Antonia walks through the gardens of the Villa she loves so much. In the middle of the heat-soaked mountains, she reminisces about her journey. She has worked in the gardens of the Villa since she was a child. Her father was a gardener there before her, as was her grandmother. The latter was the person with whom she had spent the most time. She appreciated her strong character and knowledge and had learned a lot from her. It was with her that she had planted her first shoot, had learned to differentiate between species and their needs, and had suffered from the hot days that tan the skin like leather. Following her death, she found herself alone

with her father, whose visions and behaviors were a source of many recurring tensions. She had gone elsewhere to gain experience, meeting many people including Isabelle, and it was only when her father retired that she returned to take over.

But it wasn't to blindly pursue inadequate management of an outdated green space that she had returned. Nor to dye green the grass yellowed by droughts or to plant species that are not adapted to the conditions and often come from the other side of the world. She had intended to change things and she had felt supported by the last directors of the Villa. The fire, despite its tragic nature, offered the possibility of going even further.

However, she now faces another problem. The position of the patron on the Villa. She clearly perceived that he was not as willing as Isabelle to make radical changes. So, his outburst at the meeting didn't really surprise her, but it's still annoying. Everything seems to be suspended. The risk of disunity between people and a feeling that everyone wants to let go of weighs heavily over their heads.

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## **Villa Medici – Director's Office**

For her part, Isabelle is perplexed in her office. She thinks that the patron's reaction was to be expected, knowing his position on the Villa. Since the project had begun, he seemed to open up to new possibilities. But here, a limit seems to have been crossed. She blames herself for perhaps having crossed a point of no return. She hopes, however, that he will not take away their support. It's so difficult to get these worlds, with such different daily lives and values, to talk to each other!

Suddenly, Isabelle sees through her window Rodrigue's long figure as he seems to be heading towards the gardens. She rushes to join him.

Passing one of a flower beds she hears voices in a lively discussion and recognizes those of Antonia and Rodrigue. Fearing the worst, she accelerates her pace. When she turns the corner of a hedge, she comes face to face with them. Surprised, they stop talking. An angel passes by... Antonia then speaks:

- "Isabelle, what Rodolphe has just proposed to me is simply astounding!"

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### **Villa Medici, - August 2052**

Mia, who has been a resident for a few months, puts the book she has been looking at for the past few hours on the table. Stretching for a long time to dispel the numbness from her limbs, she stretches out her arm to grab one of her pencils and one of the few blank sheets of paper on the table. Her gaze rests on the grey of the paper, projecting the images that her reading had inspired her and to which she undertakes to give shape with a few strokes of the pencil. Satisfied with her work, she lifts her head, taking in the room with her eyes. The eaves that slope down to the outside keep the heavy summer rays out, providing a beneficial shade to the room. The air is light and calm, the atmosphere soothing. The sun projects the patterns of the screens on the floor, up to the wall in front of it. She contemplates it, who serves as a support for her artistic project.

She has been working on the mural for several months now. She vividly remembers the first time she heard about the rebirth of this historic site. She had been so fascinated by this story that she had set herself the goal of painting it on one of the new walls of the Villa, which would undoubtedly be her greatest work. Determined, she submitted her work as part of a residency application. Although she had not waited for the answer to begin her draft, she was relieved by the positive response she received. Being on site allows her to make major changes and meet the actors who had contributed to the reopening of this place.

Getting up, she moves closer to the wall and follows the images with her eyes. Although the fresco is unfinished and some places are only sketched, she imagines it in all its details. She sees the fire tearing through the wood of the Villa, a trail of black reaching the walls, climbing up to the roof and moving towards the gardens where a silhouette of a woman, frozen, Antonia, watches in terror the roaring flames. In the management office, surrounded by paintings of the founders of the Villa, she sees a seated woman, Isabella, chatting with an aristocratic-looking man, Rodrigue and Alessandro the architect. Then another scene shows her talking to a woman, Alma, on a street in front of a crowd of people. An aerial view then unfolds, beginning as an architect's sketch and then transforming into a collective construction site. The faces are painstakingly depicted from archival photos she had found, paying tribute to the locals who had participated. We can see the Villa transform, evolve over the course of the frieze, full of collaboration, mutual aid and conflict, its iterative development creating a patchwork magnifying its result.

In a corner of the Gardens, a man and a woman, kneeling side by side, are planting seeds.

