**LETTER OF CLAIRE AND FRANCIS**

**Straight from Brazil to the World Meeting in Assisi**

A starting point.

*A bridge,* like the bridges that Saint Claire of Assisi wanted to build.

In a national meeting, straight from São Paulo, Brazil, we wrote our Letter. We started from the meaning of the Sacred Feminine in the change of our global economic paradigm. In Portuguese, economy is a feminine noun. All women that inhabit us, the girl that exists inside myself, the woman that exists inside myself, the woman that is my mother, the woman that is my grandmother; the girl that is my sister and my daughter, the woman that is my spouse, the woman that is my mother, the woman that is my grandmother. To all these women, we offer our recognition, and we ask for forgiveness. We thank, adore, and honor the ancestral knowledge transmitted by them, the feminine that carries all life in her womb.

Our proposition of an economy based on the feminine, the cyclical, the welcoming, the attentive, and the affectionate entails a radical transformation in the linear, masculinized means and ways of production, that has imposed on us a vision of progress based on extraction. We now choose a circular understanding of the productive processes. We also express a profound ethical commitment with the generations to come.

Listening to the silent language of Claire of Assisi, we made ourselves bridges to connect “those who have in excess with those to whom so much is lacking”. In the new 21st century economies, masculine and feminine must walk side by side, keeping pace with one another, neither ahead nor behind, holding hands, like “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon.” The Economy of Francis and Claire is what we intend to practice and honor.

Inspired by Claire and Francis, we express our wishes for a deep transformation in the long-established vision and approach of economic relations. Starting from the sexual division of labor, valuing the traditional knowledges of women and their ways of caring and respecting the cyclical nature of our common home, planet Earth. Patriarchy has reduced the economy to its material and productive dimension only. This conception has distorted the sense of social well-being, producing iniquity and unhappiness. In this shared path, feminine and masculine seek new paradigms: from competition to collaboration; from exploitation to sustainability; from accumulation to distribution; from unbalanced relations between people and countries to fair solidary trade; from endless consumption to conscious consumption, from greed to altruism.

On our way to Assisi, we committed to the call to action of Pope Francis: “*to change today’s economy and give a soul to the economy of tomorrow.*” An “*economy with soul,*” which unites us with all living beings on Earth, our brothers and sisters, children of the same Mother. Fear, frustration, and suffering is what an economy *with no soul*, a consumerist economy, has imposed on us, especially now, in this neoliberal phase of capitalism. Individualism, consumerism, contempt for others, egotism, vulgarity, and superficiality will lead the world to ruin and destruction. Timothy, one of the primeval Christians, already pointed out that: *“the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.”* We think and we intend to build the economy from the Common, from the scale of life. No longer serving the economic system, but an economy at the service of life.

An Economy at the service of life ought to consider spirituality a dimension of the self. Differently than religiosity, spirituality is not restricted to religion. It has been gradually studied in the medical sciences and already for three decades recognized as a clinical category by the World Health Organization, in addition to being studied in the field of social sciences. We, in the Economy of Francis and Claire approach spirituality both from the religious and the scientific perspectives, from the example set by the young man from Assisi, who detached himself from material goods to grow spiritually.

An economy with soul does not underestimate the importance of material goods but rejects the worship of materiality, based on the ideology of consumerism. Such is the madness of capitalism in its apology to consumerism that instead of us making utensils, it is the utensils that shape us. We build the house and the house builds us. In the large cities of the world, huge urban buildings proliferate with to sole purpose of storing unused things, notwithstanding the environmental limits of our planet. Storage buildings, true monuments to disposal and accumulation.

A development at the human scale should bear the fruit of a new socio-economic paradigm for the world, one which takes into consideration spirituality, inter-religiosity, and the cultivation of the self. That breaks apart from the culture of disposal and banality, and focuses on essential factors of life, aspiring abundance of affection, solidarity, understanding, protection, a dignified life for all, sorority, conviviality, identity, diversity, otherness, empathy, friendliness, leisure, creativity, fantasy, and imagination.

Affection and solidarity for a human world. We reject the “non-natural nature,” the “non-cultural culture,” the “non-human human.” We do not want to be commanded by algorithms as they maximize profit, transforming subjectivities in merchandise. We reject post-biological life, and the virtual reality confounding real reality. We repel the imposition of a post-truth world and of the “transhumanism.” We are not Stuff! Nor will we allow them to turn us into machines for production and consumption, mere things deprived of meaning, under the control of limitless greediness.

As Pope Francis, warns us: *“Future generations stand to inherit a greatly spoiled world. Our children and grandchildren should not have to pay the cost of our generatio’s irresponsibility.”* We live in a time of profound transformations. Starting from climate changes. And we are running out of time to revert such process.

There is no more time to lose.

Insisting on a carbon-based economy will lead us towards ecological suicide. *“We must change these perverse attitudes”* of indifference or denial of the climate change and its effects on the life of the planet*,* wisely points out Pope Francis. For the sake of our young people, for the sake of our children, for the future of animals and plants, for all beings that inhabit the planet, we see that the Economy of Francis and Claire will only be meaningful if we firmly stand for the decision of leaving fossil fuels underground, reducing its extraction until there is a total switch to clean energy sources. Nature took millions of years to transform living forms into mineral coal and oil, capturing carbon and storing it inside the earth. It is illogical and criminal to expel it in less than two hundred years, that is, in geological time, expelling it almost at once! Such disrespect and insolence are irremediably affecting the balance of the planet. We have one decade left to curb global warming, as points out the UN report backed by the entire scientific community. If we exceed the global warming limit of 1.5°C, the results will be catastrophic.

And they already are!

Eradicated diseases make a comeback every day.

The droughts, floods, storms, and tornados.

The gloomy afternoon in São Paulo when day turned into night in the middle of the afternoon due to soot from the fires in the Amazon.

Bituminous oil is taking over our beaches; from the coast of the state of Maranhão to the mouth of River Doce, in the north of Espírito Santo. Oil that soils beaches, kills fishes, turtles, and shellfishes. Oil that impregnates coral reefs and mangroves.

River Doce, the river murdered with the mud of the mining companies’ greed.

Wouldn’t this be enough for us to say enough?

What torments are we waiting for?

How many more rivers will we have to kill?

How many more new dams to interrupt the flow of live?

Dirty water cannot bring life.

The more fetid the water, the more cholera and yellow fever.

The more soot enters our nostrils, the more asthma and bronchitis.

And what will happen when rivers dry out and forests become deserts?

And what will happen when the breath we take starts burning?

What will we tell our grandchildren?

And what will our grandchildren say about us?

Our feminine Economy of Claire and Francis envisions a new energy standard, with distributed generation of clean renewable energies. The energy of the sun, the energy of the winds, and all good energies discovered by the good science. Energies produced in the new manner, decentralized, with shared knowledge, allowing all to have access to technological advances. Solar panels and windmills developed in the communities, by the communities, uniting local with scientific knowledge. Illuminating and warming up residences, streets, schools, and parks. And Industries. New ecological and sustainable industries, oriented by the principles of circular economy, without waste, in short production chains reducing the distance between production and consumption. An integrated economy, overarching all the dimensions that involve the care of our house. *Oikos*, house, home, environment; *Nomein*, manage, administer, care; from ancient Greek *Oikos/Nomein*, economy. Production in the scale of life, with fairness and balance, democratizing productivity gains, which should not be directed only to capital owners, but destined, above all, to human work.