At the top, she had painted a great sun casting its heavy rays on the city of Rome, making the white walls of the deserted streets sparkle. Unlike this one, the surroundings of the Villa are



full of life. They are shaded by the generous trees of the native micro-forest that came into being thanks to the Miyawaki method, applied by Antonia, who is still in her position. The environment is temperate and pleasant. She had drawn a picture of children running between the trunks, while adults sat on the mossy carpet of the undergrowth, chatting. Mia smiled as she remembered seeing this scene after one of the gardening classes in the 'edible' part of the wood. She had faithfully reproduced it.

Who would think that it was Rodrigue, the man she had painted in an upright and stern attitude in the scene in the director's office, who had made the proposal to make the gardens a space for cultivation and learning about agricultural practices?

Antonia had told her all about it the other day. Her proposal for a U-shaped extension was initially withdrawn. But once Rodrigue's project got under way, he was so happy that she managed to convince him to finally build a large greenhouse in the gardens. They had developed this project together and in spite of the problems encountered and their recurrent spats. It had brought them closer together, creating a frank friendship between them.

That's why Mia had drawn the two of them in a corner, next to each other. With a certain sense of humour, Rodrigue appears relaxed, a smirk on his face and his hands in the earth, while Antonia looks up at the cover of the trees with a semblance of exasperation that does not hide her amusement.

But what stands out majestically in the centre of the mural is the Villa Medici building itself. Mia had tried to reproduce the powerful impression that had gripped her the first time she had set foot there. You only have to pass through the Villa's gates to be overwhelmed by the undeniable charm of the place. The changes that have been made seem to have revealed its true spirit. The French gardens, redesigned by

Antonia and Rodrigue, have been adorned with local and Mediterranean species. The original aesthetic, which is still perceptible, is magnified by this adaptation, which combines the intelligence of symbiotic relationships with the colours and smells of resilient plants. The facades, redesigned by architect Alessandro according to vernacular models from the Middle East, are now perforated to allow air cooled by passive systems to circulate.

Mia had added a night scene showing how some premises are transformed during the evenings to host moments of conviviality, games and sharing. Having participated in it many times, she knows how it works. A collectively managed schedule indicates the multiple moments of interaction, such as repair or design workshops, depending on the availability of each other, and this several times a week. On the walls, which used to be bare, you can now find tools hung in an arrangement that has an artistic "je-ne-sais quoi" about it. The cleanliness of the space, managed by the local residents, has nothing to envy to the rooms supervised by the residents and boarders of the Villa. This was made possible by the creation of a set of rules and conditions of use, drawn up by the local residents themselves because this place is important to them, and they want to take care of it. This new organization, on which Isabelle had worked, had required many organizational and legislative changes. She had surrounded herself with a committed team in order to counter the problems raised by their approach as effectively as possible. Alma had been integrated into this team, particularly for the service aspect and communication with citizens.

At the point where the happy tones of the finished parts of her fresco give way to the grey of the support, an area left free to be completed in the future, Mia lets her hand fall back to follow the lines and redraw in the air the faces she now knows by heart. She takes a few steps back to look at the extent of her

work and better appreciate the overall unreal atmosphere of this place where she feels happy.

She is proud to have been able to transcribe what Antonia, Isabelle, Rodrigue, Alessandro, Alma and all the others had so passionately shared with her about building a human project around the Villa and how they saw the future. By letting her gaze wander through her fresco, she had travelled back in time. She was helping to pass on a new heritage.

The sound of chatter and footsteps reached her. Glancing at the clock, she realised it was time to join the others for lunch. Through the gaps in the walls she could see a group heading towards the undergrowth, their arms laden with victuals.

Taking one last look at her work before leaving the room to join this daily gathering, she reflects that, decidedly, the journey is more important than the destination...





Création et composition réalisées par Eloïdie Sudol sur Adobe Photoshop avec l'intégration d'éléments générés avec Bing AI Image Creator

# A dream square.

Jean-Louis Bergey,  
Emmanuel Dufrasnes,  
Lara Mariton,  
Laurent Lelait,  
Gilles Rougon,  
Elodie Sudol

On that beautiful afternoon at the end of a weekend in May, Anne Dubois began to write.

"The story I want to tell here bears witness to the humble origins of a collective approach that planted the seeds of the profound change that our country has subsequently experienced in the dynamics of land use planning.

I was lucky enough to have a front-row seat. I've always wanted to be a teacher. For as long as I can remember. At the time, I was working in a small provincial town, at Collège Simone Veil, where it all began in January 2028.

The mood in the country was gloomy and gloomy. The year 2026 was a year of hope. Never before have we had so much access to information on the transitions needed at all levels to decarbonize our lifestyles, our ways of inhabiting the world. Polls showed that the majority of the population felt very concerned. Finally! we thought, things were about to change. At the beginning of 2027, this hope persisted as the climatic hardships intensified. But with the sharp rise in geopolitical tensions, the focus was elsewhere. In the months that followed, this hope for progress at the national level was profoundly disappointed. Of those who wore it in spite of everything, many said to themselves that there could be no change without local initiatives...

This initiative came from two children, then my students, and a grandfather, who taught us a great lesson."

\*

The 2028 winter holidays were coming to an end. Armand, 11 years old, had been sitting in his room completely immersed in his video game for two hours. He had just finished a game when he heard the unmistakable sound of a fist banging on the front door of his apartment, timidly as always. Her mother's light step followed, and her voice sounded sweetly as she greeted their visitor. He knew who it was. His friend Aziza often came to pick him up to play football in La Pointe Square, at the end of his street.

It was a place he really liked when he was younger, but now he didn't like it too much. There wasn't much room, it was often dirty, they got their feet caught in the cracks in the concrete because nothing was maintained and the old people on the benches complained too much. He put down his controller, hurried to get ready, and rushed out of his room to join Aziza on the doorstep with a big smile. He liked to spend time with Aziza and it didn't matter if his friends made fun of him. She was his college friend who he had known since kindergarten and they had so much fun together. Aziza loved this old square for some reason, so he went with her. And then, he didn't like her hanging out alone, it could be dangerous between the big boys at the school who annoyed everyone and the strangers who passed by...

We had to admit that the square La Pointe didn't make you want to play too much, as grey as the sky and oozing with humidity. It was a tiny space next to a street that seemed like a highway for motorists, where cars drove excessively fast, squealed their tires and honked their horns all the time. During the day, the atmosphere was unbreathable. And that's without taking into account the dogs that were everywhere, the garbage that was lying around, the ground smashed in places or the toddlers' play area that had been condemned following several accidents and abandoned as it was despite the requests of the neighbors.

\*



When he arrived in the square, Armand grimaced. Even the old people's benches were degraded, the paint was peeling, the seats were missing or mouldy. The few trees that were there and made the space a little alive had died from last summer's heat and had been removed. The Town Hall took the opportunity to widen the road.

- "I'm fed up! We can't even play downstairs," Aziza exclaimed to Armand, who was already regretting his video game. Something has to be done!

- It would be cool to have a basketball court, said Armand, dreamily.

- And why should it only be "ONE" basketball court? And what's more... Why not a vegetable garden with lots of free animals and lots of places where you can really have fun such as water games or slides!

- Animals with the road so close! Everything would have to be transformed into a pedestrian zone then! Armand adds."

They continued, excitedly, imagining their dream square with grand gestures. Their exclamations reached an old gentleman seated farther away. He caught their attention before beckoning them to approach.

- "What are you talking about?" asked Ernest Brun from his leaning bench.

Aziza and Armand looked at him, astonished. They knew this gentleman, he was Ernest, as everyone called him, an "old man" who was elected to the City Council and who liked to talk to people in the street. He was kind and often came to talk to them, they had even played ball with him.

- "We're talking about unimportant stuff, I don't think it concerns you, said Armand, a little embarrassed to have made such a fuss.

- And then, why shouldn't I care about the layout of the square? I come here every day except when the weather is very bad. You know, not too long ago, I got my foot caught in a crack and it took me a week to get over it. I also know that the mayor wants to remove the square for a real estate project that I don't like at all.

- We said to each other... We need a basketball court, says Armand.

- That we need a new square that's a lot more fun for us, Aziza corrected. Or just... more human?

- And I suppose, given your enthusiasm just now, you had gone on big projects!" »

Aziza and Armand exchanged a glance and smiled, they sat down next to the old man and began to share their dreams with him...

\*

Ernest watched as the two young children crossed the square to go home, still chatting enthusiastically. Night was slowly beginning to fall and he noted with amusement that they had spent a good hour discussing La Pointe Square and its future. He particularly appreciated their innocence, allowing them to free themselves from the constraints of reality. In any case, they had made him look younger, and that was very nice, he noted with amusement as he got up to go home. Quietly, as he walked, he reviewed what they had discussed. The formalization of the substantive solutions did not matter

much. In any case, what was clearly visible was that the square was no longer suitable for anyone, not for the children, not for the elderly, not even for the neighborhood who found only memories of a bygone era.

He thought back with a little nostalgia to the time when, as a child in primary school, their school had been the subject of work to redesign the courtyard and the playground. He, along with his classmates, had been horrified to learn that the large tree in the playground was about to be removed. Without a second thought, each time they took a break, they had tried different strategies to get them to abandon this idea. This tree was also their friend, it sheltered them from the rain, they played between its roots and drew on its bark. Everything had been there, the leaflets, the posters and finally they had tied themselves together around the tree, sitting on the ground in the cold, determined not to move despite everything the teachers might say. It was their fight and they had ended up winning it, albeit with a cold. The tree had not been cut down and according to what his granddaughter, who attended her childhood school, had told her, the tree was still standing.