Producing in the scale of life also means preserving life of other beings as well, acknowledging them as subjects of rights. The animals, the plants, the waters, the flowers, the mountains, have rights, they are all entitled to the dignity that preserves the meaning of their lives and existence. This is the *Teko* *Porã* logic, it is “the good way of living in our Home” of the Guarani peoples. The native peoples of this continent that came to be known as America teach us that it is necessary to take care of our home and Mother Earth, our gift and Common House. It is up to each generation to leave a better world for the future generations. This wisdom translates into Good Living, or *Sumak Kawsay*, in Quechua, *Suma Qamaña*, in Aimara, *Kume Mongen*, in Mapuche. To promote a meeting between the Economy of Francis and Claire and the Good Living practices and vision means a reunion with ancestral wisdoms, and the reestablishment of a flow of a life of abundance and harmony. Questioning the very idea of Des-envelop, for in order to “develop,” no separation is needed, but rather to involve, envelop. With the DeClairetion of the Rights of Nature, time has come for a new sense of development.

The opposite would be to think of an Economy of the Sufficient, of that which is fair and good, that serves all with equity, and generates ‘good living’. An economy which strengthens community bonds to leverage collective development, with communities self-managing their own life processes. Collaborative urbanism, ecovillages, agroecology. The production of healthy food, with no harmful pesticides, harvested in family farming or in urban green gardens. Decent housing, labor as right. Free circulation within cities, and between cities, and countries. Living with diversity, with art, and leisure. Education and healthcare understood as common goods, never as merchandise. May people live well and may the ‘good living’ of some does not result in oppression and exploitation of others.

This generous form of economy refers to collaborative forms of production when technology is a vector for inclusion rather than exclusion. A pro-human technology, there self-employment is not a synonym of precarious work. Here the apparent objectivity of technology creates a world of horrors, since devoid of feeling, inhibits and weakens the very meaning of life. A gifted form of economy refers to intellectual generosity, the promotion and transfer of free knowledge and technologies to the communities, like free software, renewable energies, and syntropic agriculture, thus integrating, organizing, balancing, and preserving energy and production systems.

Economies in the plural form. Solidary, popular, creative, collaborative, economies. Circular and ecological economies. Godsend economies, a community party, a communion. A feminist economy, of women. Peasant and traditional economy. Economy of care, the domestic economy. The digital and open source economy. The economy of culture. And finally, the economy of labor. Living economies.

Belonging to the collective, to the common. Belonging to everyone and that must be shared with everyone. In the Economy of Francis and Claire selfishness has no place, neither unmeasured ambition, nor infinite accumulation. Yes, a world without billionaires and megafortunes. The concentration of wealth as we see today is outrageous. We cannot tolerate an economy where a few accumulate billions (of money) while other billions (of lives) are left behind. The age of unproductive capital must come to an end. In one way or another. And we begin by urging those who enjoy the circumstance of holding megafortunes to start to share by their own initiative, out of their own consciousness, like Saint Francis, Saint Claire, and many other young people from Assisi did.

The world can no longer wait. It is imperative to establish an international taxation over capital flow and financial transactions in tax havens. Profits and dividends, large fortunes, luxury goods, superfluous and unhealthy consumption must be taxed properly. It is not possible that those who have a lot keep having privileges, tax breaks and subsidies, while essential goods and services are highly taxed on the population. Labor is overtaxed and capital gets exemptions. It is an upside-down world that charges a lot from those who have little and little from those who have a lot. Capitalist accumulation grew from overexploitation of natural and human resources and the subsidies to this greed were paid with the life of entire generations; also mountains paid their fee, the woods and the forests full of medicinal plants, watercourses, oceans; life systems were altered or completely destroyed. Now it is time to implement social and ecological taxation policies which will pay for the incurred social and environmental debt. It is key that the debt system is put into discussion, a system which enslaves people and entire countries.

The Financial System, controlling an entanglement of corporations that ravage the world, accumulates large concentration of wealth and power that turns peoples and nations into “debt slaves”. Debt to own a house, debt to buy a car, to get a college degree, debt to consumerism. Debt to keep countries underdeveloped. Debt to denounce people as defaulters. Debt to control nations. A world of bondage imposed by a debt system with no limits, which controls Nations, International Bodies, and Economic Corporations, which concentrates power and wealth that chew up lives. The Financial System must be put to an end. If we want to live life as a gift, as a miracle, we must reinvent that System.