Ernest had been thinking about a project for the square for some time. Living in this neighborhood, he had seen the slow abandonment of the project and had begun to collect the opinions of the inhabitants, determining those who would potentially be willing to invest in this project. But he had lacked a little something that this fresh and lively discussion with Armand and Aziza had brought him. He had an idea of what he could do...

\*

The next day, Ernest went to Simone Veil College, the one that Armand and Aziza attended. Having always been very active in

the life of the neighborhood and communities of the city, many people knew him. This was the case for the director, Jeanne Bow-Leonor, who was also one of his nieces. She came to meet him.

- "Ernest! She exclaims, how are you?

- Very well, and you, on your side, how is this reorganization that you told me about progressing? »

They took the time to discuss many topics, checking in on the evolution of each other's lives since their last meeting, as they made their way to his office. When they got there, they sat side by side facing the table with a coffee. Jeanne questioned him as to the reason for his coming.

- "Have I ever told you about the square La Pointe, at the corner of the rue de la Vigne?" he began.

He set out to share his discussion with the two children, how he wanted to integrate them into a project concerning the future of this common space.

- "I'll see you here, Ernest! she said humorously. Listen, it should be possible, I often talk to the head teacher of the sixth grades, Anne Dubois, who is also their French teacher. You should get along well with her, I think. She often comes to me with new ideas, and one of them was about mixing visual practices and writing stories.

- It looks like the stars are aligned," Ernest laughed. When will I have the pleasure of meeting her?"

\*

It was in this way that I made the acquaintance of Ernest Brun. Jeanne had already spoken to me of this curious personage, whose investment and curiosity were equalled only by his enthusiasm. As I talked to him, I couldn't help but notice it. Ernest enthusiastically explained to me that he wanted to go so far as to make a project proposal for La Pointe Square to the city council. This, as well as a few public meetings he had held with members of the neighborhood and which had resulted in many leads as well as a petition in support of the project. It only took him a few minutes to convince me.

We quickly came to estimate how this would be presented to the students, to convince them of the seriousness of the matter without intimidating or restricting them in their proposals, and the time that would be allocated to it.

- "André Stanislavski, the art teacher, should be invited to take part in this process! I suggested.

- Jeanne told me about your idea, I agree, anyway you organize it as you want! In addition, I am counting on your presence at the municipal council meeting to present the results."

Although I was somewhat surprised by his proposal, I was beginning to understand Ernest's personality enough to know that he had clearly perceived my investment and that he fully considered me a stakeholder in this project.

- "All right, let's do this! See you next week, Wednesday as agreed? I'll show you what came out of it!"

We scheduled our next meeting in the local café and I walked him to the exit.

\*

On the day of presenting the project to the students, I met my colleague and art teacher André Stanislavski in the room. Having just finished lunch, the students were somewhat agitated. The hubbub slowly gave way to a somewhat perplexed silence as I arrived. Some of the students seemed a little nervous, which made me smile. I didn't come to punish anyone! Andre attracted their attention to introduce them to the work they were going to do during the three hours.

- "Today, we're going to ask you to think about what, for you, would be your dream square. You'll work on this in pairs."

Exclamations of joy and whispers swelled until Andrew asked for silence.

- "Calm down, calm down, he said, you can get together with your friends afterwards. During the first hour I invite you to discuss among yourselves the elements that are the most important, do not hesitate to list them. Then, on an A4 sheet of paper, you will draw all this and to finish you will have to write a short text telling the story of a child's afternoon in this square."

He then turned to me with a smile.

- "That's why your French teacher, Mrs. Dubois, is here today, since it is on her initiative that this subject is proposed to you.

- Thank you, Mr. Stanislavski," I replied, turning to the class. I spotted Armand and Aziza sitting side by side, talking in low voices. So I continued...

- "Although I am involved in this project, it was first and foremost initiated by Mr. Ernest Brun and concerns La Pointe Square.

- Old Ernest?!" Aziza exclaimed, before suddenly bringing her hands to her mouth and curling up in her chair, blushing as Armand laughed.

I gave her a half-stern, half-amused look before continuing.

- "As you know, Mr. Brun is an elected member of the City Council, and he is ready to present what you will produce to inspire the development of the square. Be realistic and unbridled, have fun, think about your grandma, your little brother and even your dog. I can't wait to see your proposals."