Creating a less-unequal world is the quest of the Economy of Francis and Claire. Capitalism and productivism - the economic model that we live in is opposite to the care of our common house. The dimensions of our Planet, our House, are finite, and our resources, exhaustible. This economic model that preaches endless accumulation and infinite exploitation is illogical and incompatible. An economic model that intends to turn the last drop of clean water into rotten liquid, to transform human beings into things, is inadmissible. Market ideology, aggravated by neoliberalism, is leading humanity to suicide.

For the Economy of Francis and Claire to flourish we may uphold this vision with clarity, explicitly. Our way of acting is fraternal and peaceful. But we know well our side in this struggle. Our preferential option is for the poor, the oppressed, the excluded, the underprivileged. For bread, housing, land, and labor. For the planet.

For what is fair. We will not limit ourselves to specific remedial actions. We will reach out, we propose mutualism, like the associations of mutual aid created between the nineteenth and early twentieth century by the workers movements to give a hand and mitigate the suffering of poor families. In the name of primitive capital accumulation, a world without laws and rights was imposed under the banner of economic liberalism. With neoliberalism this regression and helplessness are back. We will not shy away from facing it. Whether fighting for the preservation of labor and social rights, or standing side by side with the helpless, alleviating their immediate needs. But we will also call into question the discussion about macroeconomics and the power that imposes it.

Facing the macroeconomic debate demands firmness in recognizing that in our current historical time there is no way to do without the structure of the State promoting the balance between equality in diversity and freedom in the individual and collective levels. Inequality has increased to unseen levels in the exact proportion that States were weakened, until the latter were fully captured by the absolute power of money, degrading the sense of democracy and common good. This situation must be reversed. The benefits generated by the national and global economies can no longer be appropriated by a minority that controls the power in the States and International Bodies. Everyone deserves a good life.

Quality public policies that are inventive and universal, fair and well executed are also an object of concern of the Economy of Francis and Claire - as well as the ethics in the execution of such policies. We will dispute the formulation and implementation of public policies, both via governmental means and structures as well as via actions of a non-governmental nature, in the sphere of the commons. Always with a far-reaching vision, in a respectful dialogue, free from sectarianism, but with assertiveness, in-depth studies, and concrete experiences and proposals. Translating the debate into accessible, popular language, demystifying knowledge, allowing all peoples to understand, at least as much as needed, the intricate world of politics, government, and finances. Tax legislation must be changed in Brazil and in the world. Financial architecture reform, public and community banking; capital flow regulation; tax exemption for basic products; property, inheritance, and capital income taxation; reduction of subsidies to fossil fuel and incentives to renewable energies.

From Brazil, we reaffirm the importance and the need to consolidate proposals and experiences that were initiated in our country. Initiatives that our people must take ownership and offer to the world. Public policies such as the *Bolsa Família* Program which removed over 30 million people from poverty and misery and that evolved into the Universal Basic Income Program; Citizen Income, ensuring dignity and means of survival for all; Participatory Budgeting Policy, in which citizens collectively decide the allocation of public resources in their communities, a successful experience disseminated in many Brazilian cities as well as other countries, and that now must deepen, assessing also the origins of public revenues, not only their spending, and expanding the method to other public spheres besides the local, to state and country levels. Network of Solidarity Economy and Solidarity Finance, encouraging the creation of virtual local currencies, with control by the communities and local productive arrangements; Food Security and Food Acquisition Program, that is buying from family farming, encouraging the production of healthy, poison-free foods - and the agroecological transition process - mainly for public school meals, motivating food and nutrition education, like the creation, in 2006, of the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population; and finally the Live Pharmacy Program, preparing and promoting low-cost medicines for free distribution made with medicinal plants.