Most of the students were busy throughout the afternoon. As I talked to them, I realized that many of them knew this square and were also attached to it. There were fewer drawings of unicorns and other monsters than I feared. I picked up the productions while the classroom emptied. Then I heard footsteps approaching and turned back to Aziza, who seemed to want to ask me a question.

- "Yes, Aziza? What's the matter?"

- It's in relation to what you said about Mr. Ernest's project and that he's going to propose it to the Mayor... Can we come too? She anxiously awaited my answer.

- I don't know, but why not? I'm going to talk to Mr. Brun about it. If this is done, we will also have to ask your parents for their consent, Aziza."

After saying this, I saw her eyes light up and she thanked me with a huge smile before running to take the news to Armand.

\*

A month later, based on the synthesis of the proposals of the workshop made with André, Ernest (who had been really efficient!) managed to get a slot to exchange with the Town Hall. He went to the Mayor's office with Aziza and Armand.

- "Then why are you coming to see me? I guess it's important that Ernest, who is very active on the senior municipal council, asked to meet with me very soon.

-We want to redevelop La Pointe Square because we can't play there! said Aziza. In addition, I'm sure the square would be more fun with a vegetable garden, animals in freedom, water games, flowers, trees, games for children, quiet places with benches in good condition for children, etc. (Aziza is looking for a term to replace old) grandpas and grannies that would be forbidden to the big ones of the city. And without a car next to it!

- We've already thought about it during a workshop at the school to gather a lot of proposals," Armand added, placing the prepared file on the desk, in front of the Mayor.

Astonished by the energy of the two children, the Mayor recalled that this type of subject was dealt with in the City Council and not in his office.

- "It's a nice dream, but I have a better project. We're going to get rid of these dangerous benches and roots by removing all of them to build a multi-storey car park for residents who have been complaining for years about more parking spaces. I intend to present it at the next consultation with the inhabitants of this neighbourhood."

Ernest realized that it would be much more complicated than expected to convince the Mayor, who was of course going to defend his project above all.



\*

Our three friends said to each other that they had to come out in force at the next consultation because Ernest suspected the Mayor of wanting to drown the fish. In the weeks that followed, Aziza and Armand went around the neighborhood meeting all the children to explain their project and see who would be interested in coming. Armand would have preferred that Cyril wasn't interested because he didn't like him, because he thought he knew everything because he traveled a lot with his parents, but he was like everyone else actually, going to defend their square. Well, the important thing was that there were enough children.

Ernest, for his part, had taken his cane, and had gone around the lottos, the tea dances, the bridge club and the few cafes in the neighborhood to "recruit" volunteers to participate in the project. It's not easy between the "I don't give a damn", the "too old for this kind of", the belote addicts who don't have the time, but he managed to get enough volunteers. Mostly women, of course... which was not to displease him.

Ernest had also convinced Monsieur de La Pointe, the neighborhood doctor. His grandfather had been mayor of the city in the last century and had given his name to the square after his death. Obviously, the future of this square, which bore his name, concerned him very directly. Monsieur de la Pointe had studied medicine in the capital city of the Department and had practised there, before returning to his native town for the end of his career.

\*

On April 6, 2028 at 11 a.m., the community centre was filled with children. I was there, because my whole class was there. I had

said that the "school life" course would be held there, as a citizenship awareness session.

Ernest had also brought together all his friends and girlfriends from the neighborhood who were in favor of the project (especially those who were on the benches and playing pétanque). Armand and Aziza placed themselves on Ernest's right. Monsieur de la Pointe was there, too, seated to Ernest's left.

At first, the Mayor didn't give up on his project, Ernest defended the survival of the square and at one point, everyone was talking at the same time and we didn't understand anything anymore. Suddenly an unknown voice was heard in the midst of the hubbub.

- "Let's hold a referendum!"

Everyone was silent, and all eyes turned in astonishment to the back of the room. They met Tabea, the new manager of the bank branch, who had been from Zurich for a year. Another exchange of shouts, invectives and threats. The Mayor maintained that his project was the best for the inhabitants while the adults of the neighborhood (and Ernest was not the last) defended theirs. Tabea offered to mediate by taking the microphone and climbing onto a table, as she was neutral as a newcomer. But nothing helped. Monsieur de la Pointe, with his arms folded, said nothing.

Armand and Aziza, as well as their comrades, were lost because they didn't fully understand what was going on. Or rather, they understood that their square would not have its flowers, its trees, its animals, the joyful cries of children and the old people who were arguing at pétanque. It was even going to disappear. The few meagre shrubs, treacherous roots, and rotten benches were in danger of going to the dump. Cars were going to invade it. Lots of cars. The fact that they would be more and more electric would not detract from their procession of noises

and dangers, the honking of the horn from morning to night and the constant risk of accidents. Of course, we wouldn't be able to play there anymore!