Knowledges and experiences, born on the fringes, at the edges of the hegemonic system, can no longer be considered peripheral. We will act to bring them center stage in economics and development debate. The market economy has placed people at the service of the market logic, exacerbating individualistic, consumerist, and irresponsible behaviors. It is fitting to shed light on other ways of being, thinking, and acting. Languages ​​of the heart, head, and hands, which spring from the hidden and suffocated Brazil. We will begin by simple actions, by real and successful experiences, designed and built in the heart of Brazilian communities, from north to south, from east to west, from favelas to small municipalities, from coast to hinterland, from large metropolises to forest peoples. In the midst of scarcity, solutions arise. And hope will return.

The local, social currencies that encourage communities to invest their resources in businesses generated within the community, with community banks supporting solidarity guaranty. The economic relationships that emerged based on trust in interpersonal relationships, collective purchases, small businesses. The successful political program of installing one million cisterns in Brazilian semiarid region. Such a program, the result of a broad articulation of community organizations, has been improving the quality of life of families in drought regions. Family and peasant farming, the MST, Landless Workers Movement, is the largest producer of organic food in Latin America, producing 14,000 tons of organic rice, among other products. The Agroecology and Agroforestry network, with over one thousand entities. Production cooperatives, co-working, the appreciation of traditional crafts and knowledge, updated in contemporary ways made possible by digital culture. Points of Culture, promoting identity and cultural diversity in 1,100 municipalities, with over 3,500 points spread over the most distant corners, from slums to indigenous villages. Collectives of artists, of young people, of women, of black women and men, the LGBTQ community. Networks of *Quilombola* peoples, indigenous peoples, and traditional communities.

The described panorama systematizes what is already being done and which we intend to enhance. We also present new propositions, such as the education of young people for citizenship and solidarity action, with the Community’s Young Agents, a public policy that has not yet gained the necessary scale, but which has already been successfully tried out. In its first edition, there were 5,500 young people in the city of São Paulo, and in the second edition, 11,000 across the country. Uniting learning and service with community organizations. The opposite of a military service, rather a civilian service, taht values ​​community organizations transformed into powerful spaces for welcoming, learning, and experimentation for the young people of the Economy of Francis and Claire.

All this vitality present on Brazilian land experiments new models of politics and self-management. It is this melting pot of collaborative culture that gives us hope in Brazil, even in the midst of an environment, economic, social, political, and even civilizatory crisis. We will face horror, prejudice, and violence, in bringing the Culture of Peace to life and active. The Economy of Francis and Claire is here to stay, and we start by doing what is necessary; then, what is possible; until we will be doing the impossible. Like St. Francis of Assisi, we intend to achieve the impossible out of simple things.

We are here to listen and speak. We speak of democracy for we want to avoid barbarism and develop the civilization. With true, genuine democracy, beyond appearances, beyond simply the act of voting. Not only a representative democracy, but a participatory one, of referendums and plebiscites, with the economic democracy being a precondition for social and political democracy. A democracy for a diverse, plural, polyhedral, non-spherical, and uniform world. The beauty of the world is experience and to live amidst the many shapes and colors. Our beauty lies in the fact that we are the same, and different at the same time. A true democracy presupposes that people take ownership of the means of governance and that we self-manage ourselves, with democratic states and societies, and that the resources of the state remain at the service of life, not of the markets. To that end, it is necessary to go beyond States, strengthening Civil Society and the Democratic Process from its foundation, with self-management community-based councils and hearings, with right to the city, and the democratization of the media.

Democratizing the processes of citizen control over the States and the Economy requires new laws. Starting from mechanisms that enable greater participation of women, blacks, and indigenous people in the parliaments, thus reflecting the diversity of society. All this demand legislation and regulation, to rethink the funding of electoral campaigns, and democratic governance. Democracy also includes access to Justice, the family home protected, social safety nets against injustice, abuse of authority, persecution (lawfare), genocide, and hate crimes. It is necessary to have social control over the Judiciary, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Police, to strengthen the Public Defenders’ Office, the exercise of law, restorative justice, public civil actions, writ of *mandamus*, and community participation in judicial proceedings of collective interest, via *amicus curiae*.