With tears in her eyes, Aziza leaned over to Ernest and told him of her disappointment and anguish at the foretold death of the square. Monsieur de la Pointe heard him. He froze and then jumped to his feet to approach the stage where the Mayor, sweating, was defending his future multi-storey car park tooth and nail.

Monsieur de la Pointe raised his arms and cried out in a deep and loud voice:

- "Silence!"

There was silence at once. Monsieur de la Pointe was highly respected. As a well-known doctor, everyone, children and elders, and even the Mayor, knew the way to his practice, which he had set up in the family home he had inherited in the most beautiful part of the city. His family had been here for 7 generations and had done a lot for the city. In a way, he embodied the memory of the community.

Aziza, Armand and Ernest were all seized. Aziza stared at me. We had the sudden conviction that it was the Square La Pointe itself that was going to speak!

- "Mr. Mayor, he said in a calm voice, don't you have the well-being of your fellow citizens at heart?"

- Of course... uh... Sir... uh... some... uh... Point! stammered the mayor, flushed and astonished at this sudden intervention

- Don't you care about doing what's best for the people of this city?

- Of course, Monsieur de la Pointe, replied the mayor, less flushed, but still impressed by the doctor.

- Don't you care that our children like Aziza, Armand and all those from Simone Veil College, who are the lifeblood of this city for years to come, stay here, work here, get involved in sports clubs, in the city council, to keep it alive?

- Of course, Monsieur de la Pointe." replied the mayor with a somewhat lost air, like Armand, who had no desire to join a sports club when he grew up.

- "Don't you care that Ernest and his friends should be able to play bowls in peace," said Aziza, who felt herself growing wings, but was a little intimidated to speak in front of so many people.

- "Yes, of course," the Mayor stammered, "but there are other imperatives...

- Like helping cars to invade the only space available for children and our elders, adds Tabea with pollution and the risk of accidents for children. I come from a big city where pollution, noise and the danger of cars are topics that get a lot of attention. I particularly like our neighborhood here because it's lively: the kids scream, the old people complain!

- Yes, well, that's not quite it, stammered the Mayor, less and less sure of his project.

-I proposed a referendum, Tabea continued, but rather than debating project against proposal, we could perhaps imagine building it together, all here and why not with others?

- Yes, but not the big boys of the neighbourhood, said Armand, who made the whole room laugh, thus lightening the atmosphere.

- Yes, well, it's not that simple, the Mayor replies. You have to spend time, it's long, you know, it's expensive. And then between dream and reality...

- Precisely, replied Monsieur de la Pointe, we could dream together and return to Earth together. Of course, the final decision will be up to the City Council. But I am sure that we can collectively find a solution for this common good that is the square on rue des Vignes. And even with the big boys of the city, he said, looking at Armand with a small smile. After all, they're not far away, why would they be excluded? They were once small like you, I'm sure they have lots of good ideas to make this square a beautiful living place! What you will do for this square, Mr. Mayor, generations of people in your city will remember. What memory do you want to leave of yourself in this land that is dear to you, as much as it was to my grandfather and me? What mark will you leave?"

The Mayor was visibly troubled. The idea of a multi-storey car park named after him made him shudder.

- "I'm going to consult the services concerned, said the Mayor, we're going to do it this way. But hey, it's not going to be easy, and we're going to have to stay invested, I warn you. »

\*

Anne Dubois put down her pen.

Enough writing, she would continue her narrative next weekend. She would discuss how, against all odds, this initiative of Ernest, Armand and Aziza, and the inauguration of a new square completely renovated, had facilitated the re-election of the Mayor. She would then come to the role played by Monsieur de la Pointe in spreading this approach far beyond the square that bears his name. And the national success it had encountered...

Monsieur de la Pointe, Ernest Brun and the Mayor of the time had long since died. Since these events, so modest in appearance, Anne had never left this city, which had been transformed by it. She succeeded Jeanne Bow-Leonor in 2045. Armand, after studying medicine, had come to set up his practice just across the street from La Pointe Square. From his window, he could see the children laughing and running across the pedestrian street.

It was time for Anne to devote herself to preparing for the governing board of Collège Simone Veil, which she would chair the next day, for the last time in 16 years. She knew she might be overwhelmed with emotion. Because tomorrow, Monday, May 15, 2051, she will pass the torch to a young and brilliant new director. A colleague who, like her, had been teaching French to students for nearly 20 years...

The intrepid Aziza.