From local and communitarian to planetary governance, with the reformulation and democratization of International Bodies. We all live in the same House. Time has come for us to create Planetary Citizenship. In this reversed world, imposed by neoliberal ideology, goods and things can move freely between countries, people cannot. We are citizens of the same planet, we want a world with fewer walls and more bridges.

Addressing democracy is addressing the democratization of cities, occupation of public spaces, and the Common Goods. Common goods, goods that belong to everyone and cannot be imprisoned by greed. Water, fresh air, health, education, culture, and leisure, the right to come and go. Housing and the right to decent housing. Work as a right. It is unethical for a country to underutilize dozens of millions of its workforce. There are sixty million people in Brazil among unemployed, underemployed, and in precarious work conditions. It is too much human energy wasted, especially for a country with so much to do. Real democracy involves debating the world of work, the democratization of productivity gains and the ongoing transformations, the reduction of working hours. Land, work, housing, and freedom so that everyone can live a fair and peaceful life.

On the way to Assisi, we joined the Global Educational Alliance, launched by Pope Francis as well. We agree that it is *“fundamental to work viewing education in alternative ways or systems that do not have the premise of the idolatry of money. We have to seek to develop programs and curricula around the concept of a circular economy, contributing to conscious education of environmental sustainability, which requires returning to the environment what has been taken from it,”* said Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize in Economics, in a meeting with the Scholas Occurrentes program at the Vatican.

United to the Global Educational Alliance, we advocate changes in the curricula of economic schools. And also a change in the curricula of all courses. From early childhood education to higher education, going through the education for work. We seek to achieve an integral education for an integral ecology. We stand for the appreciation of teachers and their training to guide students in the rediscovery of the meaning of the Common Good. Also the appreciation of traditional and community knowledges as an integral part of the curricula. We embrace an education that regards rights and duties, the ethics of responsibility and reciprocity, and economic education since the early age.

In this journey, we affirm our commitment to a Global Transformation, based on five words, which, in Portuguese, begin with the letter E:

Ethics,

Economy,

Ecology,

Education,

Aesthetics.

On this basis, we will fight for the emergence of a new civilizational model. In this model, it will no longer be “one or the other”, but rather “one and the other”. A world in which other worlds can fit, in which beauty and the sharing of kindness will be a constant in our actions, harmonizing form and content; in which education is transformative, emancipatory, making us reconnecting with ecology, recognizing us as a species that cannot live “apart” from the planet, but as a “part” of the planet. We are children of the same mother and father. Our economic action shall be oriented towards new ways of obtaining and using the resources necessary for the common good, with respect to others. And ethics will never depart from us.

Beauty and joy, art and culture, justice, and happiness, are our wishes to reanimate the Economy, to add soul. To this end, we propose to the replacement of cold numbers to measure countries’ Gross Domestic Product by the warm indicators of the Gross Domestic Happiness. *“Joy is the litmus test!”,* said the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade. For the Economy of Francis and Claire to function, the main indicator must be the joy it brings to the living beings in this blessed province of the universe. When this happens, we will know Claire and Francis must also be happy.

The Economy of Francesco and Claire, inspired by the Canticle of Creatures, is arriving and we are joining it!

Beautiful and radiant,

May you be praised, with all your creatures.

The Economy of the Brother Sun and the Sister Moon, and the stars.

May you be praised by Brother Wind, the clear or cloudy skies.

Serene, you will provide a living to your creatures.

Useful and humble, you will quench our thirst.

Diverse fruits, colorful flowers, and herbs. All we are your children, Mother Earth. Praise and bless my Lord,

And give Him thanks!

Brazilian Movement for the Economy of Francis and Claire

São Paulo, November 19th, 2019.

I National Meeting, held at the Tucarena, Teatro de Arena at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo - PUCSP.

(Letter revised and expanded in the Planning meeting with young people towards Assisi, on January 18th, 2020, at the DIEESE Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies)

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