# Acknowledgements

The "Positive Imaginaries 2050" project would not have been possible without the desire, mutual trust and proactivity of the personalities and institutions who led it from September 2022 to January 2024:

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- Dominique Christian, philosopher, for his contributions to [narratology](#),
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Product designer and work-study student in the Discovery team as part of a master's degree in Global Design, Elodie contributed to the writing of the texts and created the illustrations accompanying this book.

**In memory of this collective  
writing project...**

## 1 – Testimonials from contributors to this project.

Thierry Braine-Bonnaire:

*"There are more and more stories around us. However, I had never undertaken the exercise of producing one. It is therefore both out of curiosity for novelty and for the richness of reflecting on several people, from various backgrounds, that I accepted, with pleasure, to get involved in this process.*

*The organization of one-day workshops was very beneficial, on the one hand thanks to the quality of the stimulating interventions that punctuated them and, on the other hand, for having induced a valuable step back from the daily flow.*

*As long as the quality of listening to the other person and the benevolence are there, which was the case, there was no particular difficulty in writing the story. At most, we can remember that writing with several hands (and therefore several styles) is not a simple thing. As a result, it is pleasant to achieve a satisfying result in which each of the authors can identify with each other. »*

Frédéric Descombes:

*"The collective telling of stories and positive imaginaries has the virtue of federating and transforming representations, in order to move on to mobilization and action. This makes it possible to bring to light the tensions and oppositions that need to be overcome.*

*The "Positive Imaginaries 2050" experience confirmed this to me, and reinforced my certainty that it is by doing things*

*together, by seeing each other's world, that we move forward united and stronger. »*

Philippe Ducci:

*"It was a real pleasure for me to participate in this process of creating imaginaries, the meetings and exchanges that were part of it will forever be good memories. I feel a certain pride when I read the story I participated in writing, it was indeed a new exercise for me. I hope this sense of pride is shared by all.*

*I invite the readers of this book to try to imagine the magnitude of the unknown that this approach may have presented, the current form of the narratives being only one of those that had been envisaged.*

*In addition, I am convinced that the multi-stakeholder approach of this project has been essential to the heterogeneity of the stories it contains, which highlight very diverse aspects of the world around us. I would not venture to attempt to predict their role in the future, but I am confident that these stories will be useful. »*

Emmanuel Dufrasnes:

*"My involvement in the "Positive Imaginaries 2050" project is a great opportunity for me to test my projections on sustainability and social innovation.*

*Collaborating with such diverse partners has enriched academic perspectives and possible futures for a sustainable future. This experience reinforced my beliefs in interdisciplinarity and creative thinking as keys to overcoming environmental challenges. She highlighted the crucial importance of foresight and storytelling in examining possible futures, proving that the collective imagination is*



*indispensable to discover innovative solutions that transcend traditional boundaries.*

*This collaborative work convinced me that building narratives around possible futures is a relevant method to engage society in achieving a more resilient and inclusive future. »*

William Gras:

*"I was lucky enough to discover this collective thanks to 2tonnes, which sent me to lead the workshop of the same name for the team. While I was expecting to meet EDF employees, I was surprised to discover people from the CEA, ADEME, CEREMA, SATT and a professor of design from an architecture school. I loved contributing to an initiative that was born out of individuals who had a momentum and followed that momentum. I enjoyed watching the questions, the thought paths refine, evolving as the process continued.*

*Neither the result, nor the questions, can be intellectualized: you have to read the book, experience it, go through it. It's a difficult job to write a story: writers and more generally artists will be essential to get the upright minds that we are on board. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this group of explorers, to do something new (and so essential since we are storytelling beings), to do things together (not always easy). A great human adventure! Congratulations to the team for carrying out this project! »*

Guilhem Maire:

*"I was very surprised when I joined the Discovery team, when I found myself faced with such an astonishing singularity project. Through our explorations and enriching encounters, we realized the crucial importance of our approach. She was able to unite us, lead us to reconsider our achievements, and open up new horizons, despite our limited experience in writing.*

*This expedition turned out to be an adventure like no other, full of daring experiments, unexpected detours and surprising revelations. By serving as a pretext to address current issues such as the role of artificial intelligence in image production or data formatting, the "Positive Imaginaries" project has proven to be a powerful catalyst for collective creation. It embodies the spirit of openness and dynamism that characterize the shared and innovative creation of our time. »*

Valérie Martin:

*"A very enriching and learning initiative on the issue of narratives, our ability to imagine tomorrow. But also a process where collaboration and listening were at the center. Intellectual and human discoveries about ourselves, about others, and about our relationships to being in the world.*

*Congratulations to the Discovery team for taking us on this journey!"*

Audrey Saint-Lary:

*"As a technologist, it is imperative to take into account the societal and human dimension, its strength and power, which is higher than the techno-solutionist criterion alone.*

*Thinking about alternative possible futures and mobilizing our imagination are the first things we need to do to get out of fear.*

*Taking ownership of the future and opening up its horizons allows us to regain the capacity for action and change.*

*In the past, I have been able to work a lot on the subject of transitions, particularly environmental and energy transitions, but always from the perspective of future sociological collapses. EDF's proposal appealed to me insofar as it counteracted useless mobilization messages in the face of the extent of the damage and a bleak future.*

*The challenge of producing an essay, the result of convergent or contradictory exchanges, enriched by multiple and unknown sensitivities, stems from a strong intensity of collective intelligence.*

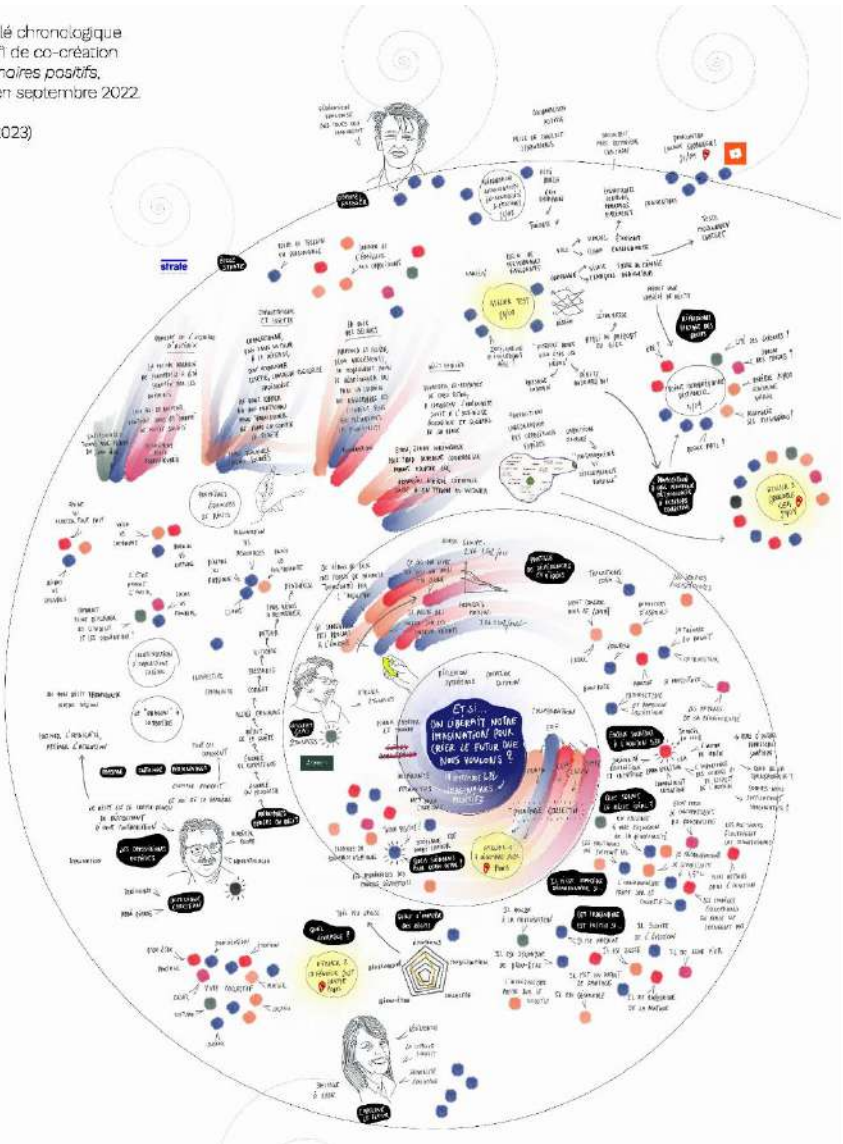
*Starting almost from scratch on the techniques of producing a story, I learned new things, and in particular by appreciating the techniques proposed by different interlocutors. »*

## 2 – Overview of the "positive imaginaries" approach

Déroulé chronologique  
du défi de co-création  
*Imaginaires positifs*,  
initié en septembre 2022

(avril 2023)

- CPE
- CEMH
- CEA
- CPH
- AEMF



### 3 - Photo album



*First written during the second workshop.*



*Frédéric, Stéphane and Valérie.*



*Emmanuel, Lara and Jean-Louis.*



*William, Audrey and Guilhem.*



*Thierry, Agathe, Lara, Emmanuel and Jean-Louis during the 3rd workshop at Y-Spot (Grenoble).*



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Completed in March 2024.



